



NEWS RELEASE

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Upper Elk River Valley Conservation Ethic Still Strong as Long-time Ranching Family Completes Easement Nearly 20 Years in the Making

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) announced today the protection of a significant portion of the Chew Ranch, just west of Clark. The ranch has been in the Chew family since 1955 and is the largest private land holding in the Upper Elk River Valley.

Dean Chew was committed to the ranching lifestyle and was part of the early conservation movement in the Upper Elk River Valley which began nearly 20 years ago. Since that time over 9,000 acres have been protected in the Upper Elk River Valley. However, the donation of a conservation easement never worked out for the Chew family financially. When Dean passed away several years ago, he left the ranch to his family.

The Chew's are a very close knit and extensive family consisting of Dean's widow, Laura, their three daughters, Renee, Queeda, and Ladean, four sons, Scott, Doak, Neil and Alan, and many grandchildren. The Chew family had wanted to follow through on Dean Chew's initial wish, to see their ranch protected and for the family to remain in agriculture.

"This ranch has been in our family for over fifty years and the conservation easement will assure that rich heritage is protected for future generations to appreciate. This easement will also allow our family to do some estate planning so we can rest assured that our family run operation will always be just that," said Scott Chew.

The 767.13 acre conservation easement is highly visible to the public traveling along Routt County Road 129. The property shares an approximately 1.5 mile boundary with other ranches already protected with conservation easements and sets the background for the views across the protected hay meadows which line the Elk River along RCR 129. The protection of the ranch helps preserve the pastoral landscape of the Upper Elk River Valley as well as the excellent wildlife habitat provided by the aspen woodlands and montane shrublands.

The conservation easement on the Chew Ranch will be held by the CCALT and made possible by \$800,000 in funding from the Routt County Purchase of Development Rights Program as well as \$600,000 in funding from Great Outdoors Colorado. The landowners are donating a large portion of the easement's value as well.

“The Upper Elk River Valley is a unique conservation story for several reasons. This valley was one of the first places in the state where ranchland conservation caught on, back in the early 1990's. In 1993, the protection of four spectacular working ranches through donated conservation easements, created a movement which led in large part to the creation of both CCALT and the Routt County Purchase of Development Program. The Chew family was part of those early efforts. We are proud of their longstanding commitment and pleased to be working with them nearly 20 years later!” said Chris West, Executive Director of CCALT.

The Upper Elk River Valley is an exceptional place, where landowners and land trusts have already protected much of the larger landscape. Over 9,000 acres of private land are protected in the upper Elk Valley contributing to a remarkable example of how voluntary measures can create a preserved working landscape.

CCALT's roots in Routt County are deep. As a result of significant interest in conservation by the local ranching community in the 1990's, the Colorado Cattlemen's Association formed the land trust in 1995. One of the land trust's founding members, Jay Fetcher, is a lifelong rancher from Clark. This conservation easement is just one part of the Cattlemen's Land Trust's protection efforts across Routt County. CCALT holds 20 easements on working ranches in Routt County, covering 11,500 acres. The organization is working on many new ranch conservation efforts that will protect upwards of 5,000 acres in Routt County in the next year. Statewide, CCALT has been instrumental in protecting more than 360,000 acres of land on 234 farms and ranches using conservation easements.

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Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust protects productive agricultural lands and the conservation values they provide by working with ranchers and farmers, thereby preserving Colorado's ranching heritage and rural communities. For more information visit www.ccalt.org.

The Routt County PDR Program has, to date, completed 34 conservation projects totaling 21,753 acres.