



COLORADO HEADWATERS
— LAND TRUST —

PO Box 1938 / Granby CO 80446 / ColoradoHeadwatersLandTrust.Org

NEWS RELEASE

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**COLORADO FAMILY PROTECTS FOUR GENERATIONS OF RANCHING TRADITION
WITH CONSERVATION EASEMENT**

KREMMLING, Co. (December 22, 2014) – [The Colorado Headwaters Land Trust](http://TheColoradoHeadwatersLandTrust) and [The Conservation Fund](http://TheConservationFund) announced today the protection of the historic 662-acre McElroy Ranch. This scenic working ranch is now permanently protected and the McElroy family will continue to own the agriculturally productive land they have ranched for four generations. To keep the ranch and its abundant water rights forever intact, funding from the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](http://NaturalResourcesConservationService) and [Great Outdoors Colorado](http://GreatOutdoorsColorado) (GOCO) were used to purchase a conservation easement on 548 acres of the ranch in 2014. In 2013, the McElroy family donated a conservation easement on 114 acres of the ranch.

“The establishment of this easement is a huge success and great news for the McElroy family ranch, which will now remain in the hands of their family for generations to come,” U.S. Senator Michael Bennet said. “Thanks to the tireless work of The Conservation Fund, Colorado Headwaters Land Trust, Great Outdoors Colorado and families like the McElroys, historic and scenic land across the state has been preserved for the enjoyment of future Coloradans.”

Strategically located at the confluence of the Colorado River, the Blue River, and Muddy Creek, and adjacent to the Town of Kremmling, the McElroy Ranch contains three miles of the Colorado River and 1.5 miles of Muddy Creek. The property lies within the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area administered by the Bureau of Land Management, and is highly visible from the Colorado River Headwaters National Scenic and Historic Byway on U.S Highway 40 and Colorado Highway 9.

“The conservation easement was an important tool for our family, and maybe for other ranching families, who face tough estate situations,” said Chris McElroy Sammons, who manages the ranch today. “The sale of this easement allowed us to hold our ranch and our family together.”

Demands on the Colorado River and its tributaries in Grand County are at an all-time high. Protection of the McElroy Ranch and its water rights will help stabilize the ecosystem on this key stretch of the Colorado River and sustain agricultural and recreational uses. The Colorado Headwaters Land Trust and The

Conservation Fund worked together to secure funding and to complete the transaction with the McElroy family. Colorado Headwaters Land Trust is the long-term holder of the conservation easement.

“Working with the McElroy family has been a true delight,” said Carse Pustmueller, the land trust’s Executive Director. “Not only has the conservation easement on this historic ranch helped the landowners, it has also protected for the public one of the prime scenic jewels in the Colorado River landscape forever.”

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funded the project through the 2013 Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and its national sage-grouse initiative. Irrigated hay meadows, riparian corridors, and wetlands on the McElroy Ranch provide habitat for numerous species, including the bald eagle and northern leopard frog, both Colorado Species of Concern, and the greater sage-grouse, a candidate for listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The property provides summer and winter range, and movement corridors, for some of the largest big game herds in Colorado, as well as cold-water habitat for brown and rainbow trout and other aquatic species.

“The preservation of prime farm and ranchlands is one of the highest priorities for the NRCS as well as the conservation of wildlife habitat,” shares Elise Boeke, Acting State Conservationist in Colorado. “The agency’s commitment to natural resources has resulted in an investment of more than \$23 million dollars between 2010 and 2014 to purchase easements in Colorado.

GOCO, which is funded by the Colorado Lottery, contributed matching funds to complete the easement purchase, and the Gates Family Foundation provided funding to ensure the long-term stewardship of the conservation easement. The McElroy family donated a substantial portion of the value of the conservation easement to complete the deal.

“The scenic McElroy Ranch, nestled along the Colorado River, is visible to thousands” said Christine Quinlan from The Conservation Fund’s Boulder office, “and permanent protection of the ranch, and its abundant water rights, is critical to sustaining the health of the Upper Colorado River.”

Much of the Colorado River corridor, from Granby to the mouth of Gore Canyon below Kremmling, is still characterized by historic ranches. The McElroy Ranch is one of Grand County’s oldest working cattle ranches, operated by four generations of the family, beginning with Henry McElroy over a century ago. Henry’s son Joe McElroy, followed by Jack McElroy and his wife Mary K., devoted their entire lives to running the ranch. Today, the ranch is owned and managed by Jack and Mary K.’s four children—Chris Sammons, Karen Horowitz, Jodi Graf, and Kelly McElroy—with a fifth generation of McElroy children involved in day-to-day operations.

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About the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) invests a portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds to help preserve and enhance the state’s parks, trails, wildlife, rivers and open spaces. GOCO’s independent board awards competitive grants to local governments and land trusts, and makes investments through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Created when voters approved a Constitutional Amendment in 1992, GOCO has since funded more than 4,500 projects in urban and rural areas in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. Maps and lists of funded projects are available at goco.org

About the Colorado Headwaters Land Trust

Colorado Headwaters Land Trust, located in Granby, works with landowners to protect Grand County's wildlife, water, wetlands, biodiversity, and scenic and agricultural open spaces. The Colorado River begins in Rocky Mountain National Park in Grand County, as do several of its headwater tributaries, including the Fraser River. These rivers and streams have created and continue to sustain the scenic valleys and landscapes that the Colorado Headwaters Land Trust is working hard to protect through the Colorado River Initiative, its priority project. www.coloradoheadwaterslandtrust.org

About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund combines a passion for conservation with an entrepreneurial spirit to protect your favorite places before they become just a memory. A hallmark of The Conservation Fund's work is its deep, unwavering understanding that for conservation solutions to last, they need to make economic sense. Top-ranked for its efficiency, The Conservation Fund has protected more than 7 million acres across America. www.conservationfund.org