



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**SEPT. 30, 2016**

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## **Conservation Easements Give Family a Place to Call Home**

**ARVADA, Colo. (Sept. 30, 2016)** - The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) has recently partnered with the Gates family to conserve the Gates Ranch with help from the Routt County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program and the Lower Colorado River Habitat Partnership Program.

The property's conservation values are undeniable. Set in the pastoral landscape of Egeria Park southwest of Toponas, the ranch's location, just under King Mountain, provides the foreground for scenic views up toward the Flat Top Range from State Highways 131 and 134, both heavily travelled routes. The property is big game habitat and occupied sage-grouse habitat. It lies in the Colorado River Basin, with portions of Sutton Creek and King Creek flowing through it. The ranch is also a key piece in an already largely conserved landscape. Within eight miles of the property, almost 19,000 acres of land have been conserved with conservation easements. The Gates Ranch will build upon this base, helping add to a landscape-scale conservation initiative.

The conservation of this particular property is part of a larger success story with conservation easements. Colorado is losing working farms and ranches every year. Especially in highly sought after locations like Routt County, ranches are being lost to subdivision and development and taken out of agricultural use. Rising land prices are making it harder and harder for agricultural families to get a start, expand, and stay in business. The Gates family has spent their life in agriculture. Theirs is a story which is becoming increasingly rare: an agricultural family who was able to buy a ranch from which to base their operation and start building a legacy.

Doug and Kelly Gates, and their son, Whittier, and his wife, Tiffany, purchased the Gates Ranch, formerly the Kayser Place, in 2014.

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The family was able to buy the Gates Ranch due to a conservation easement on their holdings in Burns, Colorado in 2007. That original conservation easement, done with Doug's father and brother, George and Frank Gates, allowed Doug's interest to be bought out, consolidating ownership in Frank Gates's family. Doug and Kelly then took their proceeds and purchased farmland in Riverton, Wyoming. However, Doug and Kelly were ranchers at heart and felt the pull of southern Routt County and the desire to be closer to their grandchildren, who all live in Yampa. In 2014, they sold the Riverton farm and bought the Gates Ranch. They formed the Gates Cattle Company with their youngest son, Whit, and his family and are now working to establish a sustainable cow/calf operation to support their families into the future.

The property serves as a base for a 4,100 acre Bureau of Land Management grazing lease. In the year they have owned the property, the Gates family has managed to piece together close to 15,000 acres of leased land on which they run yearlings and a cow/calf operation, contributing significantly to Routt County's agricultural economy.

This conservation easement on the Gates Ranch will help the family pay down debt and give them a great start from which to make this new ranch thrive. The family is excited to start building a ranching operation their grandsons, Koy, age five, and Kace, age one, could one day inherit.

"Our family is connected to Routt County. We have never wanted to be anywhere else. We are so thrilled to have this chance to start building a legacy for the grandkids," says Kelly Gates.

CCALT has partnered with the Routt County PDR program on the conservation of more than 11,860 acres, assisting 17 ranching families across the county. CCALT holds conservation easements on an additional 16,000 acres in Routt County, and has conserved more than 477,000 acres across the state. A major focus of CCALT's work in Routt County and across the state is to help ranchers with the intergenerational transfer of their properties.

"This project confirms the initial vision of the PDR Program, leveraging local funds to preserve important productive ranch land and wildlife habitat in partnership with dedicated landowners who value those elements of our local landscape," stated Claire Sollars, PDR board chair.

"Intergenerational transfer is one of the biggest threats facing our agricultural lands. Given the high land prices in Routt County, conservation easements are an essential tool to allow families like the Gates to continue in a difficult, but vital, business. CCALT is proud to have partnered with the Gates family and to have helped them in this phase of their family legacy," said Megan Knott, CCALT's stewardship director.

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*Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust protects Colorado's agricultural land, heritage and families for future generations by conserving working rural landscapes. For more information visit [www.ccalt.org](http://www.ccalt.org).*

*The Routt County Purchase of Development Rights Program has, to date, completed 54 conservation projects totaling 40,598 acres. For more information, please contact Helena Taylor at Routt County, 970-879-0108.*