



Colorado Cattlemen's  
Agricultural Land Trust



# NEWS

## **For Immediate Release**

**February 21, 2014**

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## **Historic Hutchinson Ranch protected in Chaffee County**

More than 150 years of Colorado ranching history has been permanently protected announced The Trust for Public Land and the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) today.

Located along U.S. Highway 50 between Salida and Poncha Springs, the 700-acre Hutchinson Ranch was originally homesteaded in the 1860s by Joseph Hutchinson before Colorado achieved statehood. The ranch has been passed down through six generations, making it the oldest family-owned ranch in the Upper Arkansas Valley.

The Trust for Public Land purchased the development rights to 470 acres of the Hutchinson Ranch putting a total of 650 acres under easements that allow the family to continue to own and work the land, while ensuring it can never be subdivided or fragmented.

"If ranching teaches you anything, it is the need to be flexible. In order to preserve the ranch legacy, we needed every ounce of that flexibility in order to keep this ranching heritage alive. Pursuing a conservation easement was our best option, and our family appreciates greatly all who helped make this preservation effort become a reality," said Art Hutchinson.

In recent years, Chaffee County has grown in popularity as a tourist destination and location for second homes. Over the past few years, the Hutchinson Family worked with The Trust for Public Land, CCALT, and Land Trust of Upper Arkansas (LTUA) to permanently protect nearly the entire ranch and provide them with the financial resources they needed to continue to work the land. Abby Hutchinson, granddaughter of the family's patriarch, Wendell "Doc" Hutchinson, will continue to manage the ranch.

"We are very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the Hutchinsons to help them secure their family's legacy," said The Trust for Public Land Colorado State Director, Tim Wohlgenant. "It's very rare to work with a family that's been in the Upper Arkansas Valley since Colorado was a territory and has played such an important role in the region's history."

The ranch is also one of the last working cattle ranches in the area. In 2003, the ranch and its original homestead were listed in the top five properties by Colorado Preservation Incorporated's list of prestigious and most endangered places. The Hutchinsons donated the original homestead, which is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places, to the Town of Poncha Springs.

“The Hutchinson Ranch conservation project truly embodies the mission of CCALT which is to ‘protect Colorado’s agricultural land, heritage and families for future generations by conserving working rural landscapes.’ We are excited to see the completion of this important project and to have been a part of helping the Hutchinson family achieve their conservation goals and providing Abby Hutchinson with an opportunity to carry on the family’s rich ranching heritage in the Upper Arkansas Valley,” said Chris West, CCALT Executive Director.

The Trust for Public Land secured funding from lottery funded Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Chaffee County, and the Colorado Parks & Wildlife Habitat Protection Program to purchase two conservation easements totaling 470 acres on the ranch in 2011 and 2013, both of which are held by CCALT. A third conservation easement of 180 acres, held by LTUA, was donated by the Hutchinsons in 2010 bringing the total acres conserved to 650.

“GOCO is pleased to continue its partnership to protect ranch lands in the Arkansas valley,” said GOCO Executive Director, Lise Aangeenbrug. “The recent grant for the Hutchinson ranch will not only help continue a family ranching tradition, but will also preserve water, wildlife and scenic views so important to the valley and our entire state.”

“The impact of what a program like the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program can do for the sustainability of the quality of life we all come to enjoy in the country is significant,” said Tim Macklin, Acting NRCS State Conservationist for Colorado. “The continuing partnership with our agency, the Hutchinson family and the other natural resource stakeholders is the key component to the development of this historical easement.”

“The Chaffee County Commissioners are very happy to have been able to help and support one of the pioneer families in the valley,” says Chaffee County Commissioner Frank Holman. “Preserving the land and the water and this historic way of life is very important to us, and we are pleased to have been a part of it.”

To date, over 3,000 acres of productive agricultural land has been protected in Chaffee County.

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*The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for generations to come.*

*The Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) is a nonprofit land conservation organization whose mission is to “...protect Colorado’s agricultural land, heritage and families for future generations by conserving working rural landscapes.”*

*Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) 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 by voters in 1992, GOCO has funded more than 3,500 projects in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. The grants are funded by GOCO’s shares of Colorado Lottery revenues, which are divided between GOCO, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Conservation Trust Fund and school construction.*

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### *The History of the Hutchinson Family in Colorado*

The Hutchinson family is extremely proud of its heritage in the Upper Arkansas Valley since the ranch has been owned and operated as a cattle ranch for six continuous generations. Joseph Sykes Hutchinson and Annabel McPherson Hutchinson first homesteaded the earliest portion of the ranch in 1868. Joseph came to Colorado in 1866 after being wounded at the Battle of Vicksburg during the Civil War. By the 1870s, the Hutchinson ranching operation had grown to more than 5,000 head of cattle that ranged over much of Colorado. Today, sixth generation Abby Hutchinson operates the ranch and cattle operation for her grandfather, Dr. Wendell Hutchinson, who still resides on the ranch but is disabled with blindness.

Wendell, born in 1924, is the oldest of three boys of Mills Hutchinson and Myrtle Burkart. He has lived on and worked the ranch most of his life except when away at college and WWII. He married Mary Sue Swallow in 1949, descended from another local ranching family, and they took over the operation of the ranch following the early death of his father Mills in 1949. Wendell and Mary Sue were able to hold on to the ranch and keep it operating by subsidizing it with his veterinary income, and a lot of hard physical work.

Wendell, "Doc Hutch," as many know him and his wife Mary Sue have always been a big supporter of the community. He served for 29 years on the Salida school board as well as many other organizations and boards; including the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District Board, Local Bank Boards and was a Chaffee County 4-H Livestock Club Leader for 16 years. He also is a noted historian of the valley and often gives local history talks and presentations. He co-authored a local history book, "Under the Angel of Shavano" with George Everett, from another prominent Salida area ranch family. He is very proud of the fact that the Hutchinson family arrived in the valley in the 1860s before the roads, railroad or even statehood.