

# South Metro

## LAND CONSERVANCY

*SMLC's mission is to increase understanding and appreciation of the profound importance of open spaces, natural areas and trails in the lives of people of all ages. SMLC does this through advocacy, open space acquisition and educational projects. <https://www.smlc.land/>*

### South Metro Land Conservancy Annual Newsletter 2024

## Dear SMLC Supporters:

No matter what generation you represent you are likely to have profound memories of childhood experiences outdoors in nature.

I recently reread the oral history I conducted of my father when he was in his late 70's. Born in 1921, the youngest of three children to Italian immigrants, he lived in the Bronx until just after returning from Army service in WW II. Throughout the 40-page interview, I was struck by how many times my father mentions treasured memories of experiences outdoors in nature.

He gushed over his experience attending a Baptist-run camp in Westchester, just north of New York City, where he would go for two weeks each summer. A couple of hundred children would gather every two weeks at Grand Central Station to take the train to Old Oak Farm in Sommers, NY. The camp was funded with the help of New York City's "Fresh Air Fund" so that low-income city children could get out in nature to hike and play.

But what particularly impressed me was how many times my father mentioned being in nature close to his apartment home in the Bronx. For example, idyllic picnics or building a treehouse at the world-renowned Bronx Botanical Gardens and playing in the woods along the Bronx River. And I have to share a very unusual reminiscence about the wildlife that clearly filled him with awe: living near the Bronx Zoo, he could hear the lions roar when the zookeepers fed them! Can you imagine?!

You all know that SMLC talks a lot about nature in relation to our mental and physical well-being. As partners with Generation Wild (Get Children Outdoors), we are especially attuned to the crucial role that nature and being outdoors play in children's lives.

We are blessed to have so many beautiful parks and open spaces in the south metro area. Be sure to get out there and create numerous experiences that will become cherished memories for you, your children and your grandchildren.

Sincerely,

Patricia Cronenberger, President

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*Photo courtesy of Maureen Ravnik - <https://maureenravnik.crevado.com/>*

***There are a number of ways you can stay up-to-date on SMLC activities: Facebook, Instagram and our website ([www.smlc.land](http://www.smlc.land)). If you'd like to receive our e-newsletters, please send your email address to us at [info@smlc.land](mailto:info@smlc.land). We promise we won't overload your inbox!***

## Did you know?

*Kids learn a lot by playing in nature. Playing on rocks and climbing trees teaches them valuable lessons about risk-taking and improves their self-confidence. When children play without adult intervention... They learn how to make their own decisions, solve problems, create and abide by rules, and get along with others.*

*Source: Generation Wild website, a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) program to get kids outdoors.*

# The Latest on Powers Park

Design plans for a renovated Powers Park are underway! Led by South Suburban Parks and Recreation, SMLC appreciates the careful thought and consideration the planners are giving to the design. The City of Littleton and the Mile High Flood District are also involved in the formulation of the plans. Powers Park's main purpose has been as a stormwater detention facility to minimize local flooding since the 1970s but it has had minimal park amenities. In 2022, SMLC funded a Vision Plan for the park to make it a place the neighbors will enjoy. We will keep you posted on when the design is ready for public review and comment. Read more about Powers Park here: <https://www.smlc.land/our-projects/>



*North Littleton Promise Leadership students discussing the natural areas in Ketring Park.*

Last Fall, SMLC Board members worked with the North Littleton Promise High School Leadership students interested in learning how they might advocate for a renovated Powers Park. Board members loved volunteering in their classroom at the East Community Center and spending time with such articulate and thoughtful young people. The City of Littleton produced a powerful video for its Ch. 8 programming that features the students and their work. You can watch it by scanning this QR code:



*Residents of the Overlook at Powers Park enjoy the late evening sunset at the edge of Powers Park.*



*Residents of Bradley House provide their thoughts about Powers Park.*

The Overlook at Powers Park opened earlier this year with 51 apartments for low-income seniors and disabled persons. A project of South Metro Housing Options (SMHO), Littleton's public housing authority, it is a thrilling addition to the southeast corner of the park. When SMLC conducted outreach for the Powers Park Vision Plan, seniors living at SMHO's Bradley House provided their thoughts about what they would like to see at a renovated park. They focused on more benches in the shade, good walking paths, and places to picnic – but they also expressed their younger selves by telling us about the kind of playground they would have loved to play in when they were young!



