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Routt County Commissioners approve Emerald Ridge conservation easement south of Steamboat

Story by [Tom Ross](#)

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Steamboat Springs — The Routt County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday to approve the use of Purchase of Development Rights tax dollars to conserve 210 acres of the Emerald Ridge Ranch south of Steamboat Springs.

The Purchase of Development Rights board had recommended to the commissioners the use of \$200,000 from a special dedicated tax to conserve the land by purchasing the development rights from it. Another \$13,000 will be applied to the closing costs associated with the transfer.

“With the protection of a large portion of the Emerald Ridge Ranch, the conservation work that has been done over the years in this area is really starting to come together and will shape the future of this landscape and the agricultural economy” Megan Manner, director of stewardship for Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, wrote in a news release.

Routt County’s voter-approved Purchase of Development Rights program is funded by a 1.5-mill property tax. The process works by providing voter-approved tax dollars as an incentive to landowners, often ranch families, to enter into a conservation easement that sets the land aside from development.

Emerald Ridge Ranch is south of the Emerald Mountain parcel managed by the State Land Board and the Bureau of Land Management between Routt County Roads 14 and 41. It’s also visible from Rabbit Ears Pass and Steamboat Ski Area. The Agricultural Land Trust will hold and monitor the conservation easement.

Doug Scott and his three sons, who represent the fourth generation of the same family on the ranch, own Emerald Ridge Ranch. It has been in the extended Lufkin family since 1919, when H.C. Lufkin began assembling it by gradually acquiring land parcels. H.C. Lufkin sold it to his son, longtime Steamboat rancher Don Lufkin, who owned it for more than 40 years and used it as summer pasture.

Don Lufkin, 89, lives in the Doak Walker Care Center. He remained active in the ranch even after selling it to Scott, his nephew, in 1994.

The conservation easement was appraised at \$1.05 million, and the landowners contributed 81 percent, or \$850,000, of the total, according to the news release.

The new easement represents the third phase of the Scott/Lufkin family's efforts to conserve 490 acres of the 780-acre ranch.

The conserved areas of Emerald Ridge Ranch are bordered by low-density residential subdivisions but are within three miles of 2,700 acres protected by conservation easements and by the Cyprus Valley State Habitat Area and Chuck Lewis State Wildlife Area.

The new easement, when it closes, would bring the number of acres under easements held by the Agricultural Land Trust in Routt County to more than 20,000 in 32 easements.

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