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Photo courtesy Helena Silva

Riders check cattle by horseback on the G5 Home Ranch south of Yampa. The Routt County Board of Commissioners approved the expenditure of \$825,000 in dedicated property taxes to help conserve the family ranch.

1,600-acre South Routt ranch approved for conservation easement

Steamboat Springs — The Routt County Board of Commissioners approved Tuesday the expenditure of \$825,000 in dedicated property taxes to help conserve one of the largest family ranches in South Routt, the 1,600-acre Nelson/George family's G5 Home Ranch.

The federal Natural Resources Conservation Service and Great Outdoor Colorado will contribute \$1 million toward the conservation easement on the ranch, which appraised at \$2.56 million. The owners will contribute \$760,000, or just less than 30 percent of the ranch's value.

The [Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust](#) completed the conservation easement and will oversee it. It is not expected to formally close until after the first of the year.

"This is so exciting," rancher Bobby George said. "This has been my dream. If it wasn't for these easements, the ranch might already be subdivided."

The easement, he said, is "a way to keep the ranching going for at least another generation."

The Nelson/George ranch straddles Colorado Highway 131 south of Yampa with views of Eagle Rock, the Flat Tops, King Mountain and Green Ridge Mountain. The ranch raises both cattle and sheep, and produces hay.

The \$825,000 in property taxes includes \$25,000 for closing costs, and comes from the Purchase of Development Rights fund. The program is funded by a 1.5-mill property tax re-approved by the voters in 2006 for a period of 20 years.

Commissioners Doug Monger and Steve Ivancie voted in favor of approving the expenditure. Commissioner Nancy Stahoviak is on a medical leave. Commissioner-elect Tim Corrigan participated in the discussion but was not eligible to vote. He will be sworn in Jan. 8.

George said this is the third conservation easement on his family ranch and by far the largest. He said the easement helped to resolve a family estate so that the ranch can remain in production agriculture. He was joined at the commissioners' meeting Tuesday by his mother, Rita, and his daughter, Madison. Madison and her sister, Morgan, already heavily involved in ranch work, represent the sixth generation of the family on the land.

Purchase of Development Rights Program board member Allan White told the commissioners that the length of time the George family has operated the ranch impressed the board.

"It's multi-generational, which is really what we envisioned in the early days of PDR," White said.

George confirmed that in some cases, subsurface mineral rights beneath his family ranches are severed and owned by outside parties.

Megan Knott of the Cattlemen's Land Trust said her organization hired a consultant to assess the mineral rights status of the land and the likelihood that mineral extraction might take place. It is standard practice, she added.

In the case of the G5 Home Ranch, the results were favorable, she said.

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