# Getting to Know Maureen Ravnik, Photographer

Breathtakingly beautiful photos make it so much easier for all of us understand the awe inspired by nature. For the past three years, award-winning photographer Maureen Ravnik has granted SMLC permission to feature her photography in our media for which we are deeply grateful.

Maureen was born and raised in Minnesota. She attended the University of Colorado to pursue a career in sales & marketing. Working and traveling a lot in that discipline opened her eyes to the wonders of the natural world and reawakened her childhood tendencies to creatively document her discoveries. Upon retirement, she began in earnest to pursue that dream.

Maureen has placed in the Audubon International Top 250, local, national, and international juried photography exhibitions, monthly club competitions, and state park calendars. Her images have been selected for use by the City of Littleton, and National Geographic for publication, as well as several newspapers. She has co-authored 2 books that document the history of the second largest natural area in the country.



Maureen says, “My methods and techniques are largely self-taught. I am deeply inspired by the work of Ansel Adams and Art Wolfe. My work is also derived from my imagination which is ultimately a collection of a lifetime of experiences.”

SMLC posed the following questions to Maureen:

1. ***Do you have a favorite time of the day to photograph?*** Photography is all about the light. My favorite times of day to photograph have always been early morning and early evening. These special times make a huge difference in how they imbue the landscape with phenomenal colors and beautiful long shadows. It’s also optimal time for wildlife to maximize their behavior.
2. ***What gets you out of a warm bed to photograph on a cold winter morning?*** There’s no place I’d rather be than in nature ever since I was a kid. It depends on how you perceive that cold morning. Each season brings its own miracles. I’ve learned what wildlife to look for, what behavior and when it will happen, and even learned how to read the sky and the weather patterns so I can predict what I might be presented with in the landscape. It never gets boring because it’s an ever changing cycle and no two are alike.
3. ***Tell us about an experience photographing that left you completely gobsmacked.*** I will tell you that I don’t have to travel half-way around the world to be gobsmacked. I shy away from iconic locations. The simplest moments in life can have a profound effect on my day. It is probably nature in general that keeps me gobsmacked more than any one place, species, or event. I’m a deep thinker and always try to maintain perspective on our place in the universe and how we are all connected.
4. ***Will you tell us where you like to photograph best?*** Having a favorite place to photograph can be influenced by many things. There are times when I am headed to a specific place for a specific reason when suddenly I get presented with a whole different opportunity. I have learned to maintain flexibility and roll with the flow. My motto has always been: “When you have a target, max it out for as long as you can. You may never see it again.” That is my favorite place.
5. ***What do you consider the ideal photo shoot?*** When I first started in photography, my skill level was only acceptable for keeping 1% of the photos I came home with. Today, it is roughly 10% that I keep. So, that is a successful shoot for me no matter what I am photographing. That tells me that the skills I used during that shoot were the right ones based on the environment I had to photograph in. These “keeper” photos may be presented straight out of the camera. Some are used to tell an even deeper and more unique story in my fine art photography on the competition circuit. That’s a whole different world.
6. ***Tell us about an experience photographing that you least expected.*** I was night shooting in the foothills and was down in a hollow surrounded by meadows. It was pitch black out. I was making last minute adjustments on my camera when I heard footsteps in the tall grasses behind me. It sounded like human steps. I dismissed it for a split second. I turned around and had a huge black bear right behind me watching me. I’ve never climbed into a vehicle so fast in all my life. My scurrying scared the bear too and he ran off across the meadow. Some things you don’t forget!

To see more of Maureen’s work, we invite you to visit her website at <https://maureenravnik.crevado.com> and “like” her Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/maureenravnikphotography](http://www.facebook.com/maureenravnikphotography).



A S. Platte Park ranger explains how snakes open and close their jaws. Nix, the bull snake from S. Platte Park, is in her hand. SMLC sponsored the rangers at the June 26th Meet, Greet and Eat at Writer's Vista Park. The S. Platte Park animals are always a big hit!

## City of Sheridan Tree Program A Success, with SMLC's Help!

To celebrate South Metro Land Conservancy's 30th anniversary, every \$30 donation supports local tree planting efforts. We are focusing on low tree canopy areas in the South Denver Metro area to make the greatest impact we can, to alleviate the Urban Heat Island Effect, and to make our community a better place to live. In February, we provided \$650 to the City of Sheridan "Roots in Sheridan" program for residents to receive and plant trees.

