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The mission of the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust is to protect productive agricultural lands and the conservation values they provide by working with ranchers and farmers, thereby preserving Colorado's ranching heritage and rural communities.

Contact us

8833 Ralston Road
Arvada, CO 80002
303-225-8677 (tel)
303-431-6446 (fax)
E-mail: info@calt.org
www.calt.org



Protecting the Frye Ranch and a family's ranching heritage



John C. Frye, ca. 1900

As stewards of the land, Tom and Kris Stoever tell a story of a remarkable family and a Routt County ranch. As testament of their devotion to the Frye Place, and to succeeding generations, they recently protected the ranch with a conservation easement after more than a decade of collaboration among family members, CCALT, and the Routt County Commissioners.

The ranch is named for John Calvin Frye, who grew up in Madison County, Iowa, a grandson of pioneers.

Leaving Iowa for Kansas as a young man, John Frye finally settled his elderly mother and younger sisters in Denver, making his way to Routt County in the 1890s. By the turn of the century, he had established a homestead near Hahn's Peak for summer range. He kept a house in Steamboat as a primary residence, and for his summering sisters, Nora and Ruby. By 1901, the irrigation ditches had been designed and dug. John then built a three-room cabin that still stands today.

In 1904, John had three 160-acre parcels staked, surveyed and registered under the Homestead Act: one for his father Jacob, one for his sister Elnora, and the third for his baby sister Ruby. Ruby married into the Carpenter family of Denver. Upon John's death, the Frye Ranch passed to her, and when Ruby died in the 1950s, the ranch passed to her son. Ownership of the ranch has not left the family for five generations since its homesteading.

Since the days of John Frye, the Frye Ranch, which is bordered by national forest land, has hosted five generations, friends, and neighbors; and provided more than 100 years of continuous agricultural use.

As a part of this ranching legacy, Scott Carpenter--grandson to Ruby and father of Kris Stoever--fondly recalls the ranch and his white-haired Uncle John. Locals remember Scott both as summer neighbor and as storied astronaut from the days of NASA's Project Mercury. At the age of 86, Scott said protecting the ranch for future generations became a priority for him and his wife, Patty. Working with his son-in-law Tom Stoever, Scott had a conservation easement placed on the historic ranch.

"The Frye place has exerted a pull on all of us," Kris Stoever explains. "It pulled on my dad as a boy, and on us as a roving Navy family during the Cold War. The ranch was an anchor. Like a talisman that meant we belonged to a place, and we wanted it to always stay the same."

Asked about the family's desire for a conservation easement on the property, Tom Stoever said, "The family was making sure the ranch was preserved in a way that protected not only its value historically and agriculturally, but also as a family icon."



Carpenters and Fries posing on hay wagon, Frye Place in 1937

Frye-Carpenters (l-r) at the Frye Ranch: Dr. M. Scott Carpenter, Frye's nephew; Marion Carpenter and his wife, Ruby (Frye) Carpenter, John Frye's sister; "Mrs. Brown," John Frye's second wife, and her granddaughter; Scott ("Bud") Carpenter, Frye's great-nephew; and John C. Frye.

The Frye Ranch continues to be an anchor, thanks to the partnership with John Frye's descendants, CCALT, and the Routt County Commissioners. "I can't help but imagine," Kris Stoever said, "Uncle John surveying the place he loved so well and entrusted to us—I can't help but hear him say, 'Well done'."



CCALT Wish List

Pre-Paid Fuel Cards

Truck Tires

GPS Camera

Lightly Used 4WD Car or Truck

GPS Vehicle System



Knott Ranch

CCALT's Newest Project

On October 7, 2011, CCALT completed a conservation easement on more than 1,300 acres of the Knott Ranch near Oak Creek. This partnership included funding from Routt County and Great Outdoors Colorado. Your support of support of CCALT allows us to protect treasures like the Knott Ranch across Colorado.

Spotlight on Colorado

The Gunnison Valley Legacy

Protecting a spectacular landscape while establishing valued partnerships

As many native Coloradoans would tell you, the legacy of the Gunnison Valley is a story of partnerships and camaraderie like no other across the state. This is a tale of many people from various backgrounds coming together with a common goal – the protection of the agricultural heritage of the Gunnison Valley.

Throughout the process of interviewing many of the key players in this historical account of creating such an innovative partnership, there is a common consensus; the cooperation between so many differing opinions and lifestyles coming together to protect the valley was, and continues to be, unique and extraordinary.

History in the making

It all began when Susan Lohr, an ornithologist (bird biologist), and Bill Trampe, a third-generation rancher in the East River Valley met when she was a Director at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory and Bill Trampe had grazing leases around the lab. As they worked together on the land they began to talk about sustainable agriculture and the importance for ranchers and scientists to work together. Susan also later joined Trampe on the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy Board and, as they say, the rest is history.

In 1995, Lohr and Trampe happened to attend a public land trust meeting featuring Dan Pike who, at that time, worked for Western Land Group. Dan spoke about land conservation and the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant program. Shortly thereafter, an influential and innovative board was born. “We needed a landowner-driven approach to land preservation,” Lohr said. Lohr and Trampe enlisted Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) President Edward Callaway; along with a real estate broker, a land consultant, and another rancher and bank president Thom Cox (later to become VP for CBMR) to form the Gunnison Legacy Fund.

“I have never seen a land conservation program so embraced by the agcommunity. Right away the families were interested in participating – in large part due to Ken Spann and Bill Trampe. It is the most unique place I have ever worked. Ranchers in Gunnison really wanted to stay there and make it work.”

