

# NEWS RELEASE

Colorado Cattlemen's  
Agricultural Land Trust



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## Cattlemen and Wildlife Groups Create New Conservation Partnership

### *North Park ranch preserves both wildlife and ranching heritage*

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT), in partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Great Outdoors Colorado and the Gates Family Foundation, has protected 2,240 acres of the historic Coyte Ranch in North Park. The property is located in southwestern Jackson County on Mexican Ridge, adjacent to the Rabbit Ears State Trust Land. The conservation easement will preserve the wildlife habitat and the long-standing ranch uses while prohibiting subdivision and development of the property in perpetuity.

The project represents a landmark agreement between agricultural and wildlife interests. "It's no secret that wildlife interests and ranchers don't always see eye to eye on things, but we are finding that conservation efforts like this, which protect both incredible wildlife habitat and productive ranchland, are one way to bridge that gap," said Chris West, CCALT Executive Director.

Although all parties recognize the natural resource values of North Park, CCALT and CPW had never partnered on a conservation effort like this before. Project planning and negotiations took nearly five years, overcoming numerous obstacles to secure funding including a death in the family that owns the ranch.

The property is owned by the Dave Meyring family, who are direct descendants of an early homesteader, Ralph Coyte, who arrived in North Park in the 1890's. The process of protecting the ranch was initiated in 2007 by Dave Meyring who saw the vision to seek alternatives such as conservation easements to keep the ranch intact and allow his children and grandchildren to stay in the ranch business. Tragically, Dave Meyring was killed in 2009 in a horse accident. In keeping with Dave's wishes, negotiations for the ranch conservation efforts were completed by his family.

“Dave Meyring needs to be recognized for this project. He represents one of the first traditional agricultural landowners in North Park who had the vision to seek out a conservation alternative and to be willing to work with wildlife interests to see the ranch stay intact for future generations,” said CCALT Project Director Carolyn Aspelin. “Although Dave isn’t here to enjoy it, I feel that this conservation effort is a great way to honor his vision and 40 years of stewardship of this ranch,” added Aspelin, who has worked with the Meyrings since 2007 to see this effort through.

Ranching and wildlife have coexisted in North Park for more than a century and much of the highest quality habitat in this intact mountain valley is found on the private ranchlands of the area. The Coyte Ranch is a mix of aspen and spruce woodlands and sagebrush rangeland, with small wetlands along tributaries of Mexican Creek. The owners promote the management of the property to benefit both the cattle operation and wildlife habitat for species including the greater sage-grouse, elk, moose, mule deer and black bear.

“The agricultural management of this property is and has been beneficial to the wildlife on the property,” said C.J. Mucklow, the CSU Extension Agent who worked with the landowners and the two conservation groups to develop a management plan for the property. The Management Plan for the property respects the traditional ranching uses and the properties’ important wildlife habitat. “This is a win-win situation and it shows that wildlife and agriculture can benefit from each other.”

“The Coyte Ranch property provides important migratory corridors and range for wildlife, as do many of the private lands in the area,” said Josh Dilley, District Wildlife Manager for CPW in North Park. “Managing wildlife can’t be accomplished without the cooperation of private land owners.”

For decades, the Coyte Ranch has been utilized for private big game hunting and fishing. The neighboring state trust land provides public hunting opportunities. “Hunting has always been a big part of our ranch operation,” said landowner Coy Meyring. “We have continuously looked for ways to improve the balance between wildlife habitat and cattle production.”

The conservation easement was made possible by funding from Colorado Parks and Wildlife through the Habitat Stamp program, lottery-funded Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and a contribution from the Gates Family Foundation. The Meyring family also made a generous donation a portion of conservation easements’ value. This 2,240 acre easement adds to an additional 2,000 acres of the ranch previously protected through conservation easements held by CCALT and paid for in part by GOCO.

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## **ABOUT NORTH PARK**

Due to CCALT's work with the Meyring family on the completion of the Coyte Ranch project, there has been continuing interest from other traditional agricultural families to work with CCALT on protecting other important multi-generational ranches in the area. North Park is now a priority area for CCALT's conservation efforts in the state. Currently CCALT holds conservation easement on 10 ranches in Jackson County on more than 15,000 acres. CCALT is actively working with several more North Park ranch families on conservation easements that will close in 2012 and 2013.

North Park is a unique area in Colorado in that it consists mainly of traditional, privately-owned ranches that are highly agriculturally productive. These private lands are intermixed with publicly-owned lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as extensive State of Colorado owned property.

North Park has been repeatedly identified in statewide surveys as having high natural resource values, based primarily upon its lack of development and impressive water and wildlife resources. There are very few places like North Park left in the West and it is the largest and most intact mountain valley in Colorado. The intact working ranching landscape is the result of the stewardship and management of the ranchers who have worked there for more than 100 years.

## **ABOUT CCALT AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust has been very active in North Park in recent years, permanently protecting a dozen working ranches and nearly 15,000 acres of rangeland and important wildlife habitat. 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 Coyte Ranch easement is the trust's 260<sup>th</sup> conservation easement. CCALT protects more than 20 percent of all conservation easement acreage in Colorado — more than 389,000 acres.

Conservation easements are one tool that can help landowners protect their properties and sustain the ranching legacy and wildlife resources of Colorado. 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.