



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Centennial Ranch in Jackson County Conserved**

*Vital habitat for Sage Grouse and a portion of our western heritage protected*

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) recently conserved one of the oldest working ranches in North Park, Colorado. The Rich family has owned and stewarded the 1,840 acre North Park Registered Herefords Ranch (Rich Ranch) in Jackson County for more than 100 years. John Rich and his wife Donna first began working with CCALT to conserve the property in 2012.

The Rich Ranch consists of wetlands, irrigated hay meadows, and rolling sagebrush shrubland. The ranch is used for pasture and is hayed on an annual basis. Grizzly Creek weaves through the property for approximately 1.5 miles, and the wetlands on the ranch provide important nesting grounds for multiple species of ducks and birds. Sage Grouse are particularly dependent upon the wet meadows of the ranch in the summer and fall as they raise their young. The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife has identified the North Park area and Jackson County in general as vital habitat for Sage Grouse.

Local populations of elk, mule deer, and moose also inhabit the Rich Ranch.

The ranch is located in the middle of a growing area of conserved land in North Park. The property is almost entirely surrounded by other recently conserved ranches, BLM land, and State Land Board land.

"CCALT has been working with the Rich family for more than four years. Completing this project is exciting for a number of reasons, but key among them is the preservation of a portion of Colorado's family ranching heritage. Family ranches are the economic drivers of rural Colorado and are key to the continuation of the western tradition that makes Colorado special. Completion of the Rich Ranch conservation easement adds to a growing block of conserved family ranches in the North Park region which strengthens the local community," said Erik Glenn, CCALT executive director.

Glenn also stressed that “conserving ranches like the Rich Ranch has a significant impact for all Coloradans. We all benefit from the conservation of family ranches. These ranches provide important wildlife habitat, open space, water resources, and the iconic scenic views that Colorado is known for.”

Funding for this project came primarily from the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). The program helps to provide matching funds to purchase development rights that keep productive farms and ranches in agricultural uses. To date, NRCS has facilitated the conservation of 118,342 acres of Colorado through the FRPP program.

“Easements offer many benefits to agricultural producers, preventing the conversion of productive working lands while making those lands more economically viable,” shared Clint Evans, NRCS State Conservationist in Colorado. “They provide a mechanism for allowing ranchers to keep their lands working while enhancing and protecting habitat.”

Significant funding for the conservation of the Rich Ranch was also provided by the Gates Family Foundation. Since 1946, the Gates Family Foundation has been supporting Colorado communities and aiding with stewardship of extraordinary places.

Because of the Rich family and others like them, Colorado has been able to see voluntary conservation keep agricultural production and natural resources intact in some of the areas where it matters most. This important conservation project would not have happened without the willingness of John and Donna Rich and the support of all partners involved, both in the conservation and the ranching communities.

“When you look at the impact that private land conservation has on conservation as a whole, you realize it plays an integral part in ensuring that Colorado continues to be defined by its natural beauty and western heritage,” said Glenn.

*To date, CCALT has conserved more than 465,000 acres in 41 counties across Colorado.*