

*La Plata County*  
**CONNECTIONS**

FALL 2021

**THE MANY  
FACETS OF THE  
DEPARTMENT  
OF HUMAN  
SERVICES**

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**LA PLATA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS:  
TRADITIONAL ROOTS WITH A BRIGHT FUTURE**

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**ASPAAS RANCH: A LIVING PIECE OF HISTORY**

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*La Plata County*  
Colorado

ACCOUNTABILITY · INTEGRITY · RESPECT

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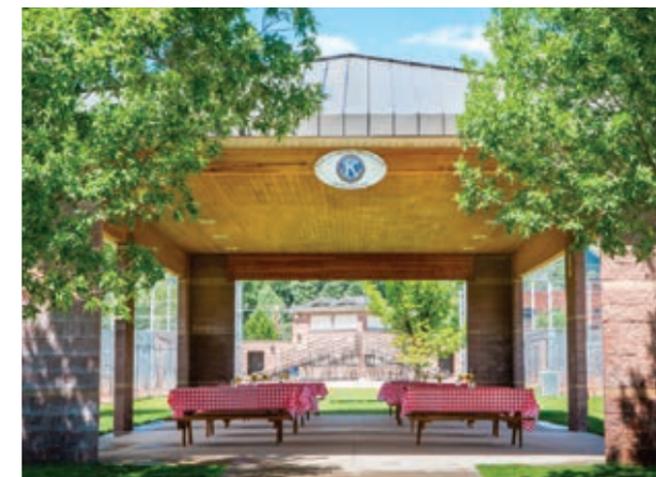
**WELCOME!**

Hello again, La Plata County residents and visitors! We hope you enjoy the Fall 2021 edition of *La Plata County Connections* as we introduce you to the people who make La Plata County run smoothly and the many programs and services available to our residents.

This month we'll introduce you to another group of dedicated and talented staffers, including members of our Building & Planning department as well as the many services and facilities available at the La Plata County Fairgrounds. We're also proud to share a few items of particularly good news – our Finance Department aced its recent audit and a recent poll shows increasing confidence in the county's fiscal responsibility as a whole. We strive to achieve success in building trust in our community through integrity, accountability and respect throughout our many departments, and it's good to hear we're on the right track!

There's also a great read on the county's Historic Preservation Review Commission and the fascinating story of the Aspaas Ranch. We'll also take a look at the priceless commodity of water and water rights in La Plata County.

We're proud of the work these and the more than 400 other county employees do year-round to make living in La Plata County a true privilege. Our team is dedicated to this community and we are excited to share these stories with you in each edition of *Connections*. Thanks for reading, and enjoy!



**LA PLATA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Clyde Church, *District 1*

Commissioner Marsha Porter-Norton, *District 2*

Commissioner Matt Salka, *District 3*

**2021 COUNTY GOALS**

**ENSURE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE**



**Objective:** Implement initiatives that protect and support public health, safety and welfare for all La Plata County citizens and staff.

**BUILD CITIZEN AWARENESS, TRUST AND SUPPORT THROUGH SUSTAINED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INCREASED TRANSPARENCY**



**Objective:** Plan, develop, fund and implement a strategic community engagement campaign that communicates the county's role, mission and services provided to residents of La Plata County.

**ENCOURAGE AND DIVERSIFY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**



**Objective:** Plan, develop, fund and implement policies and practices that encourage, foster and remove barriers to economic development.

**IMPROVE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY FOR COUNTY SERVICES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ASSETS**



**Objective:** Develop plans and funding strategies to maintain and improve infrastructure and ensure county capacity to provide quality services to residents and visitors.



# CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

## The Many Facets of the DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Second only in size to the Sheriff's Office, the Department of Human Services accounts for about 19% of all county employees. Within this department are many programs that assist specific groups of the community. The overarching department encompasses senior services, veteran services and human services, and is led by Martha Johnson, who has been with the county for about 30 years. "My goal is to keep things running as smoothly as possible for our community members and our staff. I want them to be able to focus on providing the services that our community needs and deserves without having to deal with difficulties or barriers," she said.

Working in human services can be a difficult and emotionally exhausting job at times. Still, Johnson, along with her dedicated staff, recognizes that many of the people they are helping may be experiencing the worst time of their lives. "We can provide the information they're looking for fairly and objectively with empathy and just listen to them," Johnson said.



The Child Support Services unit is managed by Meri Borst, who has been in the role for 15 years. She oversees a team of four technicians, a bookkeeper and their caseloads. The La Plata County Child Support Services caseload hovers around 1,400 ongoing cases.

