



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

December 1, 2025; Volume One

JOIN OUR 2026 WINTER PHOTO CONTEST!



HOW TO ENTER:

- Submit up to 5 photos to info@keeppagosawild.org
- Images must be in the Pagosa Springs area
- Winter captions only
- Please include your name and general location

PRIZES:

- Participants will be entered to win a Keep Pagosa Wild Gift Basket!
- Additional Recognition awards will also be given
- Deadline is February 20, 2026
- Winners Announced March 1, 2026

WELCOME TO PSFOTW!

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome, Friends.

Thank you for choosing to stand with the wild.

Pagosa Springs Friends of the Wild exists for one purpose:

To protect and preserve the land, the wildlife, and the quiet places that make this home.

We do not take that calling lightly.

We are not here for personal benefit or gain.

Our Founders and Directors are all volunteers, along with arborists to outreach professionals to filmmakers, every person who wants to be a Friend of the Wild offers their time freely.

No one is paid to do this work — because stewardship, in its truest form, is an act of devotion.

We are devoted because we came to Pagosa for its rivers, forests, and silence; its untamed ridgelines, dark skylines, and towering mountains.

We remain because we feel a responsibility to safeguard what is sacred —

to walk gently, to preserve generously, and to ensure that the wild remains wild for those who will follow after us.

In our monthly newsletters, we will share our progress, our learnings, and our ongoing work in regards to the restricted Land Acquisition Fund, habitat preservation efforts, volunteer stewardship, and the growing community of people who believe that wild land is not a resource — but an inheritance.

We honor this place by protecting it.

We honor the future by acting in the present.

Thank you for walking beside us.

May our work reflect gratitude.

May our actions protect what words alone cannot.

Together — we can help *Keep Pagosa Wild*.

Always,

Rachel Suh

Acting President



OUR FIRST MONTH IN MOTION

Roots planted. Growth underway. The forest is beginning.

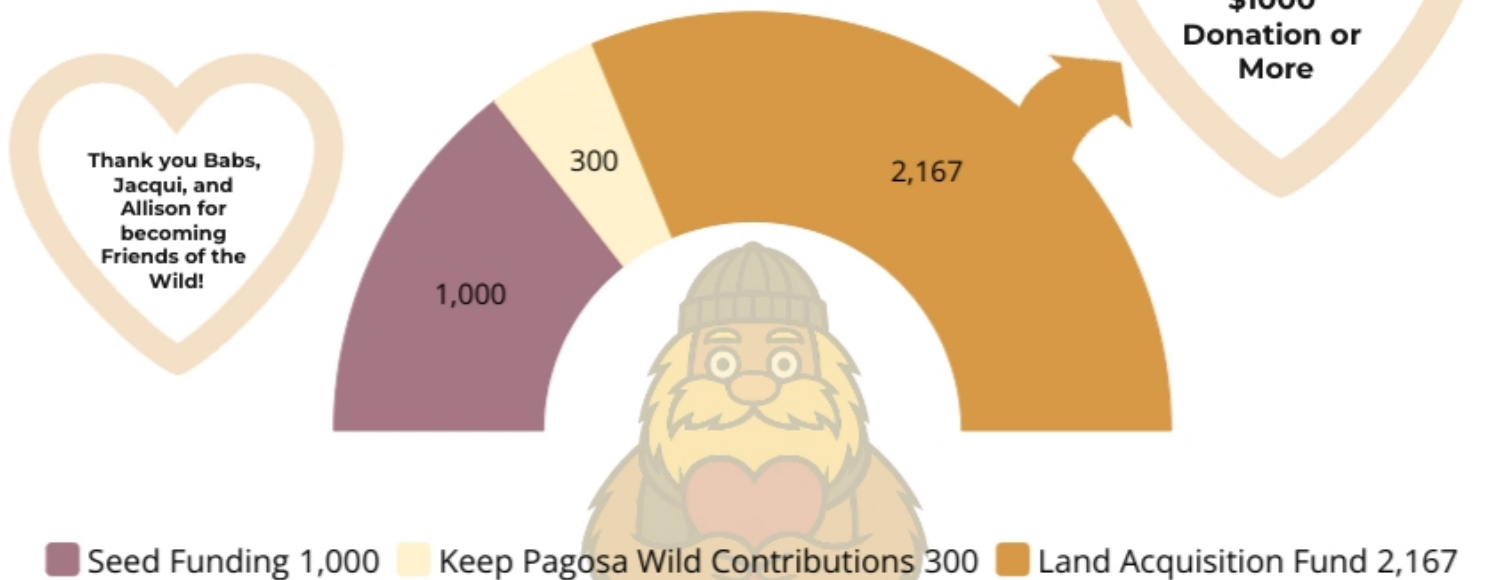
In just three weeks since opening our mission to the public, **Pagosa Springs Friends of the Wild** has already taken root. Support has come from neighbors, conservation-minded families, longtime residents, and those newly arrived who wish to *Keep Pagosa Wild*.

