



US40 Pointing West



Courtesy photo

Roundup day is a family affair on Coberly Creek Ranch at the western foot of Gore Pass in South Routt County. A large portion of the ranch has been approved for a conservation easement funded in part by the county's Purchase of Development Rights program.

Coberly Creek Ranch in South Routt conserved by 2nd easement

By Tom Ross

Friday, October 31, 2014

Share this
Email, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

Discuss
Comment

ADVERTISEMENT



Steamboat Springs — The Routt County Board of Commissioners agreed this week to use \$855,000 of dedicated tax dollars to help preserve 2,470 acres of a South Routt ranch named after two of the earliest cattlemen to come into the valley.

Coberly Creek Ranch near the junction of Colorado Highways 131 and 134 is owned by Mike and Merrilee Ellis, who ranch with the families of two of their adult children.

The ranch is named after a tributary of Egeria Creek, ultimately contributing its flows to the Colorado River. Coberly Creek was named after two brothers of that name who lost almost their entire herd of 2,000 cattle in the area of Egeria Park at the base of Gore Pass in the harsh winter of 1879-80. Ultimately, the Coberly brothers moved their cattle operation to Grand County, but modern-day livestock producers are doing just fine where pioneer cattlemen struggled under daunting winter conditions.

The newest easement at Coberly Creek Ranch was funded in part with property tax revenues derived from the Purchase of Developments Rights fund.

PDR has been in place since 1997 after voters here agreed in November 1996 to tax themselves to create a fund to stimulate land conservation. Routt County voters renewed the tax in 2005 for another 20 years.

Merrilee Ellis told the county commissioners this week that the conservation easement factors into estate planning that will allow the ranch to stay in the family indefinitely. The ranch has been in the ownership of the Neelis/Ellis Family for more than 20 years.

“With the financial assistance that has accompanied the conservation easement, we now have two of our adult children and their families working and living on the ranch,” Merrilee Ellis was quoted saying in a statement. “A third child has just purchased a home nearby in order for her children to be able to grow up in a ranch setting. And all four of our children are partners in the ranch.”

The final conservation easement was valued at \$3.6 million. Upon closing, the PDR program will be contributing \$830,000 (23 percent), the federal Natural Resource Conservation Service will contribute \$1.6 million, and the remaining \$1,178,000 (32 percent) will be a contribution from the ranch owners.

In addition to this month’s easement, which will be held and managed by the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, the landowners donated a previous easement of 480 acres on the ranch in 2103. That means the two easements combined have protected 85 percent of Coberly Creek Ranch from potentially being fragmented into sales of smaller parcels. The Ellis family has said they intend to protect the balance of the ranch in the future.

Coberly Creek Ranch is bordered partially on the east by another 330-acre ranch that already is protected by a conservation easement and on the south by a 3,300-acre ranch that also is protected. That makes Coberly Creek an important part of CCALT’s ranch land conservation work along Colo. 131, between Steamboat Springs and Toponas, according to Carolyn Aspelin, CCALT’s director of conservation transactions.

Mike Ellis told the commissioners this week that a second son recently brought his family into the ranch operation, and although running a multi-family ranch has its challenges, it is ultimately very rewarding.

“It’s complicated, but they lose as much as you do if something goes wrong,” Ellis said. “At the end of the day, when you sit down, it’s nice. Both boys headed to Torrington (Wyoming) this morning with a semi truck to pick up a load of heifers.”

To reach Tom Ross, call 970-871-4205, email tross@SteamboatToday.com or follow him on Twitter [@ThomasSRoss1](https://twitter.com/ThomasSRoss1).



More like this story

- [Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust chooses Steamboat for 1st satellite office](#)
- [Trio of easements on commissioners' agenda](#)
- [1,600-acre South Routt ranch approved for conservation easement](#)
- [Routt County commissioners approve final piece of Fetcher Ranch conservation legacy](#)
- [Commissioners to discuss proposals to help conserve properties](#)

Comments

Use the comment form below to begin a discussion about this content.

Requires free registration

Posting comments requires a [free account](#) and [verification](#).

Username

Or login with: