



Swanson Ranch, Walsh, Colorado.

Ranching, Farming, and Thriving in Southern Colorado *Conservation aides in passing ranch to sixth generation*

Kim, Colorado. – While he may be soft spoken, his voice in Colorado’s agricultural industry is widely respected. On April 26, 2018, Terry Swanson from Walsh, Colorado, attended a round table meeting held at the White House with 14 other ranchers/farmers from across the nation, President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, and Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue. Terry was there to represent sorghum growers, but his overarching passion is ensuring that agriculture has a strong future in Colorado. This fall, Terry’s dedication to Colorado’s agricultural future became even more personal when he had the opportunity to conserve his own family ranching operation.

Located on the southeastern plains of Colorado, the Swanson Ranch looks similar to a scene from a classic John Wayne western. The ranch’s high mesa tops are dissected by numerous canyons, and rimmed by Dakota Sandstone cliffs. Misshapen rock formations rise up from the ground and stands of Juniper trees fan out among the ridges. The nearest town to the ranch is Kim, Colorado, (population 68) and the Las Animas County seat in Trinidad is more the 60 miles to the southwest. It’s quiet on the ranch, and serene.

The Swanson Family has ranched for five generations, and with the help of a conservation easement, Terry hopes the business will pass on to the sixth. Terry and his wife, Marcella, own and operate the ranch, and use it primarily for raising and grazing cattle. They farm in neighboring Baca County on a separate parcel, and together, with the help of their son and his family, they make a living in this unique corner of our state.

In late October, in partnership with the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT), the Swanson family was able to conserve their ranch in perpetuity, meaning it will remain as is, in agricultural production for generations to come. Conservation of the ranch will preserve the important grassland ecosystem that supports a network of wildlife, birds, and insects that all call the ranch home. The conservation will also ensure that Terry and Marcella’s goal of keeping the ranch in the family will be possible.

Conservation of the Swanson Ranch builds on a regional effort, started over 25 years ago that now includes more than 402,000 acres of conserved land and multiple public and private partnerships. Funding support for the Swanson Ranch

project was provided by the Gates Family Foundation, Great Outdoors Colorado, The Nature Conservancy, and the Colorado Conservation Partnership.

“GOCO is honored to be a part of this large-scale conservation effort protecting Colorado’s prairie canyonlands and benefitting our state’s people and wildlife,” said GOCO Executive Director Chris Castilian. “GOCO’s Protect Initiative was created for once-in-a-lifetime conservation projects like this, and we’re grateful to our partners at CCALT and TNC and to the Swanson family for making this property’s protection possible.”

“Marcella and I wish to thank CCALT for providing us the opportunity to conserve our ranch and its environmental equity and agricultural heritage for generations to come. We are beyond grateful to all of the partners involved with this conservation easement,” said Terry.

As the sun sets this Thanksgiving on the Swanson Ranch, Terry and Marcella will rest assured that this place will continue to be a part of their family’s future. With that piece of mind, Terry will likely take a moment to enjoy the ranch that means so much to him, but if the past is any indication of the future, this southeastern Coloradan will likely be back in the trenches, advocating for Colorado’s farmers and ranchers at the start of the New Year.

“Ensuring a secure future for Colorado’s family farms and ranches is a priority for the Gates Family Foundation. Producers like the Swanson family are vital to our rural economies and valuable stewards of natural resources. We are proud to partner with Great Outdoors Colorado, the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy in protecting the Swanson family’s legacy and this property’s rich natural and cultural history,” said Senior Program Officer, Russ Schnitzer.

###

About The Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust

The [Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust](#) (CCALT) is a nonprofit land conservation organization whose mission is to “...conserve Colorado’s western heritage and working landscapes for the benefit of future generations.”

Gates Family Foundation invests in projects and organizations which have meaningful impacts in Colorado primarily through capital grants and Foundation initiatives that enhance the quality of life for those living in, working in and visiting the state. The Foundation seeks to promote excellence, innovation and self-sufficiency in education, healthy lifestyles, community enrichment, connection to nature and stewardship of the state’s natural inheritance. The Foundation’s actions will remain consistent with the founders’ intentions and the principles of citizenship, entrepreneurship and free enterprise. Visit www.gatesfamilyfoundation.org for more information.

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 urban and rural areas in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. Visit www.GOCO.org for more information.

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.