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2022 Capacity Grantee to Expand Grassland Conservation in Eastern Colorado

📅 September 26, 2022 /

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As the 2022 PLJV ConocoPhillips Capacity Grant recipient, Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) will use the multi-year funding to expand their conservation and stewardship efforts in Colorado’s eastern plains and advance their additive conservation program, which is designed to achieve additional conservation outcomes on conserved lands, and increase the resiliency and integrity of interconnected conserved landscapes.

“One of CCALT’s primary objectives is ensuring that conservation programs are designed in a manner that work for landowners across different geographies,” Executive Director Erik Glenn said.

“The added capacity that CCALT will receive from this grant is critical to ensuring that we are able to meet the growing demand for, and interest in, conservation throughout the eastern plains of Colorado.”

“CCALT continues to advocate for conservation incentives that are attractive to landowners, can get dollars on the ground quickly, and deliver meaningful conservation impact for agriculture, species, and rural communities.”

In June 2021, the Colorado General Assembly modified the state’s innovative conservation easement tax credit program and the modifications passed create a unique opportunity to deliver significant conservation gains in eastern Colorado.

“The added capacity that CCALT will receive from this grant is critical to ensuring that we are able to meet the growing demand for, and interest in, conservation throughout the eastern plains of Colorado,” Glenn said.

With the added capacity, CCALT will develop and implement new conservation projects, enable other stewardship projects on conserved working lands, and deliver technical assistance for landowners to enhance and restore critical grassland bird habitat on conserved properties.

“If we can deliver good conservation for landowners and invest in communities in organic and authentic ways, this is a region of Colorado that has an opportunity to protect a lot of habitat and natural resources,” said Maggie Hanna, director of external relations for CCALT. “These transactions last forever. The metrics don’t dissolve over the years. That is real consequence.”

PLJV ConocoPhillips Capacity Grants are awarded to organizations that are at a point where a multi-year investment can help develop their ability to deliver long-term bird habitat conservation. ConocoPhillips has been investing in bird habitat conservation in the PLJV region for more than thirty years — first by funding grants for habitat projects and now by funding capacity grants. Over the long term, capacity grants provide an average of at least an acre of habitat for every dollar invested, as these grants continue to provide outcomes well beyond the end of the granting period.

While PLJV’s current granting focus is to build capacity for organizations working to conserve undisturbed grassland habitat through conservation easements, CCALT joins fellow grantees doing similar work: Ranchland Trust of Kansas, New Mexico Land Conservancy, and Texas Agricultural Land Trust.

“Our objective is for 5% of grasslands within our region to be protected from development, with the vast majority remaining as working lands,” said PLJV Coordinator Mike Carter. “These grants are an investment in building the permanent capacity necessary to execute conservation work to prevent further loss of healthy grasslands and stem continued grassland bird declines”



Colorado ranch protected under a conservation easement. Photo by DJ Glisson.

CCALT recognizes that perpetual conservation easements are the best tool to ensure grasslands are conserved rather than converted. Since 1995, CCALT has partnered with nearly 400 families to conserve more than 710,000 acres of Colorado farm and ranch land. To date, they have partnered with landowners to conserve more than 389,000 of these acres of working lands within the PLJV Eastern Plains region of Colorado.

In 2021, after years of successfully conserving acres in perpetuity, CCALT launched the additive conservation program, aimed at contributing to the long-term resiliency of conserved working lands and wildlife habitat. The program provides technical and financial assistance to landowners of conserved properties and helps them implement projects that contribute to long-term operational, ecological, and economic goals.

“These landowners have chosen conservation and there is an opportunity for CCALT to support them in projects that improve their conservation values,” Hanna said. “We want to be a facilitator and long-term partner for landowners who want access to projects with a long-term vision in mind.”

Dive Deeper

- [PLJV ConocoPhillips Capacity Grant Program \(https://pljv.org/capacity-grant-program/\)](https://pljv.org/capacity-grant-program/)
- [Preserving a Working Ranch \(https://pljv.org/preserving-a-working-ranch/\)](https://pljv.org/preserving-a-working-ranch/)
- [Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust \(https://ccalt.org/\)](https://ccalt.org/)

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