When a parent applies with Child Support Services (CSS), they will get help locating an absent parent and establishing a child support order and paternity if necessary, as well as modification of an existing order. CSS is probably most known for enforcement of child support orders with many tools at their disposal for identifying sources of income and garnishing them, as well as intercepting unemployment benefits and income tax returns. All payments are made to the Family Support Registry, the payment processing center for Colorado Child Support.

*"The end goal is to make a difference and improve the lives of the kids."*

Borst commented on how many of their interactions involve working with parents and helping them with employment and education opportunities. "People think of us as enforcers and heavy-handed, but lately, the state has been turning towards more family-centered services," she said. This perspective helps ensure that the paying parent is, in fact, able to pay support.

"A big goal of ours is to reach out to people and find out why they aren't paying and if there is anything we can do, as far as referring them to employment supports, or encourage them to apply for available benefits," Martha Johnson added. The end goal is to make a difference and improve the lives of the kids.



**If your circumstances warrant child support and you wish to open a case, you can call 970-382-6144 or fill out an online application at [childsupport.state.co.us](https://childsupport.state.co.us).**

# ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Charmaine Summers began working with the county as an intern about 14 years ago. After spending seven years as a foster care and adoption caseworker, she worked her way up to become Supervisor of Foster Care, Adoptions, Guardianships, and Adult Protective Services.

La Plata County Adult Protective Services has three caseworkers that specifically evaluate adult protection cases. When they receive reports of alleged abuse or neglect of at-risk adults, they determine, based on the details of the report, if the individual meets the following criteria:

1. Are they an “at-risk adult”?
2. Is there mistreatment, which could include self-neglect, abuse, caretaker neglect, exploitation or an allegation of a harmful act?

“At-risk adults” are defined as individuals 18 years of age or older who are susceptible to mistreatment or self-neglect because they are unable to perform or obtain services necessary for their health, safety, or welfare or they lack sufficient understanding or capacity to make or communicate responsible decisions concerning their person or affairs.

Summers and her team focus mainly on providing resources and services to people considered “at-risk.” “Our

purpose is to see if we can improve the quality of someone’s life by connecting them to services and resources, such as Meals on Wheels, appointments with medical professionals, housing resources, needed medical equipment, etc. APS caseworkers complete full assessments to determine their client’s needs, and then implement a case plan that outlines action steps required to obtain success,” Summers said.

“Our purpose is to see if we can improve the quality of someone’s life by connecting them to services and resources ...”

Partnership with many local resources, including Community Connections, Inc. (CCI), Axis Health System, homeless shelters, nursing homes, banks, veterans’ associations, the court system, hospitals and other organizations, is vital in obtaining success for at-risk adults. In the cases that allege potential criminal activity involving an at-risk adult, APS will investigate alongside law enforcement.

Mandatory reporters must report suspected physical or sexual abuse, caretaker neglect or exploitation of an at-risk elder (age 70 and older) to law enforcement within 24 hours after making the observation or discovery. In addition, mandatory reporters are urged to report suspected physical or sexual abuse, caretaker neglect, exploitation or self-neglect of an at-risk adult (age 18 and older) to APS.

**If you suspect abuse or neglect of an adult you know, call the Colorado hotline at 844-264-5437.**



# CHILD PROTECTION – INTAKE

Child Protection involves two units: an intake unit and an ongoing unit. The intake unit performs assessments, meets with families and works with the families to make changes so any child safety concerns are addressed. The ongoing unit steps in if a child is unsafe and the family is unwilling or unable to make the necessary changes for child safety. The court may be involved, and a caseworker works with the family on building safety, having visits, coordinating foster care and making referrals for services or community resources.

Jessica Dalla-Cundiff is the Intake and Family Meetings Supervisor, meaning she oversees investigations for child abuse and neglect concerns. When suspicions of child abuse or neglect are reported, many steps and criteria need to be evaluated before action is taken. The investigation, performed by the intake specialists, determines if there are any safety concerns based on the definitions of child abuse and neglect that are part of the Colorado statutes.

Most of the time, the investigation reveals that there is not an immediate concern. In these situations, the intake specialists can help provide support and take a more preventative approach. “We are not working on the family, but working with the family,” Dalla-Cundiff said. “It’s about how we can work with you and support you to make this a better community because it takes all of us.”

After suspected child abuse or neglect is reported, there’s a lot that goes into determining the next steps. A RED team (Review, Evaluate, Decide), just as with Adult Protective Services, evaluates the case based on state statutes. A family may be at risk depending on how much prior involvement they’ve had with the child welfare system, the age of parents, number of children, history of domestic violence, homelessness and disruptive relationships within the household. Some of these risk factors can be improved with a little support, and more often than not, concerns are mitigated within 60 days and the case never progresses to the ongoing unit.

