

## **Ag Land Conservation Provides for Sage Grouse and Big Game Migration**

Kemmerer -- The agricultural and wildlife values of the Buck Ranch in Lincoln County will be protected in perpetuity, thanks to a conservation easement agreement between landowner Karen Buck and the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust completed today. With its stunning mountain views and abundant fishing, more than 2,000 acres would have otherwise been at high risk of subdivision which would have harmed a variety of habitats, including the riparian corridor straddling the Hams Fork River watershed.

The Buck Ranch is located on or near migration corridors for moose, mule deer, and pronghorn and there is one sage grouse lek on the property which is located entirely within a Sage Grouse Core Area. The protection of the Buck Ranch will keep the land available to agriculture in perpetuity and help to conserve wildlife habitat and an open space buffer between Lake Viva Naughton and Kemmerer Reservoir.

At closing Karen Buck said, "I have looked around at the dams, powerlines and subdivisions that have surrounded my ranch in the last years and realized that if I didn't want the same for my property I had better do something soon. The Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust was brought to my attention and after a lot of consideration I decided they were what I needed. Both sets of my grandparents homesteaded here in the early 1900's and raised their families. I spent most of my summer months growing up helping my grandmother on the ranch that is now under Lake Viva Naughton. As a tribute to my late husband Chester, grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles I wanted the land to be left in agriculture and ranching and undeveloped as close as it was originally when they settled. Thanks to the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust I am able to do this."

Funding for the project was provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, and the Wyoming Sage Grouse Campaign, a partnership between The Conservation Fund and the Knobloch Family Foundation.

"The Conservation Fund is thrilled to be able to assist this terrific partnership by contributing matching funds toward permanently maintaining the Buck Ranch—an incredibly important wildlife and agricultural property," said Gates Watson, Northwest Director for The Conservation Fund. "The outcome here makes great economic sense and protects critical private lands for sage grouse and other key wildlife species that help define Wyoming's working ranchlands."

The Buck Ranch can be seen from State Highway 223 along the western side of the road. This view offers a scenic vista of the Hams Fork River and willow galleries along its banks, as well as expansive views of productive hayfields and rangeland pasture. The public may also enjoy scenic views of the ranch from the Hams Fork River public access fishing areas, and the publicly-accessible lookouts and use areas on State HWY 223 along Commissary Ridge.

Governor Mead stated, "It is critical that existing land uses and landowner activities continue to occur in core areas, particularly agricultural activities on private lands." Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust Executive Director Pam Dewell underscored the important contribution of private lands to the Cowboy State's defining wide open spaces. "Wyoming leads the country in the size of ag operations, averaging 2,745 acres per farm or ranch, versus the national average of

418 acres in 2014. With more than 30 million acres of agricultural land, we can thank Wyoming producers for keeping these lands open and available for the production of food, fiber and wildlife habitat as well as the magnificent views we all enjoy every day.”

The Buck Ranch is comprised of several separate ranches that had different homesteading and agricultural histories. When the Buck family purchased the property, it was comprised of land homesteaded in 1881 and previous owners included Elmore Stevenson, R.A. Miller, J.W. Haddenham, John J. Smith, and Elijah Buck until Justin J. Pomeroy purchased it in 1915. The Bucks leased the Property from 1915-1945 when they purchased it from the Pomeroy family in 1945. Kemmerer Reservoir was built in 1938 which flooded some of the original property and was acquired by the city of Kemmerer.

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***About the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust***

*The Stock Growers Land Trust is dedicated to conservation through ranching. Based in Cheyenne, the non-profit organization serves the entire state and is Wyoming’s only agricultural land trust. Through partnerships with ranch families, the Stock Growers Land Trust holds and stewards conservation easements on more than 218,000 acres of land on ranches and farms throughout Wyoming. Founded in 2000 by the 140-year-old Wyoming Stock Growers Association, it is one of the largest among the 1,659 regional land trusts in the United States. For more information, visit [www.wsgalt.org](http://www.wsgalt.org).*