



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Chris West, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust – 303-225-8677  
Chris Leding, Great Outdoors Colorado - 303-226-4530

### **Four miles of Saguache Creek secured by 1,575 acre conservation easement**

*CCALT Successfully Invests \$3.7 Million GOCO Grant*

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) and several partner organizations proudly announce the permanent protection of the Quarter Circle U Ranch in the Saguache Creek Corridor. This property is the last one to be protected with the help of a Great Outdoors Colorado Legacy Grant that was awarded in 2004.

The 1,575-acre property is located approximately seven miles west of Saguache along Colorado Highway 114. The Quarter Circle U Ranch easement is part of CCALT's larger efforts to partner with ranchers along Saguache Creek. Over the past decade, these partnerships have resulted in 15 ranchland conservation easements that have protected more than 11,000 acres in the area. GOCO's \$3.7 million Lottery-funded Legacy Grant helped protect 6,446 of those 11,000 acres.

Seeking the permanent protection of their land, Quarter Circle U ranchers approached CCALT for assistance; the ranch's owners ultimately donated a portion of the value of the conservation easement. In addition to support from GOCO, funding for the easement was made possible by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the San Luis Valley Habitat Partnership Program. On behalf of the landowners and CCALT, the Trust for Public Land assisted by managing the transaction.

“This ranch means a great deal to our family and we are committed to raising our kids and cattle here. The conservation easement helps us to reach our goal of keeping this ranch beautiful and productive.” the landowner said.

The Quarter Circle U Ranch, named for the landowners’ cattle brand, contains over 4 ½ miles of Saguache Creek and nearly 1,000 acres of irrigated hay meadows. In addition, the ranch has extensive native grass and shrubland pastures and is adjacent to tens of thousands of acres of Bureau of Land Management land to the east and west. The cottonwood-lined creek and lush meadows are visible to travelers along scenic Highway 114 between Saguache and Gunnison, which is the longest undeveloped pass in Colorado. In addition, the ranch supports a wide array of wildlife including wintering bald eagles, and provides critical winter range for the area’s elk herds and deer.

“Working with the landowners in this area is an honor. Here is a group of ranchers who have collectively decided that keeping their landscape intact and in agriculture is more important than the dollars that they could have received from developers to cut the land apart and sell it as ranchettes.” said Chris West, CCALT Executive Director

#### The Saguache Creek Corridor:

Since 1998, CCALT has been involved with local ranch families in the Saguache Creek Corridor. These ranchers have explored ways to keep their valley intact and in agriculture, while continuing to provide the wildlife habitat and scenic views valued by the general public. This effort has led to many of the ranch families placing conservation easements on their land. Since 2001, CCALT has purchased 15 conservation easements, protecting more than 11,000 acres along Saguache Creek and its tributaries. Major funding for this effort has come in the more than \$6 million in Lottery funds from Great Outdoors Colorado and a similar amount from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Saguache Creek Corridor lies at the northwest corner of the San Luis Valley in western Saguache County. This valley is a rarity in Colorado, being relatively untouched by development and home to herds of Colorado’s four major game animals, elk, mule deer, pronghorn and bighorn sheep. There are approximately 20,000 acres of private land in the 20 mile long valley, surrounded by more than 300,000 acres of public lands. Ranchers in the area work cooperatively to bring livestock to and from high country pasture in the Rio Grande National Forest, a system that has been in place for more than a century.

*Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust helps Colorado 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. To date, CCALT has protected 202 ranches covering more than 320,000 acres. For more information visit [www.ccalt.org](http://www.ccalt.org)*

*The Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, recreation areas, working lands and natural open spaces, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. Since its founding in 1972, TPL has helped protect more than 2.5 million acres of land in 47 states. For more information visit [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org).*

*Great Outdoors Colorado is the result of a citizens' initiative passed in 1992. It receives up to half of Colorado Lottery proceeds. GOCO's mission is "to help preserve, protect, enhance and manage the state's wildlife, park, river, trail and open space heritage." Since 1994, GOCO has awarded more than \$12 million to projects in Saguache County. For more information visit [www.goco.org](http://www.goco.org).*

**Photographs of the Quarter Circle U Ranch and the Saguache Creek Corridor available upon request.**