Our growth is not symbolic — it is measurable, alive, and already moving.

November Donations (in dollars)

Founders, Friends, and Warriors

\$3400+ Donated



502

 website views

191

 conversations

10

 volunteers engaged

25

 monthly subscribers

3

 partnering or collaboration opportunities

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR LAND WARRIORS

We are honored to recognize Barbara Tillman and Patricia Lash as the first official Pagosa Springs Friends of the Wild Land Warriors. Their early commitment strengthens the roots of our Land Acquisition Fund and advances the protection of open habitat and corridor-connected wild land right here in Pagosa Springs. By stepping forward at the beginning — when belief mattered most — their support will forever stand as part of the foundation of this movement.

As Land Warriors, they will receive:

- Exclusive Land Warrior gift items
- A Lifetime invitation to all PSFOTW events
- A designated seat at our Annual Thanksgiving Appreciation Dinner (Nov. 2026)
- An official numbered Land Warrior Certificate — acknowledging their designation, rank, and place in our history

**Thank you, Barbara Tillman — First Official Land Warrior
and Patricia Lash — Second Official Land Warrior.**

Your names mark the very beginning of this forest we are building together.

We honor you — and we stand with you for the wild.



THE LAND ACQUISITION FUND IS FOR LAND WARRIORS

The Land Acquisition Fund is the heartwood of **Pagosa Springs Friends of the Wild** — the place where belief becomes ground, where hope becomes acreage, where community support becomes habitat protected in perpetuity. It exists for a single purpose: to secure wild land and keep it wild long after we are gone.

Our vision is simple, steady, and long-viewed.

If sufficient resources are gathered, we intend to extend an offer to partner or purchase land within the proposed Pagosa West development — protecting critical open space before it becomes subdivided, fenced, or fragmented. If acquired, this land would be held in organizational trust under PSFOTW, preserved as open habitat for elk, bear, birds, and every quiet living thing that depends on uninterrupted land to survive.

This property may also qualify for conservation easements through partner organizations. Easements do not restrict preservation — they secure it. Through matching grants and co-easement agreements, we can build layers of protection that outlast politics, transition, or changing priorities.

In this way, stewardship does not rest on a single set of shoulders, fade with leadership change or hinge on any one life. Conservation carries forward through the organization itself — guided by directors, volunteers, and future caretakers who hold the same reverence for wild land.

Those who step forward do this not for themselves alone, but for the elk that will calve in safe meadows, for the children who will follow deer tracks under fresh snow, for rivers that will run clear long beyond our years. This work roots deeper than our lifetime. It grows slowly, like roots beneath winter — but when it rises, it rises strong.

**We protect and conserve
not for the shade we receive,
but for the shade we leave.**

The Land Acquisition Fund is that root system — quietly expanding beneath the surface, preparing for the moment it can break ground into something green and lasting. Every dollar strengthens the roots. Every donor deepens the soil. Every volunteer helps carry the work forward.

If we succeed — and we intend to — the Nature Park will be land held in trust, protected by easement, stewarded not by profit but by principle.

This is how forests endure and how communities become guardians.

This is how we **Keep Pagosa Wild**.



PSFOTW ORIGIN: TREE FARMERS ARISE

A stray poster on NEXT-DOOR, belittled those many of us here in the NEIGHBORHOOD as TREE-FARMERS, we who hold a view contrary to his of "Workforce Housing" at any cost. He obviously stood against any effort that would contemplate a movement away from subsidized housing toward conserving the near pristine parcel of Ponderosas and grazing meadows of the 99 acres that I now consider to be labeled GATEWAY WEST. I decided then and there that I am a TREE-FARMER!

My original visceral opposition to what has become commercially known as PAGOSA WEST II was in its absolute reliance on a quasi-PUBLIC avenue of infrastructure funding. I spent most of my life as a homebuilder and as a developer. I know what I know! The required funding for the ever-growing, expensive hard costs of infrastructure construction must be the top priority of the developer and is a very definite hurdle that must be cleared before any movement forward can be initiated. The massive outlay of capital required to acquire the target parcel of real estate is daunting, but it is more easily handled through the resulting titled ownership of the ground. Investors or lenders are given avenues to ownership through various legal documents; they receive something in exchange for their dollars.

