

# MAINTAINING THE RANGE

SPRING 2017



## Acres Conserved Near Douglas

The Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust (WSGLT) completed a conservation easement on the LaPrele Creek Ranch. The 515 acre property is located southwest of Douglas and adds to three other ranches conserved by the WSGLT in Converse County, Little Deer Creek Ranch, Horseshoe Bend Ranch, and Creek Bend Ranch, which shares LaPrele's northern border.

Bo Alley, commented on the closing saying, "So many ag operations in Wyoming rely on the use of multiple units throughout the year. The LaPrele Creek ranch unit is an integral part of a larger agricultural operation that includes Creek Bend Ranch, which we conserved portions of in 2014. Conserving contiguous units is not only beneficial for the future of Wyoming agriculture, it has the added benefit of keeping larger ecosystems intact."

Both ranches are encompassed by the North Laramie Range Crucial Priority Area and the conservation easement will protect migration corridors of both mule deer and elk populations. The easement will also help ensure the protection of clean water sources including a tributary of LaPrele Creek, and natural springs that offer year round water sources for livestock and wildlife.

Reid Lance Rosenthal, Wyoming rancher and author, spoke about the conservation of the property stating, "We are again delighted to work with the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust on preserving these special lands for future generations of people and critters!"

## Upcoming Events

### The Branding Iron Classic

**Tuesday, June 6th, 2017**

WSGLT is teaming up with the WSGA Young Producers Assembly (YPA) for this 9-hole golf scramble which will kick off WSGA's 2017 Summer Conference in Buffalo, WY. All funds raised at this event will go to conserving Wyoming's agricultural lands and to help fund different development projects and events for the YPA.

**Registration for teams and sponsorships close on May 22nd.**

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

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### Grazing and Ranch Management Clinic

**Friday, June 23, 2017**

Join us for our first annual grazing and ranch management clinic taking place at Sims Cattle Company in McFadden, Wyoming. This one-day event will include a grazing focused tour of the Sims ranch, led by Scott Sims and Derek Scasta, followed by speaker sessions covering ranch profitability and predator management, ending the day with a prime rib dinner. **Sign up today, as the clinic is limited to 30 attendees.**

### 16th Annual Roundup Fundraiser and Barbeque Saturday, August 26, 2017

This year's barbeque will be taking place at the beautiful Elk Mountain Ranch. Join us for a tour of the conserved ranches, an exclusive showing of Brandon Bailey's art, and enjoy music from Dave Munsick. The auction will include unique experiences and western art. This event is family friendly!

Visit [www.wsgalt.org/events](http://www.wsgalt.org/events) for more information.

## PADLOCK RANCH PROFILE



As you drive past the gate to the headquarters of the Padlock Ranch, you take in the ranch's picturesque and unique setting, with the Tongue River flowing behind the historic buildings, and the Big Horn Mountains peaking toward the sky in the background.

Luckily, this view is here to stay. In 2005 and 2006, the Scott family donated a series of conservation easements to the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust, ensuring this key portion of the ranch would never be broken up and subdivided. The entire operation, which reaches from Dayton, Wyoming to Hardin, Montana, was put together by Homer and Mildred Scott in the 1940's.

Today, the ranch is still owned by several generations of the Scott family and is managed by Padlock's CEO and President, Trey Patterson. The ranch has developed into a diversified cow-calf, farm, and feedlot operation.

I sat down with Patterson last summer to talk about the Padlock and how conservation easements have supported their mission and values, which includes financial excellence, employing exceptional people, natural resource sustainability, being a positive member of the community, and standing as an emblem for the Scott family.

Patterson spoke about why ranching under that set of values is important to the Scott family and to him, "I think it really is a culmination of those purposes which is beyond profitability. It's this legacy of owning the ranch and being proud of it and being proud of the land, and being proud of the natural resources. Knowing that we are contributing to the environment and the community, to the agricultural industry, and that we are making a difference. We want to be excellent at what we do so it's that constant drive to be better in all of those areas."

The operation is a prime example of a successful and self-sustaining marriage between conservation, farming, and ranching. Water and streambank improvements have created healthier ecosystems for wildlife and the community. Intensive grazing plans and the planting of a cover crop for habitat are supporting both livestock and upland birds, and cattle are fed out on silage, produced from the ranch.

Patterson believes the future of agriculture depends on producers that promote what they do. People care about sustainability and most producers have a wonderful story to tell. One that is full of pride for the animals they raise, the lifestyle they live, and the land that they steward. Conservation through agriculture plays a key role in the story that the Padlock tells. Patterson spoke to this point, "You do not have to decide one morning that I am going to be a for-profit ranch, or I am going to be a conservation ranch, those two things need to be going on simultaneously and I think we embrace that."



