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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.*

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# Spotlight On Colorado

## Post Office Ranch

*Protecting a Ranching Heritage in Chaffee County*

*T*he ranching lifestyle is difficult – long hours, little pay and no vacations. However, those who do it will tell you that it is an incredibly rewarding way of life and one that permeates every ounce of one's soul. The land and the lifestyle become a lasting passion that burns deep for the multi-generational ranching families that are the backbone of Colorado's agricultural economy. Across the state, agricultural families share many things in common – work ethic, love for the land and the ranching way of life; and a desire to preserve their heritage.

This is a story about one such family and how they partnered with the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) to achieve many of their goals. Thanks to the foresight of Frank Roberts and the dedication of multiple generations of the Roberts family to keep the land intact, the Post Office Ranch will remain in agriculture forever.

For more than 60 years, the Roberts family has raised cattle and hay in the lush meadows of the Post Office Ranch west of Salida. The Post Office Ranch is a 310-acre ranch located in the Upper Arkansas River Valley. The family's legacy dates back to 1952 when Frank Roberts moved to Colorado from Plainview, TX. Originally motivated to move to Colorado for health reasons, Frank fell in love with the Upper Arkansas River Valley. He was an engineer and understood the value and importance of water. When he chose the Post Office Ranch, Frank knew that the abundant water rights would sustain the ranch.

Frank had four children of which the youngest, Dean Roberts, spent the most time on the ranch. As all of Frank's children grew up, went to college and moved away from home to start their own lives, Dean came back to work on the ranch.

When Frank passed away, there was considerable discussion about the future of the ranch. Dean continued to work the land, and his daughter Deané showed

# Spotlight on Colorado *continued*

interest in continuing the ranching heritage. As Dean's siblings realized that the Post Office Ranch would be passed on to the third generation of Roberts, they started to look at different options on how to keep the ranch in one piece and to pay out the siblings who were no longer interested in the ranching livelihood.

As a result of these discussions, the Roberts family approached CCALT in 2006 and began the process to place a conservation easement on their property. The family completed the protection of the Post Office Ranch in 2009, and they used some of the proceeds from the conservation easement to buy out the shares owned by Dean's siblings who no longer wanted to be a part of the ranching operation. The remainder of the proceeds went back into the land. They repaired a bridge that crosses the river, made some additional upgrades, and built a few guest cabins. Today, folks who want the experience of living on a working ranch can lease the cabins and enjoy the ranching lifestyle. This has allowed the Roberts to diversify their revenue stream and introduce others to their passion – ranching.

“Doing this, first and foremost, requires a love for the land,” said Dean Roberts. “The easement has made it possible for my family to continue to own and ranch the property, which would probably not have been the case without a conservation easement. If you don't call that protecting family ranches, I don't know what you would.”

As a result of the family's desire to protect the ranch, the Roberts family was the first working agricultural ranch in Chaffee County to be protected by a conservation easement. They would recommend this tool to other families who are working toward the multi-generational transfer of land. (*continued*)

**“People outside looking in don't understand what the land means to you and that it is a part of you. It tears me up to think of anything happening to it.”**

Deané LaRue

## **The Post Office Ranch**





### *Spotlight, continued*

Deané plans on continuing the Roberts' family's ranching heritage and looks forward to passing it on to the next generation when she has children, because it is a great and rewarding way of life. When describing the importance of protecting the ranch Deané said, "People outside looking in don't understand what the land means to you and that it is a part of you. It tears me up to think of anything happening to it."

Chaffee County's relatively small amount of agricultural land and its proximity to the Front Range and westward population pressures make the County's farms and ranches extremely vulnerable to rapid growth and loss of water rights. Without the partnership of ranching families like the Roberts, Chaffee County and the traditional ranching heritage would be lost to development forever.



*Left to Right: Dean & Dana Roberts, Deané & Jim LaRue*

## *New Faces at CCALT*



*Ron Morris*

**R**on Morris, co-founder of Ranch Marketing Associates, joined the CCALT Board in January. Ron was born and raised in Colorado, the son of an avid outdoorsman; so hunting and fishing were a big part of his early years. In addition, Ron spent every summer through high school working on the family's ranch near Durango, Colorado. Following his graduation from the University of Northern Colorado, Ron worked with some of the largest real estate firms in the United States. Ron has extensive experience in livestock operations, wildlife management, water, agriculture resource management and conservation easements; and is a welcome addition to CCALT's Board of Directors.

**M**ark Johnson, President and CEO of Johnson Storage & Moving Co., also joined the CCALT Board in January. Mark and his family preserved their 2,000-acre ranch in Teller County with the help of CCALT in 2005. He served in the United States Marine Corps Reserves and has a B.S. in Finance from the University of Utah. Mark is actively involved in his community and serves on several local and national boards. CCALT is pleased to welcome Mark to the Board of Directors.



*Mark Johnson*



*Jerod Smith  
awarded  
Future  
Conservation  
Leader  
Fellowship*

**C**CCALT's Project Assistant Jerod Smith was recently awarded Colorado Conservation Trust's (CCT) Future Conservation Leaders Fellowship. This fellowship advances land conservation by providing opportunities for outstanding young professionals to launch careers with Colorado's leading land trusts. A native of Meeker, Colorado, Jerod holds a Master's of Science degree in Entomology from the University of Wyoming.

