



Villa Ranch – Meeker, Colo.

Villa Ranch - CONSERVED

Meeker, Colo. (April 15, 2021) – The 2,226-acre Villa Ranch has been conserved in perpetuity by the [Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust \(CCALT\)](#) and the Krueger family. The conservation project was made possible with support from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Villa Ranch is located northwest of Meeker, Colorado and was first homesteaded by Mathias and Sigrid Villa in 1915. Current landowner, Mary K. Krueger, is the granddaughter of Mathias and Sigrid. Owned and operated by the Villa family for more than 100 continuous years, the Villa ranch is designated as a Colorado Centennial Ranch.

“The Krueger family is deeply rooted in Meeker and has been dedicated to this community for generations. It was a privilege to work with a family who is so thoughtful about transitioning the ranch to the next generation,” said Director of Conservation Transactions at CCALT, Molly Fales

The Krueger family currently raises cattle on Villa Ranch and runs a small hunting operation. Because of these activities, the family is constantly working on ways to improve their operation for the benefit of multiple species. Water facilities and pastures are meticulously maintained and managed for soil health and grass production, and many of the fields on the ranch are being reworked to control rabbit brush and to obtain better ground cover to prevent erosion. Conserving Villa Ranch was the logical next step in the family's quest to improve and safeguard this landscape.

“There are a variety of benefits derived by keeping agricultural land viable and undeveloped,” said Clint Evans NRCS State Conservationist in Colorado. “This particular conservation easement helps preserve greater sage grouse habitat. Colorado is one of 11 western states with sagebrush-steppe and sage grouse habitat and that ecosystem is one of the most imperiled in the U.S. Villa Ranch is identified as a linkage area for greater sage grouse and the property also overlaps with historical habitat for the bird which is listed as a Species of Special concern by CPW.”

In addition to sage grouse, northwestern Colorado is home to abundant deer and elk herds and boasts two of the largest migratory elk herds in North America. The area has even been dubbed the elk hunting capital of the world. Villa Ranch provides important habitat for both Northwest Colorado's deer and elk herds, and the Kruegers work with CPW and local hunters on the property annually. Located near a corridor of land previously conserved by CCALT and adjacent to the Windy Gulch Wilderness Study Area, Villa Ranch is a vital component to landscape level conservation happening in the region.

"Villa Ranch is another important parcel in the effort to create large landscape protections for wildlife in Northwest Colorado," said CPW Area Wildlife Manager, Bill de Vergie. "As Colorado's human population swells, conserving open spaces will be important to assuring that wildlife can continue to migrate and thrive in the state."

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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."*

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.*

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