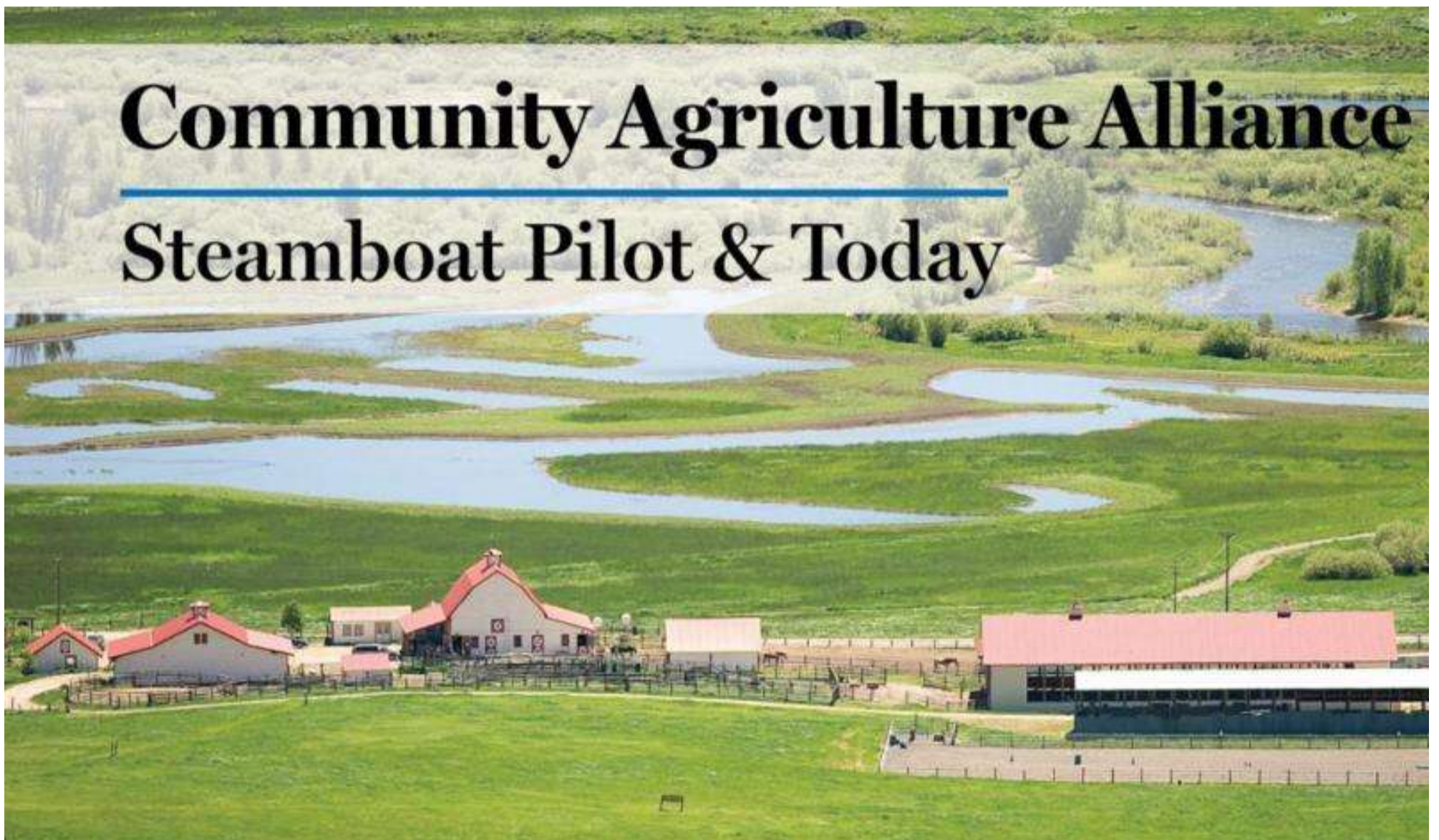


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# Community Agriculture Alliance: How are conservation easements funded in Routt County?

News [FOLLOW NEWS](#) | 7h ago**Amber Pougiales**  
For Steamboat Pilot & Today

Whether you are a fifth generation rancher, a life-long ski bum, or enjoying your first summer in Routt County, we are all connected by a love for this valley. The communities of Routt County have long understood the value of conserving working lands and open spaces. In the early 1990s, as word of Steamboat's champagne powder spread, many residents became concerned for the future of Routt County and what could happen if growth were to go unchecked.

In 1996, with a desire to secure the future of the region's open space and agriculture-based economy, voters approved the creation of the Routt County Purchase Development Rights Program. The PDR Program is a land protection tool in which a property's development rights are purchased from the landowners.

By purchasing the development rights, Routt County is able to protect certain resources in perpetuity, such as open space, wildlife habitat, agricultural use, scenic vistas, historic landmarks, and more. Funding for the Program is derived from a 1.5 mill on County property tax. In 2005, Routt County voted to renew the PDR Program through 2025.

Since its inception, the PDR Program has played a critical role in the completion of 65 conservation easements, conserving more than 60,000 acres throughout the County. The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) and the Yampa Valley Conservation Partnership have completed 50 conservation easement projects with support from the PDR Program.

The PDR program has allowed CCALT to support landowners in the completion of conservation projects for 25 years and has leveraged funding opportunities from other state and federal agencies better than any other conservation program in Colorado.

The PDR Program is overseen by a Citizen's Advisory Board, which is appointed by the Routt County Board of Commissioners. The PDR Board reviews applications for funding, conducts visits to each of the potential conservation projects, and makes recommendations to the County Commissioners. This year, CCALT applied for funding to conserve five ranches, contributing more than 8,000 acres of working lands to the growing conserved landscape of Routt County.

If you live in Routt County, or are here as a visitor, you have seen and experienced firsthand the value these conserved lands provide. To say that the PDR Program has made an impact on our community would be an understatement.

Land conservation keeps rural and agricultural traditions alive, fosters healthy communities, stimulates local economies, and conserves diverse landscapes. The PDR Program is essential to conserving the working lands and open spaces of Routt County, not to mention the scenic, recreational, and environmental benefits that these lands support.

*Amber Pougiales is the assistant director of external relations for the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust.*

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