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Iconic Colorado Landscape Conserved

ARVADA, Colo. (Nov 14, 2017) –The Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) has partnered with The Nature Conservancy (the Conservancy) to conserve more than 25,000 new acres and strengthen protection of 24,600 acres previously conserved on one of Colorado’s largest intact ranches. JE Canyon Ranch is located in southeast Colorado, just north of the New Mexico border. The most recent conservation efforts finalize a conservation legacy of more than 49,000 contiguous acres, and connect nearly 300,000 additional acres of conserved land in the region. Conservation of this vast open space wouldn’t have been possible without support from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) through Walmart’s Acres for America Program, US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grant program, and numerous other foundations and private donors.

With its dramatic mesas, sweeping grasslands, river-carved canyons, towering red rock walls, and Native American archeological sites that have long defined the natural and historic landscapes of southeast Colorado, JE Canyon Ranch is an iconic representation of the American West. While this region is unknown to most Coloradans, it is truly one of our state’s greatest natural treasures. JE Canyon is home to shortgrass prairie, pinon-juniper forests, seeps, springs, streams, and more than 850 plant and animal species including long-billed curlew, elk, mountain lion, pronghorn, mule deer, and Colorado’s largest and healthiest population of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. Nearly thirteen miles of the Purgatoire River winds through JE, adding to its habitat diversity and ecological richness.

The Conservancy purchased JE Canyon Ranch in 2015 in order to connect a large swath of conserved grassland and test management practices that would advance ecological and economic sustainability on the ranch and beyond. Today, the Conservancy is working in partnership with local ranchers to manage a sustainable production cattle operation and enhance ecological values on the ranch through its Sustainable Grazing Lands program. Conservation of this ranch through a conservation easement will ensure that the rich ranching history of this property will live on for generations to come and that JE Canyon will continue to be a key piece of this ranching community’s fabric.

“What we’re doing at JE Canyon is relevant across the West,” explains Matt Moorhead, the Conservancy’s Southeast Colorado project director. “At JE Canyon, we have the chance to inspire, connect and educate by using it as a learning site to solve challenges in balancing economic, agricultural and environmental needs, and to lead by example by conveying a conservation easement to a valued partner here in Colorado, CCALT. The conservation of lands that are ecologically significant and agriculturally productive can help preserve an important way of life that supports families and communities in Colorado and beyond—as well as the rich biodiversity that thrives in the landscape.”

Conserving JE Canyon Ranch was a collaborative, multiyear effort from several dedicated parties. Both The Nature Conservancy and CCALT have prioritized this area of Colorado and worked to connect large areas of conserved lands to preserve the rural western heritage and accommodate the spatial needs of native plants, animals and the natural processes that support them.

The project was awarded a \$1.9 million grant from GOCO as part of the organization's [Protect Initiative](#), a five-year, statewide effort to conserve once-in-a-lifetime projects like JE Canyon Ranch. Protect has already permanently conserved more than 100,000 acres across Colorado.

"The historical and ecological significance of the JE Canyon Ranch is unparalleled and CCALT is honored to have played an active role in the conservation of this incredible property. This conservation project is a true testament to the power of collaboration and persistence. CCALT is grateful for the support of all of the partners that helped to make this project a reality. Conserving the JE Canyon Ranch is the perfect way to honor those families that helped to steward this unique property throughout the years and ensure that one of Colorado's most iconic ranch properties remains in production agriculture." Said Erik Glenn, CCALT executive director.

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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.

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. Working in 72 countries, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. To learn more, visit www.nature.org and www.nature.org/colorado.

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 when voters approved a Constitutional Amendment in 1992, GOCO has since funded more than 5,000 projects in all 64 counties of Colorado without any tax dollar support. Visit GOCO.org for more information.