

# *CHANGING* SEASONS



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH SODJA

---

New projects, grants and changes are happening at BRLC!



**Bear River**  
**LAND CONSERVANCY**

# A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR - CASEY SNIDER

**“Historic,  
unprecedented,  
record-breaking.**

The world has thrown terms ad nauseum to define the current situation we all find ourselves in. Historic, unprecedented, record breaking. Everyone is grasping, trying to find a way to articulate these unique and unpredictable times, a year of loss and tragedy

that everyone hopes will never repeat. Here at the Bear River Land Conservancy we couldn't agree more. Though not to a deadly virus, we've lost one of our own, board member Crista Sorensen, whose departure we feel acutely every day. And we see the fear and tragedy in many of you who we work with, our state and federal partners, those who support us with your generosity, and in the faces of the landowners whose place and heritage we are working so hard to preserve.



It is in times like these that we find comfort in looking back to the land and to the places we are all working together on here at BRLC to save. There is comfort in knowing that because of your support we are saving farms that have been owned by families for generations. This year, in spite of all the challenges, has been a

record breaking one for us. Because of your generosity we have raised over \$6.5 million dollars in state and federal funds to protect nearly 6,000 acres in the Utah portion of the Bear River Watershed. To put that in perspective, after decades of trying, there are only 6,000 acres TOTAL currently under easement in our service area. Because of your help we will literally be doubling in the next few years the amount of conserved land. The speed of conservation is moving forward at an unprecedented scale.

We are also undergoing changes internally as well. We've secured funding for a joint position with Sagebrush Steppe, a land trust out of Southeast Idaho that also works on the Bear. This new person when hired will focus on helping us expand our work, speed up the rate of conservation, and ensure we protect the Bear at the watershed level, rather than simply going state by state.

As that new opportunity arises, there will be some changes for me as well. I'll be slowly sliding out as Executive Director. This job has been a dream of mine, but I will be taking a different role in the interest of my family. I will still be around and engaged with BRLC, but instead will wear a hat that allows me to pursue additional opportunities.

The future is bright and in a time where certainty is something rare and hard to find, I'm glad the future of those properties we are able to protect, because of you, will never ever again be in doubt.

Thank you for supporting us, particularly in times such as these. ■

**- CASEY SNIDER,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRLC**

# Remembering a Hero, CRISTA SORENSON

**SEPTEMBER 24, 1975 - APRIL 1, 2020**

*Editorial: There is no better tribute to our board member, dedicated volunteer, and dear friend than the words penned by her family. We have included the obituary here in its entirety. She was a dynamo, a trusted confidant, and a champion for conservation. In her honor we would encourage everyone to be a little brighter, a little kinder, and more accepting.*

*And to plant a garden, because that's what Crista would have done.*

Crista Lee Sorenson, 44, passed away on Wednesday, April 1, 2020, at the McKay-Dee Hospital.

Crista was born on September 24, 1975, in American Fork, Utah. She was a resident of Logan. She married Cory Wilkinson on March 21, 2015. Crista had a Master's Degree in Plant Science from Utah State University.

She is survived by her husband, Cory; her mother, Tammy Miller Hill of Carlsbad, CA; her father, Martin Sorenson of Snowflake, AZ; her daughters: Skye Paul Leis of Salt Lake City, UT; Kathryn Eternity Pearl Sorenson of Logan, UT; and Betty June Brown of Taylorsville, UT.

Crista moved to Logan in 2008 as a single mother looking to pursue a college degree. She instantly fell in love with the community and experience that USU

provided, as well as Logan city. As the years went by Crista became more than just a student and mother, she became one of the most outspoken activists, as well as the most dedicated and reliable volunteer. She is a pillar of this community; it would've never become what it is today without her. Crista was never one to judge, she welcomed everyone she met with unconditional love and respect. She opened her arms out wide to anyone and everyone who wanted or needed it.

Crista took her desire to make the world a better place, more seriously than anyone to date. She recently went back to school to become a teacher. She wanted to do more than be a crucial part of numerous organizations, she wanted to shape the minds of the future. She never felt that she was quit finished making a difference, she just wanted to keep going and doing more. That is what made her happy.

The family will not be holding a funeral at this time. A celebration of life will be arranged once global circumstances allow. The community will be informed the details of said celebration once details are decided. There will be a headstone at the Logan Cemetery where members of the community can pay their respects. Condolences may be shared with the family at

[www.allenmortuaries.com](http://www.allenmortuaries.com). ■



JESSE WALKER.PH

# Protecting Our History:

## *The Evans Property and the Bear River Massacre*

PHOTO BY DIRK BAKER

**All ranches are special, but one ranch in Cache Valley is more than land -- it's part of our history.**

“Maybe I’m just a grump old man now,” Cole said over the phone, “I don’t like a lot of buildings, I want to preserve open spaces, and this land is a critical winter range for deer and elk.”

Cole Evans worked for 30+ years in USU’s Animal Dairy and Veterinary Science Department before retiring. He now owns and manages a ranch in Avon, Utah and has worked with BRLC and our partners in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to preserve his beautiful 1115-acre property.

But this particular property has more than just scenery and critical habitat, it has a deep historical significance as well.

“That whole area was sacred,” said Darren Perry, former Chairman and current council member of the Shoshone Nation, “It had great hunting and fishing because of the streams and was also a travel corridor to the Ogden Valley for the Shoshone, and for many other tribes.”