As we walked next to the river and Patterson showed me different areas where the ranch had made stream bank improvements, it became ever more apparent, the importance of conservation as tool, one that can help connect producers to the public, one that can help to sustain ranching as a lifestyle, and one that the Padlock Ranch embodies.

A special thanks to the Scott family for being wonderful supporters of ag-land conservation, and to Trey Patterson for taking the time to speak with us.

Photos for this story are credited to Kaily Patterson.

## **NRCS DEED TEMPLATE APPROVED**

After nearly 15 months of negotiations, the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust (WSGLT) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have agreed upon a conservation easement deed template for use under the NRCS's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

The negotiations, which began in January 2016, caused the WSGLT to eventually suspend the organization's purchased easement program with the NRCS, a partnership which has provided nearly \$19,000,000 in conservation easement funding, and assisted in closing 37 conservation easements on agricultural lands in Wyoming over the last 16 years.

WSGLT Executive Director, Bo Alley spoke about the achievement, "To finalize these negotiations represents a huge milestone and allows a path forward with one of our most important conservation funding partners in Wyoming. We reached an agreement that recognizes Wyoming state law and provides our farmers and ranchers with the flexibility they need to manage their operations, while also meeting the purposes and needs of the ACEP program."

Conservation easements completed with WSGLT serve as a tool to help maintain the land's productive capacity and open character. These voluntary agreements limit the amount and type of development on a property. Landowners continue to retain title to the property and all other rights of proper ownership and each conservation easement is tailored to fit the agricultural operation.

Wyoming Governor Matt Mead who at key points throughout the 15 month process weighed in on the issues, and made time to personally sit in on final negotiations, commented on the agreement, "Conserving our working lands is a priority. We can't take our great places and western culture for granted. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has been a strong partner in those efforts. I am pleased that Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust was able to help find solutions that will benefit this effort well into the future."

The new deed template, which is approved for use under the 2014 Farm Bill, will be utilized to conserve thousands of acres around the state. These acres of agricultural land often double as habitat for Wyoming's wildlife and allow for open migration corridors as the animals pass through to different areas.

Under the ACEP program, which was put into place to support the conservation of agricultural lands by offering financial and technical assistance, the NRCS will fund up to 50 percent of the value of a conservation easement for selected projects. "Conservation easements play a critical role in protecting working landscapes while providing incentives to landowners," said Astrid Martinez, NRCS state conservationist in Wyoming. "From providing habitat for a variety of wildlife to protecting open spaces, easements are an important tool for preserving the Western way of life in our state. We look forward to our continued partnership with the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust, other conservation partners and Wyoming's ranchers."

The Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust thanks Governor Matthew H. Mead, NRCS acting Chief Leonard Jordan, NRCS Easement Programs Director Kim Berns, and NRCS Wyoming state conservationist Astrid Martinez, for their efforts to conserve Wyoming's agricultural lands that are so important to the cowboy state.



**WYOMING  
STOCK GROWERS  
LAND TRUST**

PO Box 268

Cheyenne, WY 82003-0268

Phone: 307.772.8751

Email: [info@wsgalt.org](mailto:info@wsgalt.org)

[www.wsgalt.org](http://www.wsgalt.org)

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## WELCOME

Last December, three of our wonderful board members ended their terms. Many thanks Dennis Sun, Jody Bagley, and Tracy Swanson for their years of support and dedication!

With their departure, we welcomed Jennie Gordon and Budd Betts to the board.

Jennie and her husband Mark own and operate the Merlin Ranch outside of Buffalo, and Mark serves as the Wyoming State Treasurer. Both are strong proponents of agriculture and conservation and we look forward to having Jennie on board.

Budd Betts has been involved with the organization for several years as President of the WSGLT Board of Trustees. He and his wife Emi own a guest ranch and outfitting business in Dubois. Budd served in the state legislature and is an outstanding advocate for the WSGLT mission and Wyoming's agricultural industry.

In February, we welcomed a new Office Manager to our staff. Kaylee Madigan joined the WSGLT team and has already proven to be a great asset to the organization. Kaylee was born and raised in Wyoming and has always been passionate about the Cowboy State. She recently graduated from Colorado State University with a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology and a minor in History. Kaylee is excited to use her cultural preservation experience to help grow the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust and promote the preservation of Wyoming's western heritage and ranching lifestyle.