



NEWS RELEASE

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Perpetual Protection of Ranchland near Yampa Continues

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) is pleased to announce the perpetual protection of the Y Bracket Y Ranch near Yampa, in Southern Routt County. The Y Bracket Y Ranch is located about three miles northwest of Yampa and consists of over 370 acres of productive ranchland and irrigated hay meadows. The property is owned by Marieta Nelson, whose family has been ranching in South Routt for over 100 years. Not only will the easement protect a historical and highly productive ranch property, but it will also help this traditional ranch family continue to stay in the business and pass the ranch onto the next generation. The easement, held by the CCALT, was made possible by \$300,000 in funding from the Routt County Purchase of Development Rights Program, and the landowners willingness to donate a significant portion of the easement value.

The Yampa/Southern Routt County area has a rich history of ranching and the local economy has long been sustained largely through agriculture. The threat of development spreading from the resort area of Steamboat Springs has long threatened Routt County's working landscapes with development and fragmentation, making it an important area for ranchland conservation. The Y Bracket Y Ranch fits into the middle of a landscape where multiple ranches have been protected with conservation easements held by CCALT and other conservation organizations.

"A lot of good agricultural land in this area has been lost because non-ranchers are coming in and buying small parcels for a huge house," said landowner Marieta Nelson. "This has driven real estate prices up, and made it really hard for the family rancher to be able to buy more land and expand the family operation. It is extremely important for our family to be able to continue on in agriculture, as that's all we know."

The conservation easement will ensure that the land remain viable for agricultural production forever. The property has a multitude of agricultural, wildlife, scenic, and open space values that are critical to protect now. Alkali Creek runs through the property and provides a year-round source of water for wildlife species. The Colorado Division of Wildlife classifies the property as winter range, severe winter range, and summer range for elk. The property is also severe winter range, a winter concentration area, and summer range for mule deer. The property is highly visible to the public from Routt County Roads 13, 13A, 15, and 17. The property is also visible from nearby public lands including the Routt National Forest and the Flat Tops Scenic Byway, which runs from Yampa to Meeker.

“Protection of the Y Bracket Y Ranch with a conservation easement will add to the ongoing protection efforts that CCALT is committed to in the Yampa and South Routt County areas,” said Carolyn Aspelin, Senior Project Manager for CCALT. “It is critical that conservation efforts on working lands continue in the area, as there continues to be increasing pressure in Southern Routt County for ranchers to sell out for second home developments.”

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 year. Statewide, CCALT has been instrumental in protecting more than 360,000 acres of land on 233 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.