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Women of Fullenwider Family Create Conservation Legacy

ARVADA, Colo. (Oct. 6, 2017) – With funding support from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) was able to partner with the Gray family to conserve more than 1,500 acres of their fifth generation family ranch. The Fullenwider Ranch is located among a string of ranches that lies on the northern end of the San Luis Valley near Poncha Pass. US Highway 285 traverses along the Fullenwider Ranch, carrying travelers over Poncha Pass, to and from the Arkansas River Valley.

The Fullenwider Ranch has been an agricultural operation since the late 1800s. Since its establishment, the ranch has been passed down through the women of the Fullenwider family for five generations. Today, Alma Gray (maiden name, Fullenwider) operates the ranch with her husband and their daughter, Gail; and son-in-law, Wes. Each generation of Fullenwider women has worked tirelessly to keep the ranch running; surviving droughts, unfavorable cattle markets, and family health issues. Today, the family harvests a substantial hay crop, and leases the land for grazing in the fall.

"The Grays are one of the most wonderful, traditional ranching families I've had the honor to work with. Their love of the land is remarkable and truly evident in the time, energy, and commitment the family has made to ensure the long-term sustainability of the ranch. CCALT has been working on the Fullenwider Ranch conservation project for an extended period of time and it is extremely exciting to know that the ranch is finally protected! This area of Colorado, and its rich ranching heritage, is truly worth preserving," said Courtney Bennett, CCALT Project Manager.

CCALT began working with landowners in this region of Colorado in 2012. The Fullenwider Ranch is the first of three ranches in CCALT's Poncha Pass Conservation Legacy Project to be conserved. The legacy project is aimed at preserving the rural character, natural resources, and rich history of Poncha Pass and the San Luis Valley. This year, at least one additional ranch near the Fullenwider property will be conserved; tying yet another piece of this important open space together and preserving a swath of land along Poncha Pass.

"The Fullenwider Ranch is part of a nearly 4,000-acre initiative that is moving land conservation efforts forward in an unprecedented way in the northern San Luis Valley. This is the first ranch to be conserved by this effort, and it demonstrates this family's commitment to protecting this unique part of the state," said GOCO Executive Director Chris Castilian.

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Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust conserves Colorado's western heritage and working landscapes for the benefit of future generations. For more information visit www.ccalt.org.

Great Outdoors Colorado invests a portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds to help preserve and enhance the state's parks, trails, wildlife, rivers, and open spaces. GOCO's independent board awards competitive grants to local governments and land trusts, and makes investments through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Created when voters approved a Constitutional Amendment in 1992, GOCO has since funded more than 5,000 projects in urban and rural areas in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. Visit www.GOCO.org for more information.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary federal agency that works with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources. The Agency emphasizes voluntary, science-based conservation; technical assistance; partnerships; incentive-based programs; and cooperative problem solving at the community level.