



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Conservation Easement Protects 2,470 Acre Ranch in Southern Routt County**

*The Coberly Creek Ranch preserved for generations to come*

With the help of the the Routt County Purchase of Development Rights Program and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) has completed a conservation easement on a portion of the Coberly Creek Ranch in southern Routt County. The property sits at the bottom of Gore Pass, near the intersection of Highway 131 and Highway 134.

The ranch's history of agriculture dates back to the 1880s. The Coberly brothers were the first ranchers in the area, grazing cattle near Kremmling/ Egeria Park. In 1879-1880 they wintered around 2,000 head of cattle in the area that includes the Coberly Creek Ranch. The winter was so severe that they lost almost the entire herd, so they moved their cattle operation to Grand County. The brothers are remembered in south Routt County by the Creek that bears their name.

In addition to the conservation easement covering 2,470 acres, the landowners donated an easement on 480 acres of the ranch in 2013. In total, over 85% of the ranch has been protected from fragmentation, and the landowners plan to protect the rest.

"With the financial assistance that has accompanied the conservation easement, we now have two of our adult children and their families working and living on the ranch. A third child has just purchased a home nearby, in order for her children to be able to grow up in a ranch setting," said landowner Merrilee Ellis. "All four of our children are partners in the ranch. Through estate planning, which included the conservation easement, the ranch can stay in the family indefinitely," she continued.

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In addition to receiving funding from a conservation easement, a family can also reduce the value of the property; thus decreasing the estate tax burden on the next generation.

“It’s not just about conserving the land for this family; it’s about preserving an agricultural lifestyle and doing everything possible to make sure the next generations have a chance at ranching,” said Carolyn Aspelin, CCALT Director of Conservation Transactions. Aspelin has worked with the family since 2012 on completing the conservation easement.

The Coberly Creek Ranch is bordered partly on the east by a 330 acre property that is protected with a conservation easement, and on the south by a 3,300 acre ranch that is also protected. This project represents an important part of CCALT’s rangeland conservation work along Highway 131, between Steamboat Springs and Toponas.

Ranching and Routt County are one and the same. CCALT has deep roots in Routt County and to date the organization has protected 31 properties covering nearly 21,500 acres. Statewide, CCALT has protected more than 425,000 acres through 277 conservation easements. This represents an area larger than Rocky Mountain National Park and the County of Denver, combined.

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*Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust protects productive agricultural lands and the conservation values they provide by working with ranchers and farmers, thereby preserving Colorado's ranching heritage and rural communities. For more information visit [www.ccalt.org](http://www.ccalt.org).*