Infrastructure funding is a much more nebulous affair; the investor is now looking toward return of dollars to be solely realized through the perception of value added by the infrastructure. There is nothing certain about this type of investment; if the original concept is not right, if it is not accepted by the marketplace, dollars invested in infrastructure may morph into liabilities. Once infrastructure is in-place, the flexibility of design and final purposing is set in stone. Investors and lenders understand the massive inherent risk of this phase of development.

This developer appears to be seeking public funds to kickstart infrastructure for its development. It's previous project, a Montrose medical plaza, a mix of commercial space paired with a PUBLIC medical facility seems to have followed this pathway. In its earlier effort on this Pagosa Springs parcel, the developer became engaged with Archuleta County for the purchase of a site for the proposed construction of a new Administration Building, to be built by the County upon a 5-acre parcel of this PAGOSA WEST II. In this instance, the County would serve as an initial purchaser of a small piece of the ground, facilitating the developer to consummate the purchase of the 90 plus acre balance.

The initial investment by the County would greatly override the inherent risk of the acquisition and development itself. To further offset the initial risk, the developer came up with a scheme placing the onus of "kick-starting" the infrastructure expenses for the development to the County; this infrastructure being necessary for the County to move forward with just its small parcel. These initial expenses when weighed against the limited County purchased site would be astronomical. But they would be of immense future value to the developer as he moved forward with the balance of his development. It would become a much more simplified exercise to acquire additional investors or lender funding after this initial step was in place. But WE THE PEOPLE stood, and our Archuleta County BoCC withdrew from this engagement...THANK YOU Warren Brown!

(I have never understood how our own employee, our Archuleta County Attorney, allowed our County Commissioners to sign on to such an open-ended, one-sided Letter of Intent; which to my understanding was prepared by the developer's own attorney. I forwarded copies of what was purported to be the governing document to a couple of very seasoned developers...one being a retired Colorado real estate attorney, the other being a successful retired multi-state developer. Both were immediately incredulous that such a document was ever accepted by our County Attorney.)

This partially Taxpayer funded incarnation, was soon followed on by an even more ambitious proposal; this being to attach the development to a nearly \$2M grant from the State of Colorado for the future construction of some future designed, but as yet undefined, "Workforce Housing", to be developed upon some portion of the tract now defined as PAGOSA WEST II.

To be clear...personally, I believe "Workforce Housing" to be a canard thrown out by our Denver politicians to direct large sums of TAXPAYER FUNDS to be directed into "subsidized" homes for high-middle class wage earners...many of whom here in Pagosa are employees of the Town or the County, the School District, Federal employees, or of the Pagosa Springs Medical Center. By funding housing under the mis-labeled auspices of Workforce Housing, these Publicly supported entities will experience a lessening of the eternal tension created by cries for higher wages.

As a very conservative business owning American since I was 21, I have an unshakable belief in the tenets of PRIVATE PROPERTY! KISCO, the purported owner of record for the parcel that I have dubbed as GATEWAY WEST...has the Constitutional right to ownership and profitability of its very large investment. But there is no inherent right for the potential developer to have any TAXPAYER FUNDS placed on the table for his benefit. This was where I stood when I was assailed with the term "TREE-FARMER". As a lifelong, nearly 75-year citizen of the State of Colorful Colorado, I hold the vast variety of God's flora and fauna that shares my homeland in high esteem. But in the past, I have never felt that an appellation as a CONSERVATIONIST was proper for me. But, today, in this iteration, I AM NOW AND FOREVER A TREE-FARMER!

The County and the Town missed the opportunity to acquire this parcel for a far less substantial cost, perhaps going all of the way back to the liquidation of Fairfield Resorts through bankruptcy back around 1990. But long-term forward thinking is not a trait conducive to the ongoing task of a politician struggling with how to keep his budget balanced to meet the very existential requirements of matching today's needs with today's revenue. But now we, as TREE-FARMERS, just may be presented with an opportunity to jump into the breach and remedy this missed opportunity.

The task before us is monumental...but if we are successful, the results will be the FOREVER MONUMENT of that band of forest and wet-land meadows, as inhabited by Pagosa's own families of Majestic Elk and Wonderous Deer. The successful measure of our effort will stand in perpetuity...a MONUMENT TO WE TREE FARMERS! I am committed to the challenge...if the Town and the State withdraw their support for PAGOSA WEST II, it is possible that we can rapidly achieve the required stature to be presented to KISCO as a viable back-up alternative. Perhaps our local real-estate professionals, and Shelly Low in particular, will present us as a deep community supported entity that has as its sole mission saving this GATEWAY WEST as home of our trees and of our animals; our mission is that of a Band of TREE-FARMERS!

