

## 2 South Routt County ranches, over 2K acres conserved through PDR program

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STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — Two South Routt ranches, including 630 acres associated with the headquarters of the Knott Ranch on Trout Creek and the Maneotis family's 1,489-acre High Country Lamb Ranch, have been protected from development in perpetuity after being added to the more than 30,000 acres conserved thus far through Routt County's purchase of development rights — PDR — program.

Rancher Tyler Knott, who operates the ranch with his wife, Megan, their children and Tyler's parents Bernard and Debra, said the latest easement on the ranch moves them closer to a goal.

"My dad wants to see this place become a centennial operation, and conservation assessments will help us achieve that goal," Tyler said.

Bernard Knott confirmed that the ranch has been in his family for 82 years — his parents acquired it in 1936.

The Knott Ranch is relatively remote.

"We feel fortunate to have mail delivered twice a week (on Monday and Friday)," Bernard Knott said.

Centennial ranches are relatively rare when compared to other regions of the American West, and Knott has a theory about that.

"A lot of it had to do with the amount of snow they had. If they pulled in during a year like this, they might have settled," he surmised. "In a year with a lot of snow, they might have decided, 'This isn't for me.'"

The Knotts previously conserved 1,310 acres of the ranch in 2011.

The PDR program helps to protect traditional land-use practices through a dedicated property tax that provides a local match to agricultural and conservation agencies.

In the case of the Maneotis and Knott ranches, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust and Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Habitat Protection Program were also participants in the transaction. The landowners contribute to the easement by foregoing development on a portion of the appraised value of the property.

The land trust will then hold and manage the easement.

### Raising lamb for Whole Foods

Similar to the Knotts, Tom Maneotis and his family have owned and managed the 1,489-acre High Country Lamb Ranch for generations. It is visible for more than three miles along Colorado Highway 131 south of Oak Creek. The towns of Yampa and Phippsburg are visible from the high points on the ranch, as are special views of the Flat Tops.

The property was described in a media release from the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust as being vital to the family's larger agricultural operation for the summer range it provides for cattle and the fall range for sheep as they return from the high country.

It also provides forage and habitat for big game, including winter range for elk and mule deer.

"The Maneotis family specializes in selling high quality grass-fed lamb directly to Whole Foods," the media release reports. "The conservation easement will ensure that Tom's children and grandchildren will have the opportunity to eventually take over the operation and continue growing quality lamb for Colorado."

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**About Routt County' Purchase of Development Rights program**

Beginning in 1997, when voters in Routt County approved a 1.5-mill increase in their property taxes with the funds dedicated to protecting rural landscapes, the PDR program has provided money to help leverage conservation easements that remove development rights from the conserved acres in perpetuity. Voters reaffirmed their support for the tax in November 2005, extending its term through 2025.

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