

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Gunnison Valley Ranches Conserved Father-Son duo invest in conservation legacy**



Photo: Provided by Crittendon Family

Gunnison, Colo. (December 16, 2021) – In partnership with the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy (GRCL), the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) is proud to announce the closing of the Bar IV and Colten Crittendon Ranches in the Powderhorn Valley.

Shortly after Colten’s graduation in 2018, the Crittendon Family relocated out of the Ohio Creek Valley in Gunnison to the Powderhorn Valley in order to expand their agricultural operation. Steve Crittendon, the father, owns and operates the Bar IV Ranch. Colten Crittendon, the son, purchased the Crittendon Ranch from the family that homesteaded the property in the 1920s. The ranches are used for irrigated hay production and as integral components of an established commercial cow/calf operation; the operation utilizes additional leased land in the area.

Stacy McPhail, Executive Director of the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy shared how proud “GRCL is to work with the Crittendons and CCALT to not only protect vital agricultural land in the Powderhorn area but also to support their future as a ranching family in Gunnison County.”

The conservation of these two ranches supports a young rancher and the expansion of a generational ranching operation, contributes to the overall conservation of Gunnison sage

grouse habitat on private lands, and contributes greatly to the network of protected lands throughout Gunnison County. Within ten miles of the ranches, more than 8,500 acres of conservation easements exist. Conservation of these ranches builds on the success of those conservation efforts. All of the conserved ranches in the region are critical to the scenic character of the Powderhorn Valley.

Gunnison County, and the Powderhorn Valley, are defined by their vast expanses of open space, which is maintained by the community of ranching families that steward this landscape. Steve and Colten Crittendon chose to conserve their ranches to maintain the open spaces and agricultural viability of these lands, improve the viability of their agricultural operation, and ensure that the next generation can continue to be engaged. Conservation of the Bar IV and Colten Crittendon Ranches was made possible through financial support from Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

“The Crittendon and Bar IV properties host critical habitat for the Gunnison Sage Grouse, a species listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act,” said Tim Macklin, Acting NRCS State Conservationist in Colorado. “The operations are owned and operated by a father and son team and illustrates one of the best examples of passing on conservation ethics from one generation to another. The understanding and values placed on preserving prime agricultural lands is a vital component in our efforts to achieve long-term, sustainable landscape conservation across Colorado.”

Both the Bar IV and Colten Crittendon Ranches provide habitat for big game including moose, elk, pronghorn, and mule deer. They also contain habitat for the Gunnison Sage-grouse, bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, and breeding habitat for northern leopard frog, all Colorado Species of Concern.

“CCALT is proud to partner with Gunnison Ranchland and the Crittendon Family on the conservation of these two ranches. Simultaneously working with a father and son to conserve their ranches and support the next generation of ranchers is the perfect embodiment of CCALT’s mission,” noted Molly Fales, Director of Transactions for CCALT. “We are immensely grateful for Steve and Colten’s dedication to agriculture and conservation.”

#### **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 the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

*USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers and others care for the land. The Agency prioritizes conservation planning and uses conservation programs in the Farm Bill to implement most of its efforts including the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program which is designed to protect the agricultural viability, grazing uses and related conservation values of prime agricultural land by limiting nonagricultural uses of that land.*

***About the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy***

*Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy exists to serve landowners in the conservation easement process. A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, GRCL works on behalf of conservation-minded landowners to place conservation easements on lands in the Gunnison Valley. Since 1995, GRCL has assisted landowners in placing more than 50,000 acres under conservation easement in the Gunnison Basin.*

***About the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund***

*Established in 1998, the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund ("Fund") has been assisting local land trusts with conservation easement projects throughout Gunnison County. The Fund was originally established by voters in 1997 and was then reauthorized in 2012 by voters with an overwhelming majority.*

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