



## **2,462-Acre Strawberry Ranch – CONSERVED**

**Meeker, Colo. (January 28, 2021)** - The [Colorado Cattlemen's Agriculture Land Trust](#) (CCALT) is pleased to announce successful conservation of the 2,462-acre Strawberry Ranch outside of Meeker, Colo. Conservation of the property will ensure that the ranch remains available for agricultural production forever. The project was made possible through a cooperative partnership between CCALT, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, and landowners John and Sheryl Etchart and Douglas N. Proctor.

Owned by the Etchart family for more than two decades, Strawberry Ranch is an integral part of the Etchart's larger agricultural operation in the state. The property consists of grazing lands and productive hay fields, and the project represents the second phase of conservation for the Etchart family. The Etcharts conserved their 290-acre "Home Ranch" property with CCALT in 2014. While Strawberry Ranch is private property, its conservation offers significant benefit to the public, both in Rio Blanco County and across Colorado.

Contiguous to the Windy Gulch Wilderness Study Area and in close proximity to BLM land, conservation of Strawberry Ranch ensures that an important mix of sagebrush shrublands, dryland fields, and pinon-juniper woodlands habitat will remain intact forever.

"Strawberry Ranch contains grasslands of special significance and is yet another win for greater sage grouse conservation," said Clint Evans, Colorado's State Conservationist for the NRCS. "The property contains valuable rangeland and is located in important linkage habitat as identified by CPW. The protection of Strawberry Ranch from further subdivision ensures the sage brush habitat and associated lands and the values of this multigenerational ranch remain intact."

Strawberry ranch is also heavily utilized by Northwestern Colorado's famous deer and elk herds. The ranch provides the herds with a migration corridor and important winter habitat. Because of that, the Etcharts

often partner with CPW to plant wildlife friendly seed mixes and invest in infrastructure to improve the ranch's watering systems. State studies signify that undeveloped private land, like Strawberry Ranch, are key to the success of our migratory species. In addition to conserving the ranch, the Etcharts are simultaneously working with CPW to develop a 10-year access easement for late season elk hunters on the property. Hunters, like those that will purchase licenses to hunt on Strawberry Ranch, are the primary funders of CPW's conservation programs.

"This partnership and the Strawberry Ranch project are excellent examples of conservation in action," said Bill de Vergie, Area Wildlife Manager for Colorado Parks and Wildlife. "We're pleased to help ensure that this critical wildlife habitat will be conserved in perpetuity, and look forward to continuing to work with the Etchart family on future conservation opportunities."

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**About The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust** - [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."

**About Colorado Parks and Wildlife** - [Colorado Parks and Wildlife](#) is an enterprise agency, relying primarily on license sales, state parks fees and registration fees to support its operations, including: 41 state parks and more than 350 wildlife areas covering approximately 900,000 acres, management of fishing and hunting, wildlife watching, camping, motorized and non-motorized trails, boating and outdoor education. CPW's work contributes approximately \$6 billion in total economic impact annually throughout Colorado.

**About The Natural Resources Conservation Service** - *The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary federal agency that works with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources. The Agency emphasizes voluntary, science-based conservation; technical assistance; partnerships; incentive-based programs; and cooperative problem solving at the community level.*

**About The Nature Conservancy** – *The Nature Conservancy is a global environmental nonprofit working to create a world where people and nature can thrive. Founded at its grassroots in the United States in 1951, The Nature Conservancy has grown to become one of the most effective and wide-reaching environmental organizations in the world. Thanks to more than a million members and the dedicated efforts of our diverse staff and more than 400 scientists, we impact conservation in 79 countries and territories across six continents.*

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