Shoshone also historically made pemmican from deer meat and chokecherry

harvested in this area. While you can find chokecherries around the valley, it’s unusual to find them as concentrated as they are here. It is also very near the site of the January 29, 1863 Bear River Massacre.

Part of the property is called Sagwitch Basin, named after Chairman Perry’s 3rd-great-grandfather. “Sagwitch went to that spot all the time, including the day after the massacre. It was a place of retreat and protection,” he said.

“You know, the Iroquois wouldn’t make decisions without considering seven generations ahead. It’s about our future and what we’re leaving them. You see development all over the place. The fact we have people who are willing to put their land into something like this to preserve land for future generations is great,” Chairman Perry says.

Cole agrees, “I appreciate the opportunity to work with NRCS and BRLC to preserve the land. It’s important to have open areas that aren’t developed.”

We have successfully raised the necessary funds to protect this critical property. We anticipate working with the Evans family to protect this critical property over the next year. ■



PHOTO BY DIRK BAKER



PHOTO BY DIRK BAKER



PHOTO BY DIRK BAKER



PHOTO BY DIRK BAKER

# We are hard at WORK!

CHECK OUT UPDATES ON BRLC PROJECTS THAT ARE IN THE WORKS RIGHT NOW!

## COLDWATER RANCH

This project has been awarded funding through the Forest Legacy Program. We are now simply working on finalizing the necessary documentation to permanently protect over 600-acres in Blacksmith Fork.



PHOTO BY CASEY SNIDER

This project would be the first phase in protecting one of the largest ranches in Cache County.

## West Canyon and PRIME RANCHES

We have been approached by some landowners along the Little Bear River. We have received a portion of the necessary funding to protect over 3,000-acres in the area.



PHOTO BY CASEY SNIDER

This ranch was the first place in the state that protected in-stream flow through flow-leasing to protect coldwater fish, and is next to several large conservation easements in the area.

The Elkhorn Ranch was the first ranch established in Cache County over 150-years ago, with a herd of cattle sent north by Brigham Young. This property is surrounded by commercial and residential development on the south end of Logan. We have recieved a portion of the the funding to protect this critical property.

## ELKHORN RANCH



PHOTO BY CASEY SNIDER

We are currently working on expanding the size of our easement to the south of our existing land in Trenton, Utah. This project is in partnership with PacifiCorps and will contain wetland restoration as part of a mitigation plan from Green Canyon High School. Construction of the wetlands and enclosure of the easement is scheduled to happen this fall.

## BEAR RIVER BOTTOMS



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH SODJA

# We can't do it without YOU.

FLIP TO THE BACK COVER TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN HELP US DO OUR CRITICAL WORK

## 2020 Orchids at Mendon Meadows

For most of us 2020 will be a year we'd like to forget, but it was an excellent year for orchids at BRLC's Mendon

Meadow Preserve. The volunteers who map and monitor Ute Ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) orchids at our Mendon property found 608 flowering specimens, our third-high count in the eight years since BRLC acquired the property.

Mendon Meadow is a 30-acre farmland parcel at the southeast corner of Mendon. The easternmost 11 acres of irrigated pasture hosts one of the nation's most robust populations of Ute Ladies'-tresses, listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a Threatened species. Every August and early September, a team of dedicated volunteers weekly surveys the property in search of small, delicate orchids, flagging each one and marking its location with a field GPS unit donated by Juniper Systems. This year, 11 people helped with the count, donating 68 total hours onsite to this ongoing scientific effort.

By tracking both numbers and locations, we can learn not only how well the population is doing, but if it's expanding or contracting in area and where plants are thriving best. Numbers fluctuate - in 2017 we counted nearly 2,000 but found only 137 the following year - and it's not clear why. This year Mark Brunson and Brian Dixon, who have counted ULTs at Mendon since the beginning, were invited to join a USFWS advisory team as the agency conducts a Species Status Assessment for Ute Ladies'-tresses. Results of that effort will help determine whether the species is recovering range-wide.

- MARK BRUNSON

PHOTO BY MARK BRUNSON



PHOTO BY DIRK BAKER

# Once it's gone, it's gone Forever...



## GROWTH IS UNPRECEDENTED...

Property values across Northern Utah are increasing exponentially and our economic window to protect the Bear River Watershed is shrinking every day. It is more critical than ever to work on protecting these wonderful places. Check out our website to learn how you can leave a legacy or donate to BRLC at:

**BEARRIVERLANDCONSERVANCY.ORG**



**Bear River**  
LAND CONSERVANCY

# Become a Friend of the Land, today!



Dear Northern Utah Neighbor,

As the population continues to grow in Box Elder, Rich and Cache counties, our mission to, “conserve and enhance private lands for wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, land and trails of recreational or historical significance, watersheds, and critical vistas, using education, conservaiton easements and sound management, to benefit the people of northern Utah, today and in perpetuity.” is more critical than ever.

If you feel the work BRLC is doing is important, please consider becoming an annual “Friend of the Land” member today. Thank you, and happy trails!

- Casey Snider and the BRLC Team

## Donation & Membership Sign-up Form

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS, CITY, STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

- \$2,500+ Steward of the Land
- \$1000 Land Benefactor
- \$500 Land Patron
- \$250 Land Sustainer
- \$100 Land Saver
- <\$100 Land Friend
- (Membership \$20+)

Please send your payment to:

PO Box 4565  
Logan, UT 84323-4565

**Or pay online at**  
[BearRiverLandConservancy.org/donate](https://www.BearRiverLandConservancy.org/donate)