

# East Vail waterfall is preserved with help of land trust

At the Eagle Valley Land Trust, we aim to preserve the character of our community, one acre at a time. We believe part of achieving that goal means conserving and protecting the iconic places that people love — whether it's a favorite local hiking and biking spot, a historic generational ranch carrying on our Western heritage, a perfect meadow for hunting, a pristine creek for fishing or a picture-postcard landscape that represents our mountain lifestyle.

The land trust currently holds conservation easements on more than 6,500 acres in Eagle County. We steward and protect

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these lands forever. In this column, we will occasionally highlight one of the local properties we have conserved. Today's "local conservation highlight" is the East Vail waterfall.

The East Vail waterfall is a well-known local landmark that has become an icon of the Vail Valley for residents and guests alike, greeting travelers and welcoming people as they descend Vail Pass and enter our picturesque community. The waterfall is a beloved place and serves as a highly utilized recreation area.

However, what you might not know is the East Vail waterfall serves as a success story for local land conservation. Originally, many decades

ago, the 4.8-acre site at the base of the falls was approved for development. However, a dedicated group of local conservationists, led by Dr. Tom Steinberg, believed in this waterfall as a symbol of the Vail Valley and felt it deserved to be preserved in its natural state.

Twelve years ago, due to the diligence of your local land trust in partnership with the town of Vail, the East Vail waterfall and the surrounding land were finally saved forever for the people of our community.

The Eagle Valley Land Trust remains extremely proud of our efforts in 2000 and 2001 to preserve this waterfall for the people of Eagle County. It was a large effort with many neighborhood partners, serving as an example of how our community comes together for great causes.

In March 2001, the East Vail waterfall and the nearly 5-acre parcel of land at its base were permanently preserved with a conservation easement by your local land trust. Additionally, the conservation easement protecting this property also protects the water rights of the falls, ensuring the water will continue to flow for the enjoyment and benefit of our citizens and guests.

Today, the East Vail waterfall is a publicly accessible recreation area that is extremely popular with local outdoor enthusiasts. In winter, the falls have become one of the premiere places for ice-climbers to enjoy their sport. In summer, the land is a highly used local hiking spot, providing another public portal for venturing into the southern mountains. The falls also serve as a paradise for bird watchers and nature photographers. The site provides wildlife habitat for migratory and resident birds — even the black swift has been spotted here. The land also serves as occasional summer range for mule deer, fox, great horned owl, porcupine and black bear.

The East Vail waterfall and surrounding land is a slice of genuine Colorado right in our backyard. I encourage you to grab your hiking boots, binoculars and a camera, and visit (or revisit) the East Vail waterfall. It is a true local gem, as well as a land conservation success story.

The Eagle Valley Land Trust believes in saving the special, unique and iconic places in our mountain community that we all love and appreciate. The East Vail Waterfall is the perfect example of our work to save land for the people of Eagle County forever.

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