



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Dunham Ranches Conserved**



Photos: Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

MEEKER, Colo. – Open ranchland, irrigated hay meadows, and the White River dominate the views driving south into Meeker along Highway 13. Dunham Ranches, a 1,581-acre ranch that includes property along the White River just outside the town of Meeker, and along Coal Creek five miles east of Meeker, and a generational family history, is a fixture in this growing conserved landscape. The Dunham Family has ensured the ranch will permanently remain open and productive by partnering with the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) to permanently conserve the entire property. Bill and Diane Dunham initiated the conservation easement, and both have deep roots in the region. Bill Dunham's grandparents established their farming and ranching operation on the Coal Creek property in the early 1900's, while Diane Dunham's family acquired the White River property in 1942. Today, Bill and Diane's son, Rodney Dunham, and grandson, Ty Dunham, manage the family ranching operations. Julie Sturman, Bill and Diane's daughter and Rodney's sister is also a part-owner of the property and shares the family's vision for the future of the ranch.

Dunham Ranches will be conserved with two conservation easements that will add significantly to the growing conserved landscape surrounding the community of Meeker, a vibrant ranching community that continues to demonstrate its dedication to conservation. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provided funding for one of the conservation easements that will conserve a portion of the Coal Creek property and the White River property and will also ensure that its senior irrigation water rights continue to be used for their decreed agricultural purposes on the property.



“Our great-grandmother admonished us to ‘take care of the land and the land will take care of you.’ We are proud to enable 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generations and beyond to tend to this land that we love,” said Julie Sturman for the Dunham family.

Significant wetlands and cottonwood woodlands surround the nearly one mile of the White River that traverses the property, providing habitat for a variety of wildlife, while the sagebrush steppe and shrublands and grasslands on the Coal Creek property provide habitat for sage-grouse and critical winter habitat for elk and mule deer. While the White River property sits just outside of Meeker and is the bedrock of those irrigated hay meadow and White River views one encounters driving into Meeker, the Coal Creek property is a fixture in the open views of rolling sagebrush and grasslands that surround the lower-lying areas of Meeker.

“The Dunhams’ commitment to conservation builds on a legacy of conservation throughout the area,” said John Gioia, CCALT Director of transactions. “The conservation easements on Dunham Ranches will support the Dunhams’ current and long-term plans for the ranch and will ensure it remains a ranch forever. Thank you to the Dunhams for choosing CCALT as their partner in this effort and thank you to NRCS for its significant support.”

Rodney, who worked for 20 years at the Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Materials Center in Meeker, and Bill, a former White River district water commissioner, have worked extensively with the NRCS to develop stockwater storage and delivery on the Coal Creek property

“The installation of a conservation easement onto Dunham Ranches benefits water quantity, plant productivity, livestock production, and wildlife habitat in northwestern Colorado,” said Clint Evans, NRCS State Conservationist in Colorado. “It is particularly important to Greater Sage Grouse habitat and a number of species prioritized by the state of Colorado. NRCS’s Agricultural Conservation Easement Program will help ensure the property and its natural resources remain available for agricultural use.”

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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 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.*