

NEWS RELEASE

Colorado Cattlemen's
Agricultural Land Trust



Routt County

**December 29, 2009
For Immediate Release**

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A COALITION OF CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS JOIN TOGETHER TO PROTECT THE HISTORIC FOCUS RANCH

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), Routt County, and The Nature Conservancy have partnered with the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT), to purchase a conservation easement on 590 acres of the Focus Ranch which is located in the Upper Little Snake River Valley approximately 50 miles northwest of Steamboat Springs. The Focus Ranch is a 1,232 acre cattle and guest ranch which straddles the Colorado-Wyoming border. The ranch is a highly productive agricultural operation which produces more than 400,000 pounds of beef each year. More than 900 acres of the ranch are irrigated by a complex flood irrigation system which is comprised of approximately fifteen (15) miles of ditches and a large reservoir. The conservation easement will ensure that the agricultural character of this property is preserved in perpetuity and that a large portion of the Upper Little Snake River Valley's rural agricultural heritage is passed on to future generations.

Almost two miles of the Little Snake River flows through the Focus Ranch from east to west and the ranch is highly visible from Routt County 129. The traditional ranching operations employed by the Reidy family allow travelers a glimpse of the unique ranching lifestyle that once dominated the western United States. The ranch is comprised primarily of riparian areas, irrigated meadows, cottonwood galleries along the Little Snake River and large areas of sagebrush dominated rangelands. The ranch also provides habitat for black

bear, elk, and mule deer as well as bald eagles, greater sage grouse, and Colorado River cutthroat trout.

The Colorado conservation easement compliments the adjoining 642 acre conservation easement which encumbers the Wyoming portion of the ranch. CCALT will hold both conservation easements. GOCO awarded CCALT a significant grant from Colorado Lottery funds towards the protection of the Focus Ranch, which is in addition to a substantial grant awarded by the Routt County Purchase of Development Rights Program.

The Wyoming easement was made possible with the help of financial contributions from the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust and The Nature Conservancy. In addition, the Wyoming Stock Grower's Agricultural Land Trust provided important support for the project in Wyoming. However, neither easement would have been secured without the generous donation of land value made by the Reidy family. Overall, the Reidy family has donated approximately 55% of the overall value of the conservation easements.

“The tremendous donation made by the Reidy family is a testament to the passion and dedication the family has to the land. It is a privilege to work with landowners, like the Reidys, who are committed to protecting the agricultural values that have shaped Routt County and Colorado for more than 150 years,” said Chris West, Executive Director of the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust. He went on to say, “Protecting ranches like the Focus Ranch helps to ensure that the ranching heritage of Routt County is preserved for future generations.”

“Conservation work in the Upper Little Snake River Valley began more than ten years ago when a group of valley landowners came together to discuss ways in which they could protect the agricultural heritage of their neighborhood,” said CJ Mucklow, Routt County Extension Agent and member of the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust Board of Directors. “It is exciting to see the landowners of this valley continue their long standing efforts to preserve the agricultural integrity and intact nature of this special landscape.”

Conservation easements are a tool that can help landowners protect their properties and sustain the ranching legacy of Colorado and Routt County. Easements are tailored to fit each specific property and each landowner's differing needs and goals. Landowners work with individual land trusts, such as CCALT, to develop conservation easements that will both protect the property in perpetuity and allow the landowners to continue their agricultural operation in a sustainable fashion. Most conservation easements are executed through a donation by the landowner to the land trust. In some instances, such as the Focus Ranch conservation easement, the land trust is able to work with the landowner to secure both public and private funding to purchase a portion of the conservation easement. Funders such as GOCO, The Nature Conservancy, Routt County PDR, and the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust are valuable partners in conserving the natural values that make Colorado and Routt County a special and unique place that appeals to visitors from around the world.

"We are extremely pleased to work with CCALT, GOCO and the dedicated owners of this significant ranch operation to preserve these productive working acres and wildlife habitat," said Ron Roundtree, Chair of the Routt County Purchase of Development Rights Citizen's Advisory Board. "This is a complex ranching operation run by people who not only know what they are doing but are willing to share their knowledge with others. These are exactly the kind owners and valued assets the PDR Program was envisioned to benefit through participation in conservation."

"We would like to say thank you to GOCO, the PDR program, the citizens of Routt County, The Nature Conservancy, the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, the Wyoming Stock Grower's Agricultural Land Trust and CCALT for their support of our efforts to protect our ranch and the Upper Little Snake River Valley," said Terry and Maureen Reidy. "We live in a special place and we very much want to see it continue to look as it has for the past century. The support of the funders and the work of the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust will go a long way in protecting the rich and unique lifestyle of the American West."

Established in 1995, CCALT was the first land trust in the nation to be created by a group of mainstream agricultural producers and the land trust maintains a close relationship

with the Colorado Cattlemen's Association. CCALT focuses solely on the protection of agricultural lands. The land trust has recently accepted its 215th conservation easement, and now holds more than 20 percent of all conservation easement acreage in Colorado — more than 335,000 acres.

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