The intake unit includes a caseworker dedicated to facilitating family meetings throughout a family’s involvement, from intake through case closure. Facilitated family meetings (FFMs) are a tool employed internationally for over forty years and implemented by the Colorado Child Welfare System ten years ago as



another approach to improving partnerships with families. They are an opportunity for families, natural supports, paid professionals and whomever else the family wishes to be involved to come together and discuss safety goals as well as changes the family can make to reach them. Facilitated family meetings are encouraged as beneficial tools, but are never required. Colorado-specific research shows a higher chance of reunification and success rates within child welfare cases where regular and timely FFMs occur.

There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes in the intake unit, and Dalla-Cundiff and her team work hard to evaluate every detail, provide effective support and resources, and respond in a way that aligns with the Children’s Code in the Colorado Revised Statutes. This approach helps to ensure that families receive the support they need to create a safe and healthy home environment for their children.

**If you suspect child abuse, call the Colorado hotline at 844-264-5437.**

# SMALL COMMUNITIES, BIG IDEAS

NICOLE CLARK (LEFT),  
DARRIN PARMENTER,  
AND ANGELA FOUNTAIN



## CSU EXTENSION AND 4-H CLUBS SERVE THE LA PLATA COMMUNITY WITH EDUCATION AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES

When Guy Wright joined La Plata's 4-H club, he was a shy 11-year-old with some social anxiety – definitely not the type of kid that would volunteer to speak in front of people. After getting involved with the club and spending time with kind and encouraging students his age, Guy's confidence began to grow.

He eventually even joined the livestock judging team, where kids are tasked with evaluating cattle, sheep, and goats and defending their reasoning in front of a panel of judges. They participate in livestock judging events all over the country, and this year Guy was part of the team that qualified for the international competition in Scotland. He also earned a scholarship to college.

"We help raise amazing kids that grow up to do amazing things," said Angela Fountain, the 4-H Youth Development Agent. "I'm a little biased, but I believe the kids that do 4-H are different – they know how to look people in the eye, talk to adults, they're just really good kids."

Guy is one of hundreds of youth that participate in 4-H in La Plata County, where they learn, grow and ultimately serve the community. 4-H (which stands for head, heart, hands, health) is a nationwide hands-on youth development program that provides a supportive setting for youth to mature through volunteerism, leadership and the learning of valuable life skills. La Plata's 4-H clubs focus on livestock, horses, crafts or STEM, but behind each class is the opportunity to learn and grow as a person through servicing the community.

"We believe in developing young people who are empowered, confident, hard-working, determined, responsible and compas-

sionate – seeing a world beyond themselves so that they have the lifelong skills to succeed in college and career," said La Plata CSU Extension Director Darrin Parmenter.

In addition to 4-H, the CSU Extension office in La Plata offers classes and enrichment opportunities in agriculture, horticulture, and consumer and family education, among others, for people of all ages.

The U.S. Congress established what is now called an "extension" in 1914 as a way to offer educational opportunities to rural

While many of the classes have changed, this basic mission is still very much apparent in the day-to-day operations of the CSU Extension today.

Darrin studied at two land-grant universities – Montana State University and Cornell University – and has worked at the University of Florida and CSU, also both land-grant universities. Through his experience, he saw the difference an extension could make in the daily lives of so many people, which was ultimately why he decided to commit to the organization.



communities and make the research, information and expertise available on campuses accessible to more people. They taught things like farming, ranching and food preservation, with the overall goal of improving the quality of life in rural communities.

"I witnessed the potential impact we could have for a small-scale vegetable producer, a new landowner or a kid trying to raise an animal and a kid seeing the self-confidence gained when put in a leadership role," he said.

# Traditional Roots with a Bright Future



## LA PLATA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

### THE WOMAN AT THE HELM

Emily Spencer is one of the newest county employees, having started as the La Plata County Fairgrounds General Manager in January 2020. While she did face an unconventional first year, she is still bursting with excitement and passion for future events. She has over 15 years of experience managing group sales and events for a local, high-end hotel, but was drawn to the fairgrounds because she recognized a beautiful event space underutilized. "I was excited to come to the fairgrounds and the county because of the need for event spaces here, and I think that what the fairgrounds can offer is generally unknown to La Plata County residents," she said.

Spencer handles contracting and booking for all of the events and coordinates the day-

to-day management of staff and resources. Her team consists of her assistant, Jodi Zuber, four full-time maintenance employees and three nighttime employees that assist with event setup. Together, they can host upwards of 15 events per day!

### WHERE WE STARTED

The fairgrounds are a special place that embodies the roots of La Plata County's rich ranching history. The traditional role of the fairgrounds, Spencer explained, is to assist with ranching and agriculture. Families in the area that are still ranching can come to Darrin Parmenter, CSU Extension Director and Horticulturist, for help with a soil test kit, identifying unknown plants, problem-solving and more. The fairgrounds are also the location of



4-H competitions during the county fair at the end of every summer.