- Dan Pike

“Ranching is worth preserving not because it’s a quaint 19th century agricultural practice,” says Lohr, “but because cows are better than condos. Ranchland is crucial wildlife habitat, and tourism depends on pristine views. Bill and I agreed that ranchers deserve to be compensated for the open space they provide.”

An innovative partnership

These partners sought to initiate the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Project, a ground-breaking program to help keep agriculture viable in the Gunnison Basin. The majority of the county’s mountain peaks are federal land, but the lush valleys are virtually all private, many owned by ranching families who have lived here over a century.

The board was interested in the new GOCO Legacy Grant Program. They spoke with Executive Director Will Shafroth who recommended that the organization submit a planning grant proposal to determine the readiness of the community and the organization for the next

Legacy round. Determined to protect the remaining agricultural landscapes, the Gunnison Legacy Fund board members worked with Dan Pike to submit a proposal to GOCO and in February, 1996 they received the grant funds.

The board members then went out and met one-on-one with all of the families in the valley to determine if they were interested in conservation easements and if this would be a solution that would be agreeable to the families. They included a survey to determine if this was something worth spending time and money on. Backed by Ken Spann and Bill Trampe, who come from long-time and multi-generational ranching families, the idea was greeted with open minds and respect.

In July of 1997, GOCO released the second round of Legacy Grant awards. Legacy board members learned that they were allocated \$2 Million in funding with the potential for more in the future. They also received \$170,000 from the USDA Farmland Protection Program, the first funding ever received from the program in Colorado, and was a valuable match for the GOCO Legacy Grant.

Ranches are protected

The first project protected through the GOCO Legacy Grant was the Pringle Ranch. This easement is held with The Nature Conservancy. The second funded project was the Redden Ranch, held by CCALT. The Redden Ranch easement protects 995 acres of agricultural property, wildlife habitat and open space with significant productive, natural and wilderness values.

The Redden Ranch also protected an additional parcel in 2003 which lies in the upper portion of the beautiful Ohio Creek Valley with Colorado Open Lands. The property is entirely open ranchland and is an important part of the productive agricultural land still remaining in the Ohio Creek Valley.

In 1999, the Gunnison Legacy Fund began doing business as the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy (GRCL). Their mission is “to create a legacy for future generations by preserving ranching and conserving ranchlands in the Gunnison Valley.” They have partnered with various land trusts to protect 17,795 acres as of September 2011.


Within five years, the organization had protected 12 linear miles of Tomichi Creek. The landscape and the neighbors all worked together and protected a significant landscape. The first board members of the Gunnison Legacy Fund were phenomenal in making this work. These seven individuals from differing backgrounds and industries all agreed that something needed to be done, and whatever the outcome, it must orient around the ranchers and the agcommunity.

Partnering for success

The latest project completed by GRCL was a joint effort with CCALT. On May 31, 2011, Joe and Lyndal Davis added 363 acres of protected grazing land to the 400-acre easement they granted in 2000. The Davises waited patiently for 11 years until additional grant funds became available for the completion of their project. Partners on this project included GRCL, GOCO, CCALT, Gunnison County, and the landowners. The funding agencies selected the Davis project because it meets their requirements for protection of open space, wildlife habitat, and agricultural lands in perpetuity.

“We are really lucky in the Gunnison basin to have so many great local partners with our conservation work. Local grants really help us leverage larger grants from Great Outdoors Colorado, the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, and other sources,” said Greg Peterson, President of the Board, Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.

This story is a wonderful example about how multiple conservation organizations can work together to protect an entire landscape. To date, CCALT has protected 21 projects with the help of GRCL, GOCO and other local partners. Even now, additional funding opportunities are being provided to landowners in the Gunnison Valley. Every year even more agricultural land is protected and the landowners continue to work toward the goals they set as a community in a gathering over a decade ago.



“We forged a pathway for the mutually-beneficial relationships between the ranching families, businesses and community. This was, and still is, a mutually-beneficial approach that respects the ranching families.”

- Susan Lohr

Summer BBQ at the Prairie Canyon Ranch a Success!

CCALT Board and Staff would like to thank everyone who attended or donated to our Summer BBQ at the Prairie Canyon Ranch. CCALT raised more money than any previous event due to all of the support of our donors and sponsors!

The proceeds from the event will go toward the protection of Colorado's beautiful agricultural lands. Photos from the event can be seen online at www.ccalt.org.

2011 Summer BBQ Sponsors

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8833 Ralston Road
Arvada, Colorado 80002
www.ccalt.org
303-225-8677

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We need your help!

CCALT needs your help! Landowners across the state are protecting the ranching landscape that makes Colorado special. We cannot do this alone and need your help! The Land Trust has protected over 374,000 acres in Colorado to date. Now is your chance to get involved with CCALT and make a personal difference in protecting the scenic values and historical agricultural heritage that is so important in Colorado!

What can you do to help? There are several ways to make a difference in securing Colorado's ranching heritage for future generations. Our future is in your hands!

Spread the word! Let others know about our organization and the important work we do. Join us on Facebook and attend our events. Another easy way to help is to mail us a donation using the envelope attached to this newsletter.

Are you feeling the effects of the recent economy in your pocketbook but you still want to give? Budget your donation and pledge a monetary gift once a month. This reoccurring donation is simple and can be charged to your credit card automatically. Call us now to set up your donation or visit us online at www.ccalt.org.

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