

Press Release: October 19, 2005

Local families protect ranchland

In the past month, two more Gunnison families chose to give up their rights to subdivide and develop their agricultural land. Bill and Connie Guerrieri's family protected 115 irrigated acres north of Gunnison. Doyle and Mark Templeton protected 99 acres on Tomichi Creek. Both families deeded conservation easements to Colorado Open Lands, a statewide land trust. The projects were coordinated by Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy (GRCL), a local grassroots organization. GRCL was also responsible for obtaining the grants and donations needed to fund the projects.

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), funded by the Colorado Lottery, granted \$313,796 for the two agricultural land preservation projects. Additional funding was provided by the federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program, the Gunnison County Land Preservation Fund, and private donations. The families donated \$193,366 worth of easement value.

The Guerrieri's land includes irrigated hay meadow and seasonal pasture. The Templeton property includes irrigated hay meadow and sagebrush grazing land. Both properties also provide wildlife habitat for waterfowl, songbirds, and a variety of mammals. The Guerrieri property can be seen from Highway 135 and County Road 10. The Templeton parcel is bisected by Highway 50. Neither easement allows public access.

Since 1998, Gunnison Ranchland Legacy has facilitated the placement of 30 easements on 14,138 acres in the Gunnison/Crested Butte area. GOCO has provided more than \$10 million in lottery proceeds to assist with many of these easements. The County Land Preservation Fund has contributed more than one million dollars. GRCL still has an additional 15,000 acres, worth over \$30 million in development value, on the waiting list for funding, according to Lucy High, Executive Director for the organization.

"Legacy is constantly seeking additional donations and grants," High commented. "We are very grateful for our many supporters whose contributions ensure that we can continue our mission to preserve ranching and conserve ranchlands in the Gunnison-Crested Butte area. Conservation easements help protect productive ranch lands while also preserving wildlife habitat and scenic views."

Further information is available at Gunnison Legacy's website, gunnisonlegacy.org.