The fairgrounds are also a convenient, in-town location for families to board their horses and have about 30 stalls, "although most folks rent out two or three," Spencer explained. "The horse can live in two with a wall removed and then use the third to keep hay and tack." Those who keep their horses at the fairgrounds form a tight-knit community and help each other out.

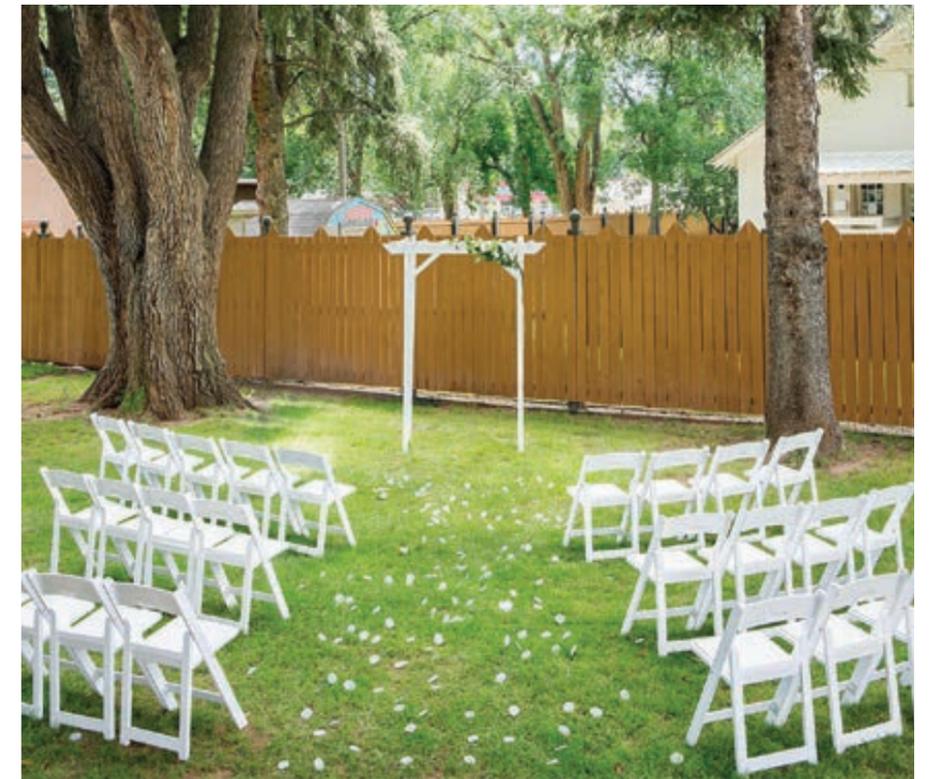
Horses, agriculture, and ranching will always have a place at the La Plata County fairgrounds, even as it expands in other directions and grows with the community.

### WHERE WE'RE GOING

While it is a place to celebrate history and tradition, the fairgrounds have even more to offer than county fairs! It is a beautiful and affordable place to host events of all sizes. Plus, those renting out event spaces have many choices when it comes to food, drinks or decorating. Patrons are welcome to bring their own food or have a caterer of their choice bring food in, and serve whatever they like.

Spencer does admit that she feels the picnic pavilion is the ideal place to rent if booking for a private event. Covered and able to hold 60 people, it's the perfect location for a baby shower or business meeting.

In the future, Spencer hopes to not only encourage private events to utilize the fairgrounds but dreams of adding community events too! She pictures outdoor music concerts in the arena, letting local restaurants rent out the kitchen spaces during baseball tournaments or rodeos to serve food, and outdoor festivals for everyone to enjoy.



"I want the fairgrounds to serve the people of La Plata County affordably and beautifully for all of the important events in their lives, from weddings to baby showers, company picnics and holiday parties," Spencer said. If you are interested in booking event space at the fairgrounds, you'll work with Spencer directly.

ON THE LEFT, THE KIWANIS LA PLATA COUNTY PICNIC AREA. ABOVE, THE ELM COURTYARD SET UP FOR A WEDDING CEREMONY. PHOTOS BY: ILLUMINARTS

PICNIC SHELTER  
THAT SEATS  
**60**  
PEOPLE

For more information or to book an event at the Fairgrounds, call Emily Spencer at 970-382-6468.

RODEO ARENA  
THAT SEATS  
**1,500**  
PEOPLE

**10,000**  
SQUARE FOOT  
EXHIBIT HALL

**30**  
HORSE STALLS

**2** BASEBALL  
FIELDS

**6** MEETING  
ROOMS

KEY STATS

# COUNTY RESIDENTS OFFER VITAL INSIGHTS IN SPRING SURVEY

## RESULTS SHOW A JUMP IN RESIDENT CONFIDENCE ALONG WITH OVERDEVELOPMENT CONCERNS

The Spring 2021 La Plata County Survey results are in, and they demonstrate a growing sense of trust and confidence in the county by its residents.

