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Conservation Easement Preserves Agriculture and Sensitive Wildlife Habitat

Cheyenne, Wyo. — Approximately 3,000 acres of productive ranchland in Hot Springs County have been preserved as the result of a conservation easement completed on June 30 by the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust. In partnership with the Wilson family, and with funding provided by the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust and the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, a conservation easement on the Swallow Place on the V Ranch ensures that the unit will remain in agricultural production in perpetuity.

Jim and Terry Wilson chose to prevent the subdivision and development of the property in the future and donated a significant portion of the appraised value. The Wilsons have been active participants in various conservation efforts along Kirby Creek and provide hunters with access through the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's "walk-in" program. The ranch serves as suitable habitat for many of Wyoming's Species of Greatest Conservation Need and a majority of their ranch is designated as yearlong habitat for pronghorn and crucial winter-yearlong habitat for mule deer by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The property is within a Sage Grouse Core Area and the northern portion of the property is designated as Crucial Terrestrial Habitat in the Department's Strategic Habitat Plan.

The decision to place the easement on their family property was a decision the Wilsons gave great thought to and the project was thoughtfully planned to further the family's estate planning as well as complement the many conservation efforts already completed and planned for the future. Following the closing, which was attended by Jim and Terry Wilson and daughter and granddaughter Billie Jo and Emme Norsworthy, Jim said "Completing an easement gives us a little more security for the land we have there. It joins an easement the neighbors have so it kinda ties a little more of the area in. It gives us some security for what the future is going to bring and saves that land – that was our intent, to keep it as is for future generations to come and we had three generations sitting at the signing because we wanted to have them involved and for them to see what that means. And their approval means a lot to us."

Chairman of the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust Ed Prosser stated, "The Wilson family, going back to Willard, has been a driving force in the cattle business in Wyoming and surrounding states for longer than I can remember. Practically a household name if you have

been in the business in this part of the country very long. It is rewarding that a family with that much history in the cattle business in Wyoming understands the importance of conserving and protecting ag lands for future generations.”

Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Executive Director Bob Budd spoke of the integration of agricultural and wildlife values, “It’s exciting to see projects like this come to fruition. The Wilsons are a long-standing ranch family with deep roots in Hot Springs County. Their commitment to Hot Springs County and to the ag industry is hard to match. This is a particularly important conservation easement when we look at the future challenges presented by sage grouse and other species as this particular project conserves sage grouse in an area of extreme importance to their future livelihood.”

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department also expressed their thanks to the landowners. "This outstanding partnership will conserve these very important wildlife habitats in perpetuity; we appreciate the Wilsons' vision and commitment to agriculture and conservation," said Director Scott Talbott. The V Ranch project marks the fourth completed by the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust in collaboration with the Department.

The majority of the property is visible from Kirby Creek Road where travelers can look across the pastoral view of the property toward the Bridger and Owl Mountain Ranges on the horizon.



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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 56 ranch families, the Stock Growers Land Trust holds and stewards conservation easements on 201,176 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 land trusts among the 1,659 regional land trusts in the United States. For more information, visit www.wsgalt.org