



STATE OF COLORADO: BANDED PEAK

The Navajo River Headwaters conservation easement protecting 16,723 acres is the culmination of a 20-year public-private effort to conserve 50,000 acres of southwest Colorado and northern New Mexico. Threatened by the expansion of nearby tourist destinations, the property's conservation through the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program (FLP) ensures its continued protection of an essential watershed, critical wildlife habitat, and an active timber and hunting economy.



Since the 1990s, the threat of land conversion to non-forest and non-agricultural use has been on the rise as the economy shifted from timber and agriculture to tourism and recreation for second-home owners. Local zoning allowed the property to be subdivided into 35 acre parcels. Without the FLP, this conversion would have inevitably disrupted the headwaters region of the watershed. The nearby tourist destinations of Durango, Pagosa Springs, and Wolf Creek Ski Area have all contributed to the region's rapid population growth. From 2010-2017, the county's growth rate was double the national average.

The privately-owned project lands are surrounded by 3.75 million acres of national forests and wil-

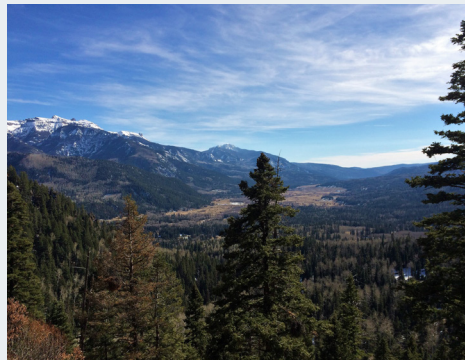
derness, including a shared 38 mile boundary with USDA Forest Service lands. The property is bordered by the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail for 10 miles and is part of an important viewshed for thousands of visitors.



Property is surrounded by the **South San Juan Wilderness, San Juan National Forest, and Rio Grande National Forest.**

The implementation of the Navajo River Watershed Plan, including the conservation of this property, has required numerous partners, including Colorado State Forest Service, USDA Forest Service, The Conservation Fund, Archuleta County, Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, Colorado Open Lands, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, local residents, and nonprofits.

As part of the San Juan-Chama Water Project, the project lands protect a critical watershed on both sides of the Continental Divide and supply water to Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Taos, the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, Southern Ute Reservation, and agricultural lands in the Middle Rio Grande Valley.



Wildlife species found on the property include elk, mule deer, Canada lynx, peregrine falcon, river otter, boreal toad, black bears, bighorn sheep, mountain lions, bald eagle, osprey, red-tailed hawk, and a species of cutthroat trout that is unique to the San Juans.

Sensitive plant and insect species protected: **Great Basin silverspot butterfly, Pagosa bladderpod, and New Mexico butterfly weed.**



Preservation of the property supports the county's largest industry: tourism, which brought in \$65 million in 2017, fueled by the spectacular scenery and recreational opportunities of the area. Private hunting on the project lands also generates significant annual revenue, with further income accruing to the local community from visiting hunters.

The forested property has supported the local timber economy with \$450,000 in gross annual sales in recent years, including commercial timber and Christmas tree sales.

Part of the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant from 1832, the conservation of the property is historically significant. With only two owners since the early 1800s, the property looks today as it has for centuries.



Rising 4,000 feet from the valley floor, the Navajo River Headwaters property is framed by the Continental Divide's San Juan Mountain Range to the east and the Chalk Mountains to the west. This scenic landscape is a critical water source for over a million people, provides important habitat for numerous plant and animal species, and supports a thriving tourism and forest products economy in southern Colorado. The conservation of the property ensures that these benefits are guaranteed in perpetuity. The additional funding for FLP through the Great American Outdoors Act will allow for the conservation of similar properties and landscape scale initiatives to proliferate in Colorado.

AT-A-GLANCE



Tract size: **16,723 acres.**



Project lands are surrounded by **3.75 million acres** of national forests and wilderness.



Property is **82% forested** with aspen, cottonwood, ponderosa pine, fir, spruce, and Gambel oak.



Project lands include **33 miles** of streams, including **5 miles** of the Navajo River, and **850 riparian/wetland acres.**



Recent timber and forest product sales have generated **\$450,000 in annual economic benefits** for the local economy.



Critical **water source** for over a **million people.**

Top L: River valley. (Photo: Christine Quinlan); **Middle L:** Banded Peak. (Photo Courtesy of John Fielder); **Bottom L:** Looking across forestland on the NHR3. (Photo: Claire Harper, USFS); **Top R:** Banded Peak. (Photo Courtesy of John Fielder)

For more information, visit
<https://csfs.colostate.edu/forest-legacy-program/>.