

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **A YEAR- END CONSERVATION GIFT TO COLORADO**

*Ranchers partner with Cattlemen's Land Trust to protect more than 45 properties covering 50,000 acres across Colorado in 2008.*

DENVER - In these times of economic uncertainty, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) is proud to announce that conservation efforts have paid great dividends in 2008. Ranchers and farmers across the state continue to embrace conservation easements in increasing numbers. CCALT has completed a record number of transactions, including 26 new conservation easements and additions of acreage to 16 existing conservation properties.

"From the shortgrass prairies of northern Weld County to the high mountain valleys of North Park, Routt County and the Wet Mountain Valley of Custer County, ranchers have stepped up to permanently protect their spectacular open land. This is something that benefits each of us as Coloradans, and protect those things that define our great state." said Bill Fales, CCALT President and rancher from Carbondale.

Since its founding in 1995, CCALT has protected 202 ranches with conservation easements, covering more than 320,000 acres of productive agricultural land. "These lands not only produce food and fiber that we all enjoy as Americans and are vital to our local economy, but also the wildlife habitat found along our rivers, winter range for our big game and the scenic views that Colorado is known for." said Terry Fankhauser, Executive Vice President of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association.

This conservation occurred in the face of increased scrutiny of Colorado's innovative Easement Tax Credit Program. New legislation passed by the Colorado Legislature in 2008 secured the program through increased oversight and transparency of individual transactions. "This program provides landowners with a financial incentive to donate conservation easements. This fits with ranchers' land ethic and desire to see that their lands stay intact and in agriculture" added CCALT Project Manager Carolyn Aspelin. "The funds ranchers receive for protecting their land are often reinvested in the ranch, helping pay down debt, buy out partners or buy land to expand their operations."

*Specific Highlights from 2008 include:*

Northwest Colorado: In the high mountain valley of North Park, CCALT completed two significant conservation easement purchases and added three additional easement donations protecting more than 3,000 acres. In Routt and Rio Blanco counties, CCALT added six conservation easements that add to extensive efforts in these areas to preserve agricultural lands and wildlife habitat. In total, CCALT holds 11 conservation easements on 7,000 acres in these two counties with several more in the works for 2009.

Weld County: Over the past five years, CCALT and our landowner partners have very quietly protected more than 28,000 acres. This includes eight new transactions in 2008 which protected over

16,500 acres this year alone. This ranching area is one of the most intact areas of shortgrass prairie in Colorado and a conservation priority for numerous organizations.

San Miguel County: CCALT has partnered with the San Miguel County Open Space Program, CCALT has protected almost 5,000 acres of productive rangeland. This highly scenic area of Colorado has a long history of sustaining working ranches and hosts a multitude of wildlife species, including a population of the Gunnison Sage Grouse.

South Central Colorado: CCALT has been active in four counties this year in the region, including several transactions in Park and Teller Counties as well as new easements in Pueblo, Chaffee and Custer counties. In total, eight transactions easements served to protect over 4,600 acres of prime ranch lands in 2008.

*Additional project information and photographs available upon request*

*Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) helps Colorado's ranchers and farmers protect their agricultural lands and encourage continuing agricultural production for the benefit of themselves, their families and all of Colorado's citizens. CCALT has partnered with landowners in the protection of 202 farms and ranches covering more than 320,000 acres since 1995. For more information visit [www.ccalt.org](http://www.ccalt.org)*

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