



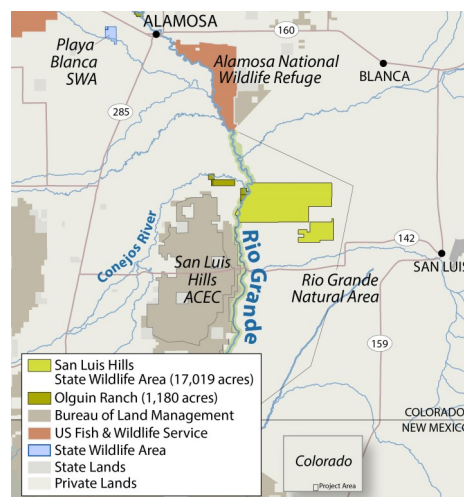
# WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

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Global Giving  
Project Report Photos  
June 2018

## *Upper Rio Grande, Colorado: A New Refuge for Fish, Wildlife and People in the San Luis Valley*

Colorado's San Luis Valley has a new state wildlife area, thanks to WRC's purchase of 17,019 acres along the upper Rio Grande. In April, we transferred those lands to Costilla County, reconnecting a community to a river that had been off-limits to the public. In the process, we conserved thousands of acres of outstanding habitat, a major boon to the fish, birds and wildlife of southern Colorado. The wide-open, rolling hills and shrublands of the property are a special place and were one of the last large, intact tracts of private land within the Rio Grande Natural Area. The river and surrounding uplands are crucial for imperiled animals like the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and for mule deer, pronghorn and Rocky Mountain elk. With the property now under county ownership, the lands will be managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as the new San Luis Hills State Wildlife Area and forever protected through a conservation easement held by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *Russ Schmitzer Photo*



## *Salmon River, Idaho: Returning water to vital Salmon River tributaries in the Sawtooth valley*

Early this spring, Western Rivers Conservancy celebrated a major success in Idaho's Sawtooth Valley when we conserved the 369-acre Goat Falls Ranch and transferred the ranch's water rights to the state to keep them permanently in-stream. The effort will improve flows in two critical headwater tributaries of the Salmon River and add 369 acres to the spectacular Sawtooth National Recreation Area. This marks the first time the Idaho Water Resources Board has acquired water rights for the purpose of dedicating them permanently in-stream, an approach we hope serves as a model for balancing agricultural needs with native species recovery. With cold water, restored habitat and improved flows, Goat Falls Ranch has a far greater chance at again becoming a haven for salmon, steelhead and wildlife, with benefits extending across the vast Snake and Columbia basins. *Kirk Anderson Photo*

