



# NEWS RELEASE

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## From Senate to Sagebrush

*Senator Bennet visits Jackson and Grand County ranches  
to observe conservation impact*

U.S. Senator Michael Bennet recently joined the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) for a tour of three ranches in northwest Colorado. Jackson County commissioners and a representative of oil and gas producer EE3 traveled with the Senator to visit with several ranchers to see how ranching and wildlife conservation efforts co-exist.

Senator Bennet is a key member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the chairman of the Conservation Subcommittee. He also served on the conference committee that produced the Farm Bill, one of the few major pieces of legislation to come out of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. His visit to working ranches gave him a first-hand look at how conservation programs funded by the Farm Bill are working on site. "One of the best things about being on the Senate Agriculture Committee is that I get to come out and see how conservation works on the ground in places like North Park," said Senator Bennet.

In North Park, the tour stopped at the Lucky Penny and Cheyenne Creek Ranches, where partial-owner and manager Sharon Harvat had the opportunity to present her family's cattle and hay operation. Nearly 4,100 acres of the ranches have been permanently protected by conservation easements held by CCALT. "The conservation easement and the dollars from the Natural Resource Conservation Service through the Farm Bill will not only secure this ranch for my son to work; it will also allow us to reinvest in the ranch to make it more economically viable and sustainable," said Sharon Harvat.

The group also visited the sagebrush pastures of the Rich and Coyte Ranches. The two ranch projects will protect nearly 10,000 acres of private land interspersed with several thousand acres of Federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property. John Rich, one of the ranchers

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involved in the project, detailed his efforts to manage his ranch for both cattle and wildlife, as the area is home to Colorado's second largest population of the Greater Sage Grouse.

The possibility of an Endangered Species Act listing decision on the Greater Sage Grouse was a topic at each stop. Research continues to show that traditional ranching provides habitat and the wide open spaces the bird species needs to thrive. North Park has a stable population of the grouse and there are significant concerns that a listing would negatively impact the local economy and unnecessarily punish ranchers.

“The local, voluntary conservation efforts going on here show the positive things that ranchers are doing for the conservation of the Sage Grouse,” said Senator Bennet. To date, more than 145,000 acres of private land in Sage Grouse range have been protected with conservation easements in Colorado alone, with many more potential projects with traditional ranchers foreseen.

The North Park ranches, as well as the last stop on the tour in Middle Park, were all conservation easement projects held by CCALT and funded through the Natural Resource Conservation Service Sage Grouse Initiative. The Initiative has been working for the past five years to coordinate conservation efforts to benefit agricultural production and wildlife conservation efforts on working lands across the West.

The value of these ranches to the state is immeasurable. They produce food, provide recreational opportunities and create habitat for all kinds of wildlife, including the Sage Grouse. “The ranches are where it all happens. We are so happy that the Senator was able to see how a program created in Washington can generate such a significant impact here in Colorado,” said Chris West, CCALT's Executive 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).