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Eastern Colorado News

DT ranch family honored for conservation efforts

by **Abbie Mitchell**
Staff Writer

DEER TRAIL — Thirty years of ingrainig conservation into the Stacked Lazy 3 Ranch has earned a Deer Trail family the recognition of Colorado ranchers statewide in the form of the 2016 Colorado Leopold Conservation Award.

The \$10,000 award, named for conservationist Aldo Leopold, is given to recognize extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation and aims to inspire Colorado land owners to keep conservation in mind.

"It was the most humbling experience of my lifetime," Keven Turecek said. "I never expected to be recognized for just doing what we do."

Built on both of their parents' land along with neighboring land, Keven and Sandi Turecek's mul-

tigenerational ranch has operated for over 30 years. The Tureceks have spent their lifetimes working as well as raising children on the Stacked Lazy 3 Ranch. Since their house was built in 1997, the family has installed three sets of working corrals and have expanded the ranch so two of their four children — Tyler and Travis — could join the operation.

Conservation has always been a priority at Stacked Lazy 3 Ranch, and the Tureceks go to great lengths to treat their land with care.

"Our motto has always been, 'If you take care of the land and cattle, it will take care of you,' so conservation is really important," said Sandi Turecek, who was recently appointed to the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust board of direc-

SEE TURECEK FAMILY

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Turecek family accepted the Leopold Land Conservation Award at the Colorado Cattlemen's Association annual convention in Colorado Springs on June 13. Pictured are, front row from left, Erin Cawiezel, Troy Turecek, Wade Dodge, Allie Cawiezel, Becca Dodge, and Ashton Turecek; and back row from left, Justin Cawiezel, Jackye Cawiezel, Missy Dodge, Keven Turecek, Sandi Turecek, Travis Turecek, Ty Turecek, and Page Turecek.

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TURECEK FAMILY

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tors. "If it's your livelihood, you have to conserve everything you can."

The Tureceks have trouble pinpointing a single-most important conservation method implemented on their land, probably because the list is so long.

To conserve soil moisture, the Tureceks installed over 50,000 feet of terraces, converted hundreds of acres of farm ground back to native grasslands and only farm minimum-till crops. Only smaller-framed Angus cattle set hooves on Turecek soil, and only graze in a switchback rotation.

To conserve water, the family repaired and built numerous retention dams and laid over 70,000 feet of pipe to bring water back to stock tanks placed about the property.

And in an effort to battle wind erosion, the Tureceks have planted thousands of trees to create shelter belts.

"I don't know if any one method stands out, but I think our range management and water management is very important," Keven Turecek said.

However, the Turecek's conservation work does not end there. The

family hosts ranch tours and works with organizations to increase awareness and understanding of 21st century food production and land stewardship.

"There seems to be a disconnect between what is grown on the farm or ranch and what gets to the table," Sandi Turecek said. "I would hope that in the future we all could work on the communication and getting the knowledge out there to say what we are doing isn't harmful to the people we are providing food for, and it is not harmful to the animals that we are raising."

On June 13, the Tureceks received a crystal trophy and \$10,000 award at the Colorado Cattleman's Association Annual Convention in Colorado Springs.

"It is pretty humbling to get recognized for just doing what you do; it means a lot," Sandi Turecek said. "I mean, it is quite an honor, and we are humbled and honored by it, it is a pretty big deal."

However, winning the award has not gone to the Turecek's heads, who will continue to fight for conservation and awareness until the end of their days.

"I think we got recognized for doing what we do, but what we do isn't anything that spectacular. Most all ranches, if they are viable and long term, do everything they can to be conservationists," Sandi Turecek said. "The ranchers and farmers are the original conservationists and environmentalists. They are good stewards, and it is their livelihood, so they have to be."



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