**Bobby Sikes,
Founding Friend**





PAGOSA TREE FARMER SONG

(Fast-Pick Banjo Version)

Verse 1

When the mountains turn to gold
and the winds start blowin' cold,
you'll see Tillard stompin' down the rocky ridge!
With his beard full o' sticks,
and his crumpled flannel swish,
he's a half-myth fella with a look you just can't miss!

Chorus

He's the Pagosa Tree Farmer!
Growin' forests two-by-two!
Got sap on his elbows,
and a green chile or two!
He ain't quite man nor mountain,
but he's somethin' in between!
Oh, the Pagosa Tree Farmer—
keepin' Colorado green!

Verse 2

Little Mary zips on by,
tiny mittens to the sky,
sayin', "Mister, you got somethin' in your beard!"
He digs left, he digs right,
pulls a pinecone clean and light—
and the crowd busts out a cheerin' mountain jeer!

Chorus

He's the Pagosa Tree Farmer!
Growin' forests two-by-two!
Got sap on his elbows,
and a green chile or two!
He ain't quite man nor mountain,
but he's somethin' in between!
Oh, the Pagosa Tree Farmer—
keepin' Colorado green!

Bridge

Up the hill waits Rosa—
why, that's short for Ponderosa!
Cookin' biscuits, stew and brew,
and a green chile or two!
"Come on home!" she hollers sweet—
"Bring them roots and dusty feet!"
He laughs and plants another tree
before he heads on up to meet 'er!

Verse 3

If a sapling takes a fall,
Tillard hears that rescue call—
like a hero with a shovel and a grin!
With his hands of bark and dirt,
he'll fix up that little squirt,
and send it growin' tall and proud again!

Final Chorus

He's the Pagosa Tree Farmer!
Growin' forests two-by-two!
Got sap on his elbows,
and a green chile or two!
He ain't quite man nor mountain,
but he's somethin' in between!
Oh, the Pagosa Tree Farmer—
keepin' Colorado green!

Yee-haw!

MEET TILLARD: THE PAGOSA TREE FARMER

We were not ashamed of being called Tree Farmers — *we were inspired by it.*

With the help of my nine-year-old daughter, Tillard grew from a nickname into spontaneous folklore — a sasquatch-like figure with a full beard, a warm smile, and the spirit of the Pagosa community.

Through song and storybook, Tillard and his wife Rosa (short for Ponderosa, of course) have come to life.

What began as a joke became a symbol — one we look forward to sharing with you through our conservation work and future projects.

He stands for stewardship, for stories, and for the wild that raised him.

Watch our store at **KeepPagosaWild.org** for regularly released new Tillard items, including illustrated storybooks that take place in Pagosa Springs!

Rachel Suh
Founding Friend and
Acting President

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS AS WE RING IN THE NEW YEAR AT PSFOTW

From all of us at **Pagosa Springs Friends of the Wild**, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a peaceful holiday season.

May your winter be quiet, bright, and full of reasons to step outside into the stillness of the San Juans — the land we are working together so hard to protect.

OUR NEW YEAR AT PSFOTW

As we move into the new year, January will mark the beginning of our outreach phase. We will begin connecting with conservation groups, land trusts, grant-based alliances, and funding partners whose missions align with long-term protection of the Pagosa region. This next step will include grant research, writing, and submissions.

It is the first step toward larger opportunities — matching funds, easements, acquisition leverage, and long-term wildfire corridor protection — the groundwork needed to transform support into preserved land.

We look forward to the year ahead, the work ahead, and the continued growth of this community of guardians.

Thank you for being part of it.
Thank you for standing for the wild.

Always,
Rachel Suh
Acting President

VOLUNTARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Secretary: Niara Isley

Treasurer: Terri Pritchard

Acting President: Rachel Suh

HOW TO BE A FRIEND

Growth comes from more than funding — it grows through hands, hearts, and shared purpose. Anyone who feels called to protect the wild is welcome to stand with us.

You may join through:

Becoming a Land Warrior — major donors whose support accelerates acquisition and whose names will be engraved on our future Wall of Warriors once land is secured for the Nature Park

Grant Writing & Matching Funds Assistance — essential for easements, land trust partnerships, and leveraging every dollar into acres protected

Merchandise Support — spreading Tillard's presence in homes and businesses so the message of stewardship grows beyond us

Professional expertise & volunteer service — outreach, mapping, educational programming, partnership building, stewardship field work

Event & operations support — fundraising campaigns, restoration projects, corridor monitoring, communications

Whether someone gives financially, offers skill, or carries the story forward, each contribution protects habitat, migration pathways, and open space for future generations. The structure is collective, not individual — a legacy held in common trust.

Reach out to us at
KeepPagosaWild.org
or directly through email at
Conserve@KeepPagosaWild.org