Over the course of the two-year fellowship, Jerod will be involved in stewardship of CCALT's conservation easements, as well as the management of new conservation initiatives. "Our sophisticated stewardship program will expose Jerod to a wide array of land protection strategies, as well as potential pitfalls to avoid when constructing a new conservation deal," said CCALT Executive Director Chris West. "Jerod's ranch background is invaluable to us."

The fellowship was funded through a generous grant from Anadarko Petroleum Corporation. "Anadarko makes it a practice to support our communities," said Amy Venturi, Director of Social Investment at Anadarko. "We chose to invest in CCT's Future Conservation Leaders Fellowship because it is a proven program that shares a natural alignment with our business and values. We directed that investment to CCALT because of the organization's commitment to farm and ranch families in Colorado."

"This partnership is powerful in large measure due to the strength of CCALT," said CCT's Executive Director Brian Ross. "Anadarko understands that our economic well-being demands extraordinary land stewardship. CCALT is a top land trust in Colorado and a national leader. We are proud to support CCALT and look forward to celebrating Jerod's accomplishments."



## Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Renewal



CCALT was accredited on February 1, 2009 and is up for re-accreditation in 2013. CCALT believes that this process is extremely important and that the landowners we work with deserve 100% accountability. As a result, the CCALT is pleased to announce it is applying for re-accreditation through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission in 2013.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. To learn more about the accreditation program and/or to submit a comment, visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org), or email your comment to [info@landtrustaccreditation.org](mailto:info@landtrustaccreditation.org).



# *Is Conservation Going to the Birds?*

CCALT is partnering with several new funders to expand our ability to protect working ranches in Colorado. These new partners focus on habitats and scientific studies which show that private lands in agricultural production provide some of the best environments for avian species. These groups have sought out CCALT and our landowners; and are now providing critical conservation dollars to these efforts, particularly in Northwestern Colorado.

So, are conservation easements going to the birds? The answer is clearly yes. When you look at the bird population in Colorado, data distinctly shows that agricultural landowners are sound stewards of the land and of the wildlife that thrives there. Irrigation of hay meadows creates excellent nesting areas for migratory ducks and other waterbirds like the Wilson's Phalarope shown here on a conservation easement in North Park. Upland areas on private ranches also provide some of the best-managed habitat for Greater Sage Grouse.

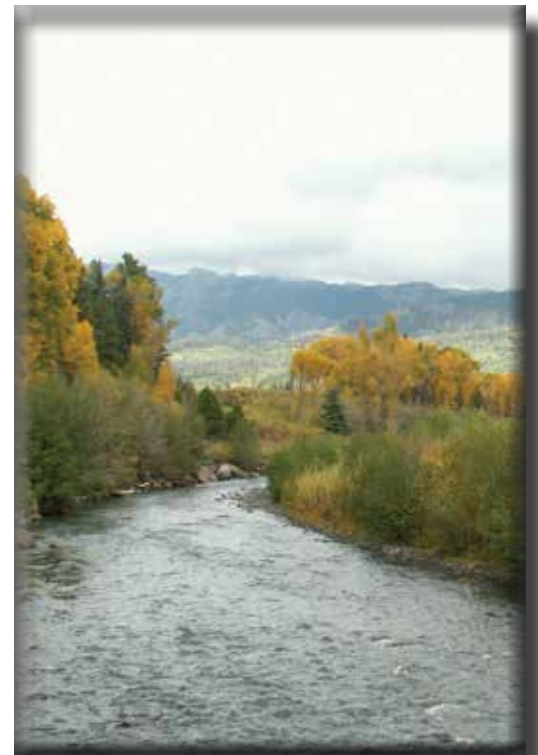
"What's good for rangelands is good for these birds and that is why we are teaming up with CCALT to complete wildlife conservation through ranching. That's where conservation happens on the ground every day," said Tim Griffiths, NRCS National Sage Grouse Initiative Coordinator.

## *Leaving Your Legacy*

Including the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust in your estate plans is a great way to protect Colorado's special places. You can remember CCALT in your will or living trust; or name CCALT as a beneficiary of your IRA-qualified retirement plan, or life insurance policy.

Charitable bequests are a common method of giving where an individual can name the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, or any other charity, as the heir to a portion of his or her estate. Making a bequest allows you to make a significant contribution toward protecting Colorado's working farms and ranches for future generations.

If you plan to make a gift through your will, CCALT has language that may be useful to you during your estate planning. For more information or if you would like to talk with someone about making a planned gift, contact your financial advisor or contact our Development Director Alyssa Street at [alyssa@ccalt.org](mailto:alyssa@ccalt.org) or 303-225-8677.







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# Save the Date!



*Brooks-Sinclair Ranch, Douglas County*

Save the Date for the CCALT Annual Sunset BBQ. There will be dinner, drinks and an auction; so be ready to have a wonderful time on one of CCALT's protected ranches. RSVP today!

## **2013 CCALT Sunset BBQ**

Brooks-Sinclair Ranch in Sedalia, CO  
Saturday, July 13, 2013  
5:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$150/person

The proceeds from the event will go toward the protection of Colorado's beautiful and productive agricultural lands. To RSVP for this exciting event or for sponsorship opportunities, please contact Alyssa at [alyssa@ccalt.org](mailto:alyssa@ccalt.org).