This was the second annual La Plata County survey (the first was in 2019, and last year's survey was canceled due to COVID-19). It was conducted April 21-27 of this year. Three hundred registered voters from various key demographics throughout the county participated in either the online survey or a live phone interview. The margin of error was 5.66 percent.

The goal of the survey was not only to produce a needs assessment, but also to gauge which areas the community finds most critically important so that county staff and commissioners can better target and prioritize improvements.

"We value our residents' input and feedback, and the survey is just one of the many tools we're using to hear directly from them," said County Manager Chuck Stevens. "It's designed to gauge how we're doing and where to focus our efforts."

The results showed a 10-point jump in confidence in the county and its ability to spend taxpayer funds wisely.

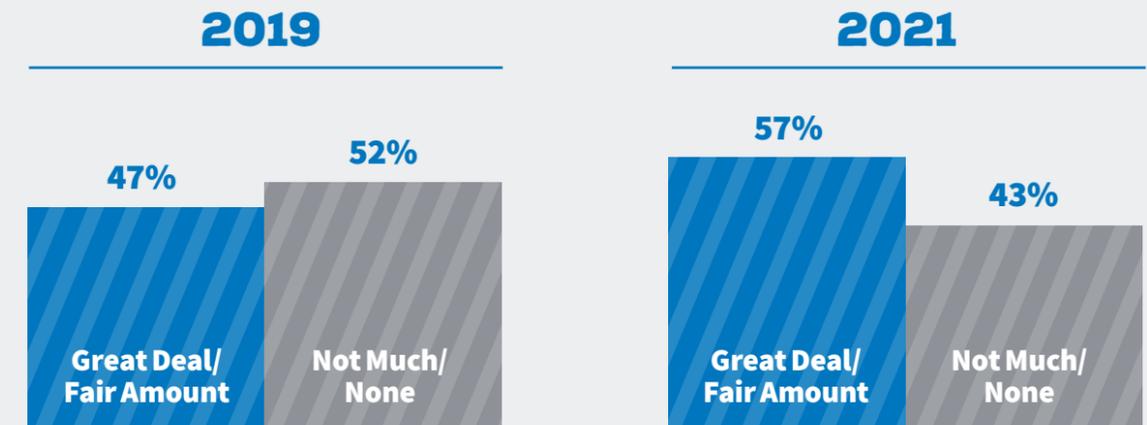
Stevens attributes the jump in trust to the county's deliberate efforts to improve communication and transparency between the county and residents, such as expanding the opportunities for public comment on policies and projects, offering more ways to deliver feedback, and encouraging resident participation in meetings.

The county has also increased and improved its direct communication to residents with the addition of *La Plata County Connections* magazine, the budget mailer, and utilizing social media and other tools for disseminating information to residents.

Other key findings from the survey include that the number one area of concern for residents is traffic and overdevelopment, followed by housing. This information will help guide the board and staff as they establish county priorities.

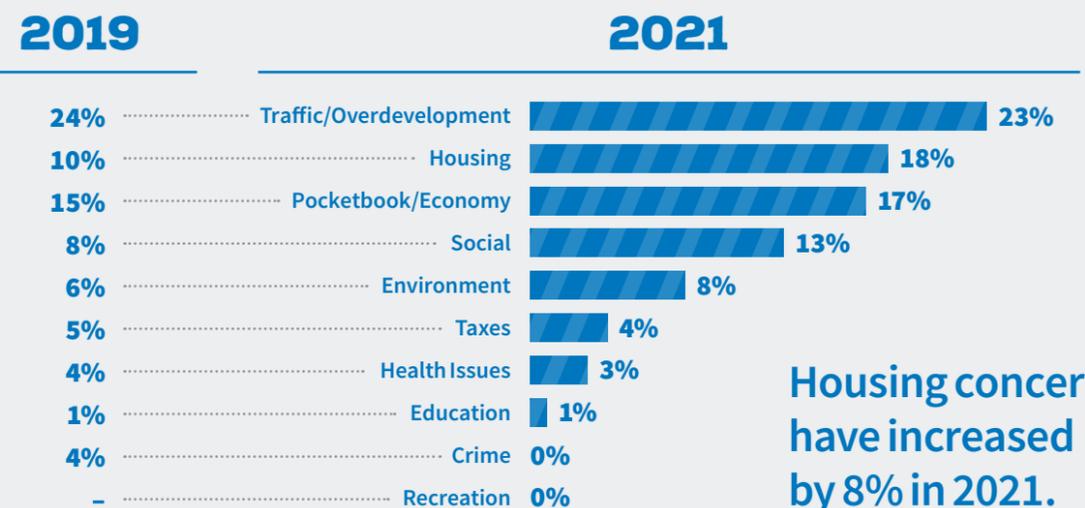
"We're pleased with the direction these survey results are going in, but know we still have a lot of work to do," Stevens said. "We want to see another big jump in confidence next year."

