



WYOMING STOCK GROWERS AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST

JONAH INTERAGENCY OFFICE AND THE CONSERVATION FUND PROTECT CRITICAL SAGE GROUSE HABITAT IN WESTERN WYOMING

This first use of JIO mitigation funds for land conservation preserves family-owned working cattle ranch

Daniel, WY (April 2, 2008) – A diverse mix of public and private partners, led by The Conservation Fund, announced today that they have completed a deal that permanently protects 1,042 acres of critical sage grouse habitat on a working cattle ranch southwest of Daniel, Wyoming, and improves habitat conditions on more than 25,000 acres of adjacent land owned by the Bureau of Land Management.

The project represents the first use of Jonah Interagency Office (JIO) oil and gas mitigation funds for permanent land conservation. The Wyoming Game & Fish Department selected the site because it contains some of the highest quality sage grouse habitat in the Green River Valley – in a single visit more than 250 sage grouse were observed on the property.

The Conservation Fund worked with the Botur family, owners of Cottonwood Ranches, to place a conservation easement on their property, thereby preserving a family legacy of ranching while at the same time protecting critical wildlife habitat. A conservation easement is a legal voluntary agreement that calls for the landowner to permanently restrict the type and amount of development that occurs on his or her property. Funding for the easement came from JIO mitigation funds, the Wyoming Wildlife & Natural Resources Trust and The Nature Conservancy, through a grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation for the support of Wyoming's Comprehensive Wildlife Con-

servation Strategy. The Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust will monitor and enforce the easement.

“Mitigating for the gas development and investing in agriculture and the local community is an important venture,” said Freddie Botur, owner of Cottonwood Ranches. “This project supports local agriculture



Cottonwood Ranches near Daniel, WY

and protects one of the unrecognized treasures of Sublette County. We're pleased to have donated to the effort and to have participated with the good folks at The Conservation Fund.”

The property contains more than four miles of riparian and wetland habitat along Muddy Creek and is completely surrounded by public land. In addition to habitat for the rare sage grouse, the property also provides winter and yearlong habitat for pronghorn antelope, moose, mule deer and elk.

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“The perpetual nature of this conservation easement exemplifies the commitment to conservation of the multiple parties involved,” said Ted Rentmeister, JIO project coordinator. “In bringing this project to a reality we have collectively guaranteed a piece of the natural world for generations to come. That’s something we can all be proud of.”

“This is a model of collaborative conservation, and we thank the Botur family, Cottonwood Ranches, the JIO and the numerous funders for the opportunity to work with them to positively benefit sage grouse and other wildlife and to protect working ranch lands in a voluntary manner,” said Luke M. Lynch, Wyoming field representative for The Conservation Fund.



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