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2017 Colorado Leopold Conservation Award® Recipient Announced

Arvada, Colo. – Rancho Largo, co-owned and managed by Grady Grissom, has been selected as the recipient of the 2017 Colorado Leopold Conservation Award®.

The prestigious award is presented annually by Sand County Foundation, the Colorado Cattlemen's Association, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, and American AgCredit.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the Leopold Conservation Award recognizes extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation. It inspires other landowners through these examples and provides a visible forum where farmers, ranchers and other private landowners are recognized as conservation leaders. In his influential 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*; Leopold called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage, which he called "an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity."

Located in Fowler, Rancho Largo is a cow/calf operation that emphasizes adaptive grazing and biodiversity. The adaptive grazing practices on the ranch have led to increased abundance of plants such as western wheat grass and New Mexico feather grass. The increased plant diversity has also led to improved water retention and has reduced soil erosion. A strong believer in education and communication, Grissom views his 36 pastures as laboratories where he can compare the effects of graze periods, and the ranch hosts many students and fellow ranchers to help educate others on how working with nature and having a productive working ranch can go hand-in-hand.

The \$10,000 award, and a crystal depicting Aldo Leopold, will be presented to Grissom at the Colorado Cattlemen's Association annual convention in Grand Junction on June 12.

"Our congratulations to Grady Grissom and Rancho Largo Ranch," said Tim Lehmann, President of Colorado Cattlemen's Association. "The quality of applicants made the decision to choose just one recipient a real challenge. In the end, this award properly recognizes the stewardship of working ranches and the outright benefit those ranches bring to the environment," Lehmann continued.

"The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust is proud of the conservation accomplishments of the 2017 Leopold Conservation Award Applicants," said Erik Glenn, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust Executive Director. "The applicant pool showcased the diversity of agriculture in Colorado and the dedication that these farming and ranching families have to the lands they steward, their communities and their families. We are particularly proud of this year's winner Grady Grissom and Rancho Largo."

"Tri-State and its member electric cooperatives and public power districts are proud to support the Leopold Conservation Award," said Mike McInnes, Chief Executive Officer of Tri-State. "The award's recognition of environmental stewardship in the protection of our rural landscapes reflects the strong conservation ethic of rural communities and their electric cooperatives."

"As a longtime supporter of the Leopold Conservation Award Program, American AgCredit is proud to take part in honoring those farmers and ranchers whose work includes conservation of the land and long-term commitment to stewardship," said Terry Lindley, Chief Marketing Officer of American Ag Credit. "Each year these winners represent the best of those nominated as civic leaders preserving our natural resources. We congratulate the finalists of this prestigious award."

This year, many outstanding landowners were nominated for the award: Utterback Ranch, T-Heart Ranch, the Stults Family, the Phillips Family - Ranchlands, Parker Pastures, Off Ranches, the Livingston Family, Jordan Cattle Company, Folsom Grazing Association, Oswald Cattle Company, Draper Ranch, Reeder Creek Ranch, and Blue Valley Ranch.

The award is made possible through the generous contributions from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Assoc., American AgCredit, The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, The Nature Conservancy, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For application information, please visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org.

ABOUT THE LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD

The Leopold Conservation Award (www.leopoldconservationaward.org) is a competitive award that recognizes landowner achievement in voluntary conservation. The award consists of a crystal depicting Aldo Leopold and \$10,000. Sand County Foundation presents Leopold Conservation Awards in California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

ABOUT SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

Sand County Foundation (www.sandcountyfoundation.org) is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to working with private landowners across North America to advance ethical and scientifically sound land management practices that benefit the environment.

ABOUT COLORADO CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA) is the state's only nonprofit trade organization exclusively representing Colorado's beef producers. Founded in 1867, CCA is the nation's oldest state cattlemen's association. <http://www.coloradocattle.org>

ABOUT COLORADO CATTLEMEN'S AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST

Recognizing the need to help Colorado's ranching and farming families protect their agricultural lands, in the face of growing development and economic pressures, the Colorado Cattlemen's Association in 1995 formed the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT). To date, CCALT has partnered with hundreds of ranching families in the protection of more than 500,600 acres. <http://www.ccalt.org>

ABOUT TRI-STATE GENERATION & TRANSMISSION ASSOCIATION

Tri-State Generation & Transmission Assoc. is a wholesale electric power supplier owned by the 43 member electric cooperatives and public power districts it serves. Tri-State generates and delivers electricity to its member systems that serve more than one million people across nearly 200,000 square miles of Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wyoming. tristate.coop

ABOUT AMERICAN AG CREDIT

Founded in 1916, American AgCredit is part of the nationwide Farm Credit System, and is the nation's 6th largest Farm Credit cooperative. American AgCredit specializes in providing financial services to agricultural and rural customers throughout California, Nevada, Kansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico -- as well as to capital markets customers throughout the U.S. www.agloan.com

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