

Southern Plains Land Trust and NativeEnergy Announce Acquisition of 6,600 Acres of Prairie Grassland in Colorado to Prevent 190,000 Tonnes of CO₂e from Entering the Atmosphere

Sustainability leaders make purchase possible, with NativeEnergy's HelpBuild™ program; create carbon offsets

BURTON



Southern Plains Land Trust
GAINING GROUND FOR PRAIRIE WILDLIFE



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LAMAR, CO and BURLINGTON, VT, February 28, 2020 — [NativeEnergy](#) and [Southern Plains Land Trust](#) (SPLT) announced today the successful purchase of 6,600 acres of grassland prairie on Jagers Ranch in southeastern Colorado. This purchase increases SPLT's existing nature preserve to nearly 25,000 acres. [Stonyfield Organic](#), [Burton](#) and [Vail Resorts](#) are among the corporate sustainability leaders supporting this effort, as one element of their climate activities.

"Building and preserving healthy soils is a fundamental part of our commitment to being organic, and it's also a critical solution to climate change" said Lisa Drake, Director of Sustainability Innovation at Stonyfield Organic. "For 22 years, Stonyfield has offset the carbon impact of our energy use by investing in projects that capture or prevent the release of emissions that contribute to climate change. We are grateful to SPLT and NativeEnergy for preserving this important grassland ecosystem that will keep the carbon stored in the soil for generations to come."

Grasslands store one-third of the Earth's soil carbon. Yet, just one acre of grassland can store an estimated 50 tonnes of carbon or more, yet in the U.S., grasslands are at risk of conversion to cropland or development. When grasslands are converted to cropland, 50 percent to 70 percent of the carbon they hold is released as carbon dioxide (CO₂), contributing to global warming. With one million acres converted each year, half of the U.S. grassland carbon reservoirs have already been lost.

The 6,600 acre property faces a threat of conversion to cropland given that much of its soils are suitable for farming, and cropland rental rates for row crops are more than five times pastureland rates in Bent County, Colorado. A permanent conservation easement will preserve the property and prevent an estimated 190,000 tonnes of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere over the next 50 years — the equivalent of almost [208 million pounds of coal not burned](#).

[This project](#), developed with NativeEnergy's [HelpBuild](#) model, enables SPLT, a land trust dedicated to preserving shortgrass prairie, to acquire and conserve this 6,600 acre property and expand its existing nature preserve. HelpBuild brings early financing to organizations

before they acquire land and easements, better equipping them to conserve important remaining grasslands at a faster pace and on a larger scale.

“NativeEnergy’s unique investment structure provides financing when we need it most, enabling us to expand the nature preserve and accelerate our ability to conserve shortgrass prairie in the southern Great Plains,” explains Nicole Rosmarino, executive director of SPLT.

This project will help halt the loss of the remaining 50 percent of Colorado’s [shortgrass prairie](#) — an ecosystem being reduced at a higher rate than any other type of ecosystem in the state. With this expansion, important wildlife species and habitats benefit, including the American bison (the U.S. National Mammal). The bison, with black-tailed prairie dogs, will help limit shrub and tree encroachment, and preserve habitats for native swift fox, ferruginous hawks, burrowing owls, elk, pronghorn antelope, and the mountain plover.

The project will be verified against the [Climate Action Reserve’s Grassland Protocol](#). To assure the permanence of the carbon sequestration, the 6,600 acres will have a permanent conservation easement and a 150-year agreement with the Climate Action Reserve that prevents conversion to cropland, but allows existing livestock grazing to continue.

Companies supporting this project will receive verified carbon credits from the first 20 years of the 50-year crediting period. Burton and Vail Resorts’ support is linked to emissions associated with the [2019 Burton U.S. Open](#), held at Vail Mountain in Colorado, and furthers larger climate initiatives within both organizations. Also, by enabling this first purchase, Burton, Vail Resorts, Stonyfield Organic and other supporters also help ensure SPLT maintains its option to purchase additional lands, with aim to conserve an entire adjacent property.

To date, corporate sustainability leaders supporting the project include those with ambitious climate goals, a stated aim to preserve wildlife, biodiversity and habitat in the U.S., a footprint in Colorado, or a connection to the southern Great Plains landscape. “At this moment, companies are looking to take authentic, lasting, verifiable climate actions that advance their climate ambitions. As a public benefit corporation, we are excited to enable actions that also preserve soil health and conserve ecosystems,” states Jennifer Cooper, VP Client Strategy with NativeEnergy.

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