### How much confidence do you have in La Plata County to spend taxpayer funds wisely?



2021 shows a 10% improvement in confidence.

### What would you say is the single most important problem facing La Plata County?



Housing concerns have increased by 8% in 2021.

### Are things in La Plata County going in the right direction?



## ROBERT BOWIE, SENIOR PLANNER AT LA PLATA COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Robert Bowie has been with the La Plata Planning Department since 1998. “I come from a family of planners,” he says, “and I became interested in shifting to that field after studying architecture.” Robert received his master’s degree in planning from the University of Colorado Denver after moving to the state in 1985. He came to

Colorado for the program but also for the culture and climate.

As a senior member of the planning department, Robert has helped and worked with a wide range of individuals and groups and on a multitude of projects. One of his priorities is helping the community of La Plata County find a balance between growth and preservation.



“Our job as planners is to help ensure that growth happens responsibly while maintaining assets that the community values,” he says. “All of our work involves working with the community to make sure we have their input and guidance.”

A more recent challenge is the surge in demand for homebuilding – Robert wants to be sure residents and investors can build positively and sustainably. His latest projects include several proposed real estate developments.

*“I enjoy assisting the public by answering questions. They have questions and concerns, and it’s very rewarding to help them navigate that.”*

According to Robert, “This is a real community, meaning that there are many people who live here year-round, who like the fact that it’s family-friendly with a variety of activities. . . and they have concerns about affordability, about the area changing and becoming too exclusive.”

When asked what his favorite part of his job is, he responds:

“First and foremost, I enjoy assisting the public by answering questions. The people we serve include everyone from mom-and-pop business owners to out-of-town developers, to property owners looking to add accessory dwellings. They have questions and concerns, and it’s very rewarding to help them navigate that.”

## LA PLATA BUILDING DEPARTMENT: Fostering a Spirit of Community

Todd Beattie carries two titles: Building and Code-Enforcement Manager and Floodplain Manager.

While the first one might sound a little intimidating, Beattie makes it clear that one of the La Plata Building Department’s main goals is to have a good working relationship with the community.

The structural integrity of buildings and the safety of building occupants are paramount concerns of the Building Department and the focus is on education, responsibility, and building trust and rapport within the community.

The Building Department has an almost 50-year history of going above and beyond to serve the county’s residents. “I learned a lot in the three years I was able to work alongside Butch Knowlton”, Beattie says. “His 44



years of experience is impossible to replace; however, one important thing we can and will maintain is the great relationship with the community established since the start of this department.”

Since the pandemic, the department has been busier than ever, with new residents moving in and new construction projects underway. “The construction industry has been busier than ever,” Beattie says, “but we’ve adapted and our team looks forward to coming to work each day to provide the best service we can.” The county continues to grow, but according to the Building Department team, the community spirit is as strong as ever.

*“The construction industry has been busier than ever,” Beattie says, “but we’ve adapted and our team looks forward to coming to work each day to provide the best service we can.”*

# Meet DR. HELEN RUTH ASPAAS

**H**elen Ruth Aspaas, a retired geography professor, has been a Historic Preservation Review Commission (HPRC) member since 2018.

It all started when she successfully added her ranch home, near Hesperus, to the historic register. It was a move Aspaas made after years of traveling between Colorado and her university job back on the East Coast. “The nice thing about the academic world,” she says, “is that you can pack up your books and bring them home for the summer.”

Now that Aspaas lives year-round in La Plata County, she enjoys dedicating her time to showing and teaching others about the remarkable historical landmarks throughout the county – including her own home.

As a commission member, her responsibilities include helping to create itineraries for driving tours, acting as a tour guide and helping applicants who are interested in having their properties receive historic designation.

Aspaas makes no secret of the fact that she loves what she does: “I work with really bright people who are dedicated to preserving the visual history of La Plata County and educating others about it.”

She is passionate about preserving historic sites for future generations and encourages anyone whose property might qualify to apply for the historic register. Aspaas adds that she has personally helped others through the process and loves doing so.



## ASPAAS RANCH: A LIVING PIECE OF HISTORY

Dr. Helen Ruth Aspaas today resides on the same 149-acre ranch as her ancestors did when they immigrated from Norway in the 19th century. The picturesque white ranch home has managed to keep its fundamental structure intact while being passed down from generation to generation.

