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Second Ranch Conserved in Poncha Pass Legacy Project

ARVADA, Colo. (Oct. 13, 2017) – The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) has successfully partnered with the Ridgely family to conserve more than 1,700 acres of their Pheasant Valley Ranch in Saguache County. The project was made possible with funding support from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Pheasant Valley Ranch is located east of the town of Villa Grove on the northern end of the San Luis Valley near Poncha Pass. The ranch is the second conserved property in CCALT's Poncha Pass Conservation Legacy project aimed at preserving an entire swath of ranchland in this area of Colorado. While Lee Ridgely and his family have only been involved in the ownership of Pheasant Valley Ranch since 2005, portions of the ranch were first homesteaded in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Pheasant Valley is one of several historic ranches along U.S. Highway 285.

"Our mission is to help people help the land," shared Clint Evans, NRCS State Conservationist in Colorado. "It requires collaboration; and through partnerships like these, NRCS is able to leverage and enhance the results of the financial and technical assistance it provides in order to conserve natural resources and prime working agricultural lands like the Pheasant Valley Ranch."

Today, Pheasant Valley Ranch supports a strong cattle production operation that includes both summer and fall grazing and hay production. With a goal of keeping the entire ranch in agricultural production, in 2018, the Ridgelys plan to work with CCALT to conserve the remainder of their ranch.

CCALT project manager Courtney Bennett noted: "The Ridgely family's dedication to land conservation is inspiring and CCALT is excited to continue working with the family on the next phase of this conservation project. Once completed, the Ridgelys' conservation legacy will include nearly 4,000 acres along the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains."

Conservation of Pheasant Valley Ranch will forever impact Poncha Pass and this area of southern Colorado. Even in the face of population growth and development, this land will remain untouched; preserving a piece of the rural character, natural resources, and rich western heritage of the San Luis Valley.

"GOCO is excited to see another piece of this legacy conservation effort be completed," said GOCO Executive Director Chris Castilian. "Helping the Ridgely family conserve the character of the Valley, keep the land in agricultural production, and protect water resources and wildlife habitat is core to GOCO's mission, and we're honored to be part of this project."

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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.