On April 19 and 20, the City handed out trees to residents, resulting in:

- Trees planted on 30 properties!
- Engaged over 40 Sheridan residents!
- Planted over 90 new trees in our community!

Thank you for your support! We are still accepting donations to the tree program. Further donations to our tree program will continue to help with tree planting programs in our community

Donate today at  
<https://www.coloradogives.org/donate/SouthMetroLandConservancy>



*SMLC Board Member Kelly Ingebritson and her 9-year old daughter, Molly Ingebritson, presented our tree donation check to the City of Mayor and City Council. They spoke at the Council meeting about the benefits of trees, such as shade, flood control, wildlife habitat, and beauty.*

## History Corner: S. Platte Park and Aspen Grove

Did you know that the rezoning of agricultural land along South Santa Fe Drive adjacent to South Platte Park prompted one of the first major projects for a fledgling SMLC?

You can read more about how an important buffer was added to protect the park and enhance South Platte Park here:

<https://www.smlc.land/history-corner/>



*Photo courtesy of Maureen Ravnik -  
<https://maureenravnik.crevado.com/>*



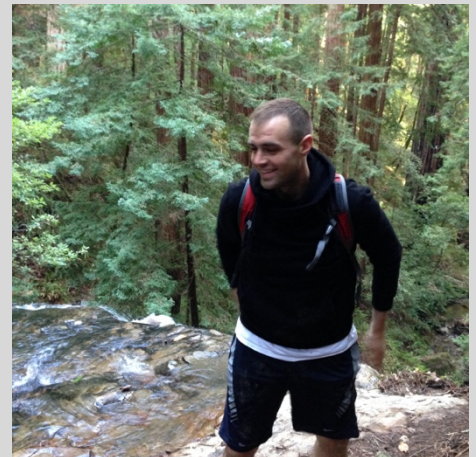
# Meet SMLC's New Board Members

Last fall, SMLC tried something new: we advertised to fill positions on our Board. Interested persons then completed an application and the Board conducted an interview. We took this course of action after attending a session at a national Land Trust Alliance conference about building Board capacity where we learned it can be very beneficial to look outside one's typical network and to treat filling board positions like finding the right person for a job. We were very pleased with the interest we received and we are thrilled to introduce you to our new board members. As you all know, SMLC is run by an all-volunteer Board so these new Board Members bring additional energy, knowledge and skills to everything that we do.

**Anna Amici** - Anna has a background in Environmental Science Education and a passion for helping others appreciate the importance of natural spaces and ecosystem services to their lives. She taught undergraduate Environmental Science for 5 years and now works in online science curriculum development. She has a bachelor's degree in Biology from the University of Chicago and a Masters in Secondary Science Education from DePaul University. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, playing board games and carpentry. She lives in Highlands Ranch with her husband and dog.



**Gregory Anderson** - Gregory works as a software developer but has also worked as a preschool teacher, a linguist (Arabic and Spanish), and a member of a road crew. He moved to Littleton in 2019, after his time in the Army. For the past few years, he has been a member of the City of Littleton's Next Generation Advisory Committee and enjoys the opportunity to serve the community at-large. He often is found in the garden with his wife and young son planting seeds and looking for bugs.



**Molli Luke** - Molli has spent the last 15 years supporting and managing systems, education, and software development in nonprofit organizations. She has a Ph.D. in behavior analysis, and her knowledge of the science together with her interest in environmental sustainability have led her to participate in a number of committees, projects, and paper publications on the subject. She grew up outdoors and in nature. Now that she is a mother, she hopes her children will share her passion for the environment.



## our purpose

*Without question, being outdoors and experiencing nature is central to our daily lives. South Metro Land Conservancy is the principled voice for nature in places close to home. Using creativity, strong relationships and unfaltering passion, we seek opportunities to preserve, educate, promote and align a grand vision for how we all connect with nature.*



## THANK YOU!

**You may also make your donation electronically by going to the South Metro Land Conservancy website (<http://www.smlc.land>) and clicking on the “Donate” button on the homepage. Your contributions are vital to our work.**

**Facebook:** @southmetrolandconservancy **Instagram:** smlc\_co

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