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Video Link: www.youtube.com/grvlandtrust

Keepin' it in the Families

Launch of Statewide Wyoming Land Trust Helps Wyoming Landowners

Pinedale – The launch of the Wyoming Land Trust will help more ranching families statewide keep land within their families, and significantly strengthen Wyoming landowners' ability to keep wildlife, scenic viewsheds and open spaces available for generations to come.

After 10 years of working positively in one of the state's most intensive energy development areas, the Green River Valley Land Trust will expand into a statewide trust called the Wyoming Land Trust. Please follow this video link for a launch description and key sound: www.youtube.com/grvlandtrust

"Ever-increasing requests throughout Wyoming led us to take the important step to serve landowning families statewide," said GRVLT and WLT Board Member Dave Bell. "Wyoming people want to build the Wyoming they want – to maintain the unique character that defines us and also grow our economy," he said.

"The Wyoming Land Trust makes that balance a priority," Bell said.

"We began in one of the core energy producing areas of our State, and worked hand-in-hand successfully with energy developers and ranchers to conserve and inspiring pieces of Wyoming," Bell added. "We will help landowners throughout Wyoming to keep it in the family – literally."

"Mark Twain said, 'In the West whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting over.' Land in Wyoming is a lot like water. Thankfully there are organizations such as the Wyoming Land Trust that help to bring people together by focusing on their shared values," U.S. Senator Mike Enzi said. "We can use the land and preserve it for the future. The Wyoming Land Trust is here to show us how."

The Wyoming Land Trust will facilitate conservation easement donations, purchase conservation easements, steward conservation easements, educate the public and work collaboratively with other land trusts. These services will help landowners conserve Wyoming's natural and agricultural resources privately, voluntarily and without any additional government regulation.

The success of the Green River Valley Land Trust will be celebrated at a 10-year anniversary party on July 17th on the Brown family's conserved Green River Ranch near Daniel, Wyoming. Governor Dave Freudenthal will be the keynote speaker. Event details: www.grvlandtrust.org/gannett.html

In 10 years the Green River Valley Land Trust demonstrated "landowner-centered solutions that protected and enhanced the area's quality of life – economically, visually, culturally and sustainably," said Larry Wolfe, a WLT Board member.

"All this with market-based secure solutions. A stronger combined future resulted for ranching families, wildlife and energy producers, who found they benefited from on the ground solutions," Wolfe said.

Lara Ryan, GRVLT and now WLT executive director said, "Every day, all across Wyoming, people are looking for the best answers for the future so that we get it right. Integral to that is making sure future generations can see and enjoy the Wyoming that we all love so dearly today."

"We can all come together to think about what the Wyoming we want looks like, and how conservation and energy mitigation can help," said Ryan. "Ten years of working in Sublette County in varying economic climates, gives us a unique experience as a land trust. We want to help statewide with mitigation, conservation and keeping production agriculture active in Wyoming's future."

"Wyoming landowners are central to providing clean air and water, wildlife habitat, migration routes, agriculture heritage and scenic views -- can you imagine what would be lost without their presence? We need as a state to keep it in the family," Ryan said.

WLT board members and Ryan emphasized that with more than 10 quadrillion BTUs of energy produced in Wyoming annually, there is plenty of work for all land trusts and partners in Wyoming.

"Wyoming is blessed and extremely fortunate to have a number of organizations that help landowners conserve the things they love about our state – the Wyoming Stockgrowers Agricultural Land Trust, the Jackson Hole Land Trust, the Conservation Fund, the Sheridan Community Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and great partners like the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Conservation Districts, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited and more. These groups have made a real difference in Wyoming and should be celebrated and supported."

"Our work gives landowners, especially agricultural landowners, choices. These choices are right for some and not for others. But they let landowners and their families plan for the future of their land together as best they can," Ryan said.

"We are taking the opportunity we had in Sublette County and expanding it across Wyoming communities with a statewide board and an organization working throughout the state. There is a lot of great work being done throughout the state – we hope we can add positively to that mix."

Ryan also noted that the WLT will continue to headquarter from Pinedale. "We know where our home is. Our Wyoming Land Trust headquarters will be where our landowner focus began."

The Green River Valley Land Trust was the first accredited land trust in Wyoming, and that accreditation will carry over to the Wyoming Land Trust.

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Background: Below is a background material on the Wyoming Land Trust and its mission.

Wyoming Land Trust Website: www.wyominglandtrust.org

To date, the Green River Valley Land Trust has worked with more than 45 families on 51 easements that conserve 28,564 acres of working rangeland, wildlife habitat and open space. These landowners—young, old, natives and newcomers—have helped GRVLT become one of the top 100 land trusts in the country in terms of acreage conserved.

Like the Green River Valley Land Trust, the Wyoming Land Trust will exist to serve landowners. WLT will not be an advocacy group or an environmental group. WLT's board and staff will live and work in Wyoming and use voluntary, market-based tools like conservation easements that respect private property rights and help landowners achieve their goals.

Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements between landowners and land trusts like ours that restrict certain uses of the land to conserve its agricultural and natural values forever. They're tools that landowners can use to keep their land available for agriculture; alleviate income and estate taxes; pass their ranch to children and grandchildren; curb residential subdivision and commercial development; preserve habitat for moose, antelope, elk, mule deer, fish, birds, and other wildlife; and maintain the beautiful views we all enjoy.

In addition to conservation easements, the Wyoming Land Trust will continue the Green River Valley Land Trust's Corridor Conservation Campaign, a 5-year effort to make 500 miles of existing fences in key wildlife migration routes in Sublette County workable for ranchers and passable for wildlife at no cost to landowners.

By the end of this year, big game in Sublette County area will find more than 275 miles of previously-prohibitive fencing passable as they move between seasonal ranges.

That makes a real difference, not only for sustaining our wildlife populations, but for the Sublette County community as well. It means residents and visitors can continue to enjoy our area's wildlife with their families. It means that cattlemen have good fences to continue running their operations, maintaining our state's unique agricultural heritage, and providing intact, unfragmented habitat. And it means that the Land Trust's customers—the private landowners who make this all possible—have a reasonable, trusted partner to help them meet their conservation goals.

The Land Trust thinks of the Campaign as "common-sense conservation in action." It's efficient, effective and delivers immediate results. It's relatively simple to implement, easily replicated in other areas, and makes a real difference for wildlife. And it's brought together a host of non-traditional partners like sportsmen, environmentalists, industry and agencies, who've found common ground in a straightforward solution.

Corridor Conservation Campaign Project Partners

	Bridger-Teton National Forest		Questar Exploration and Production Company
	Bureau of Land Management		Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
	EnCana Oil and Gas, USA		Shell
	EnerCrest		Safari Club International
	Environmental Defense Fund		University of Wyoming Haub School and Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources
	Good Sportsman Marketing, LLC		WLC Engineering
	Greater Yellowstone Coalition		Western Governors' Association
	Heart of the Rockies Initiative		Wyoming Department of Agriculture
	James Family Foundation		Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
	Jonah Interagency Mitigation and Reclamation Office (JIO)		Wyoming Department of Transportation
	Mule Deer Foundation		Wyoming Game and Fish Department
	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation		Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative
	Patagonia		Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust
	Private individuals and landowners		

To join this exciting partnership, please contact us!
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