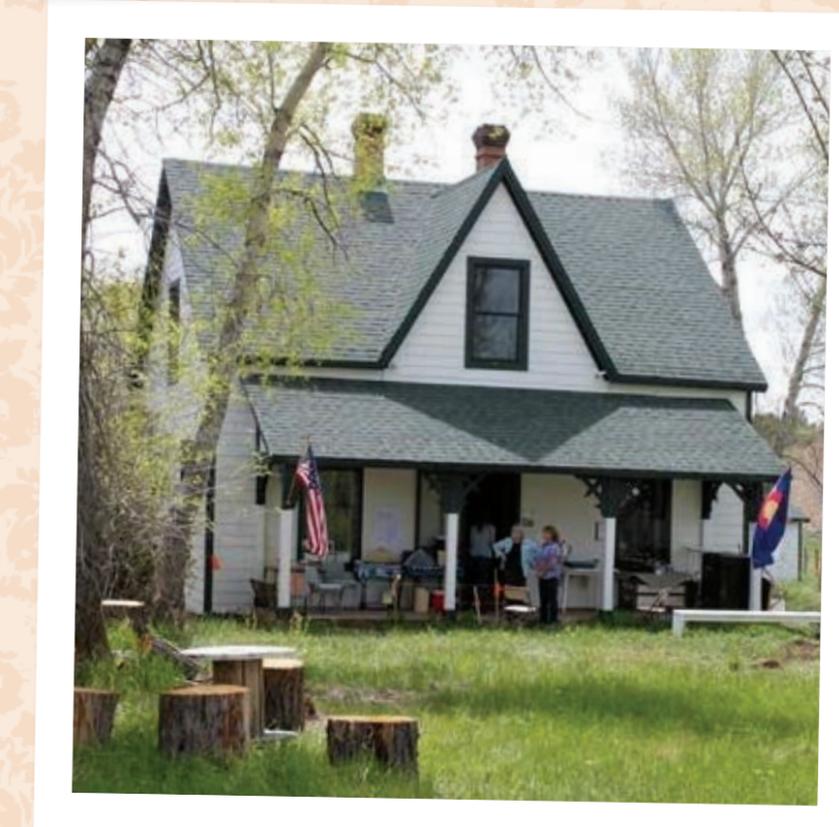
Even before Aspaas’s great-grandparents and their children moved in, the house already had history behind it. Originally, it was an officers’ quarters based in Fort Lewis. In the early 1890s, it became a boarding home.

When the Aspaas family acquired the house under the Homestead Act of 1898, they moved the structure to their ranch. This, Aspaas reveals, required nothing less than a feat of physical ingenuity. The building was moved onto a series of rolling logs and pulled by a mule team a mile and a half down the road!

Aspaas’s great-grandmother, Annette, was both a well-educated and resourceful woman. To continue to make ends meet, she and her family converted the downstairs part of the home into a post office. “She became an important and beloved figure in the community,” Aspaas explains. “Because she could read and write in English, French, and German as well as Norwegian, she could help others who were less literate with reading and writing their mail. She was also hospitable to her Ute neighbors.”

Helen Ruth Aspaas has no direct descendants of her own, but she plans for Aspaas Ranch to remain a preserved historical site long after she’s gone.

“My dream,” she says, “is that flora and fauna here will always be protected, and the house will serve as a retreat for women artists and academics who need a place where they can work on important projects.”



### LA PLATA COUNTY’S HISTORIC PRESERVATION

To learn more about La Plata County’s Historic Preservation and how to apply, visit: [co.laplata.co.us/services/community\\_development\\_services/planning/historic\\_preservation/index.php](https://co.laplata.co.us/services/community_development_services/planning/historic_preservation/index.php)

# THE FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT TO WATER

Farmers, ranchers and others with a beneficial use can access La Plata County’s fought-for water rights

La Plata County has a long history of farming and ranching, and thanks to La Plata County’s senior water rights, that tradition is protected and supported for years to come.

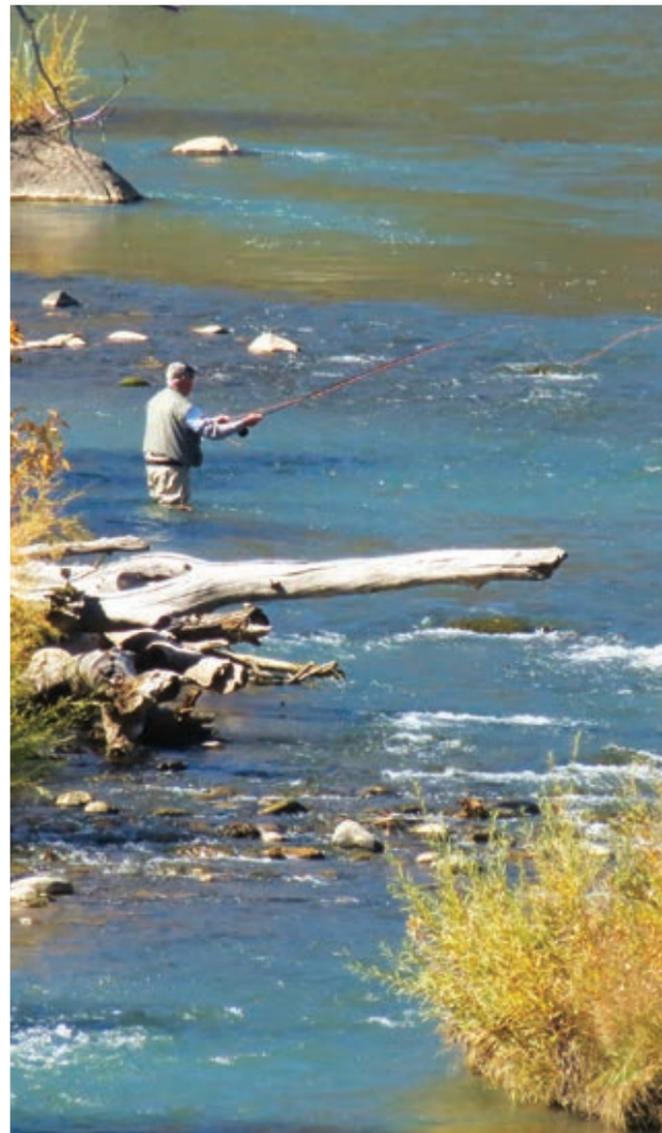
In 2007, La Plata County fought to obtain water rights in two water court cases on behalf of its citizens, to protect the precious resource for historical uses like agriculture and ranching. The county’s efforts made it much simpler and more economical for those in need of water for beneficial uses to obtain it and gave these users priority over Durango’s recreational in-channel diversion (RICD) water rights.

“Water is a limited resource, and its proper use is a vital issue affecting La Plata County and each one of its citizens,” the board of County Commissioners stated in a comprehensive priority list. “La Plata County relies on water not only for municipal and industrial uses but also depends on it to support robust agricultural, recreational and resource development industries and to protect precious environmental resources.”

The two cases are known as the 99 Water Rights and 127 Water Rights. The 99 Water Rights are administered solely by the county, and the 127 Water Rights are co-administered by the county and the Southwestern Water Conservation District. They can both be obtained for qualifying uses by applying with the county.

Qualifying uses include agriculture, irrigation, manufacturing, geothermal, commercial use and firefighting, among others. Each use has a specific amount of water allocated.

“La Plata County and SWCD have spent a fair amount of money and a lot of time first to acquire these water rights and then to implement programs based on these water rights,” said Assistant County Attorney Kathleen Moore. “While the 99 Water Rights application process is more involved, this is due to nexus with the county’s planning efforts. As an organization and a community, we have relied on these water rights for planning purposes.”



While it may sometimes seem that area rivers, including the Animas River seen here, provide plenty of needed water, regional communities must constantly strike a balance to ensure there’s also enough for fishing, agriculture and recreational needs.

## COUNTING ON LA PLATA COUNTY

A third-party audit builds trust and transparency in the county

La Plata County cannot be effective in the absence of public trust, and the proper accounting of taxpayer dollars is a critical component of this trust. Auditors play a central role in fostering this trust – they provide a third-party, credible insight into the inner workings of the county.

“When a breach of the public trust occurs due to employee dishonesty in a public agency, it is common for citizens to become concerned,” said County Finance Director Adam Rogers. “La Plata County has not experienced embezzlement or fraud, but despite this positive track record, we remain vigilant in protecting and strengthening the county’s financial operations.”

*“La Plata County has not experienced embezzlement or fraud, but despite this positive track record, we remain vigilant in protecting and strengthening the county’s financial operations.”*

Like all counties in Colorado, La Plata County is subject to an annual financial statement audit by an external auditor, who reports directly to the Board of County Commissioners and the public.

Accounting firm RubinBrown, La Plata County’s auditor, conducts an annual onsite visit that can last up to two weeks. In 2020, the firm did an in-depth dive into the Sheriff’s Office and the Clerk and Recorder, both



of which have complex budgets and handle many transactions. The auditor also audits individual programs that have received Federal funds – for instance, the Coronavirus Relief Fund was selected for audit.

After the visit, auditors review the county’s data and financials, using software to look for anomalies or unusual events. The final financial statement, known as the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report,

is presented publicly and to the Board of County Commissioners, typically in July.

The auditor’s report and county financial statements can be accessed on the county’s website under the finance department page.



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