

Natural Resources -- Parks and Wildlife
Crystal Creek Ranch Conservation Easement

Rio Blanco and Moffat Counties

3,451 acres

Approximately 20 miles south of Craig

Action Required

Recommend support for the conservation easement acquisition on Crystal Creek Ranch (approximately 3,451 for \$2,720,000).

Questions and Responses

None.



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

**Capital Development Committee
January 2023 —Property Transaction Proposal**

**Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Wildlife**

Action Requested	Pursuant to C.R.S. 33-1-105(3)(a) and C.R.S. 33-10-107(2) recommend support to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission for the Division of Parks and Wildlife’s proposal to acquire a conservation easement on approximately 3,451 acres in Rio Blanco and Moffat counties.
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General Information	
Project Name	Crystal Creek Ranch – CE Acquisition RFP
Number of acres	3,451 acres
Location	Approximately 20 miles south of Craig, CO
County	Rio Blanco and Moffat

Costs / Source of Funding		
Purchase Price	\$2,720,000.00	*Source: Habitat Stamp revenues earmarked for the benefit of or access to wildlife habitat, pursuant to C.R.S. 33-4-102.7
Habitat Stamp	<i>Spending authority has already been approved for this project in the Long Bill</i>	
	Fiscal Year	FY 2022-23
	Line Item	Land and Water Acquisitions PCPKP902C
	Appropriation	\$11,000,000.00
	Remaining Unexpended Balance	\$11,000,000.00
Annual Monitoring Costs	Staff time to perform annual monitoring.	\$340 per day for a maximum of three days per year.
Development Costs	N/A	

* The Division may alter the source of funds for individual acquisitions based on circumstances that arise in the time period prior to closing.

Summary of Proposal:

CPW will acquire and hold a conservation easement on approximately 3,451 acres located in both Rio Blanco and Moffat counties. Improvements on the property consist of a residence (2,315 sq. /ft.), four cabins (216, 256, 294, and 1,450 sq. /ft.), a shower house (120 sq. /ft.), and several older agricultural outbuildings. The property contains the presence of elk, moose, bears,

mountain lions, antelope, beavers, mule deer, blue grouse, cut throat trout, and badgers. In fact, the largest herd of migratory elk in Colorado pass through the property each year. The south fork of the Williams Fork River also goes through the property, which is considered fishable. Types of habitats found on the property include irrigated meadows, mixed mountain shrub lands, woodlands, and emergent wetlands. The property is bordered on three sides by national forest and BLM lands.

The acquisition of a CE on this property will advance CPW's Strategic Plan as follows:

Goal I – Conserve wildlife and habitat to ensure healthy, sustainable populations and ecosystems.

- Objective B: Preserve and enhance diverse habitat.
- Objective D: Protect and enhance water resources for fish and wildlife populations.

Additional information:

The current landowner recently purchased the property within the past two years and also owns another ranch in the area that has a CPW-held conservation easement attached since 2012. The current uses of the property include seasonal sheep grazing, hay production, and limited hunting through private outfitters, which are anticipated to continue into the future.

Geothermal and Wind: According to a review of the first map referenced below, the Property lies outside the scope of regions of known or potential geothermal resources. Also, according to a review of the second map referenced below, the Property lies outside the Central Solar Power and the Wind Resource Generation Development areas.

1. *November, 2003 US Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Geothermal Technologies Program.*
2. *A map entitled "SB07-91 Renewable Resource Generation Development Areas" from "Renewable Energy Development Structure," a report of the Colorado Governor's Energy Office dated December 2009.*

Mineral Interest Ownership:

The Minerals Remoteness Letter determined, "the probability of surface mining at the Site is so remote as to be negligible; however, ongoing crude-oil production is expected to continue in the western part of the Site on the established well pad, and the possibility also exists for future oil and gas drilling and extraction at a portion of the Site and on adjoining lands due to active private and Federal leases."

Water Rights:

The CE will encumber the water rights and restrict their use to support the conservation values of the property.

Attachments:

- Map
- Photos
- Concurrence letters



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Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Crystal Creek Ranch SHA
Conservation Easement Acquisition
Project # 20-068
Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties



Photo 1

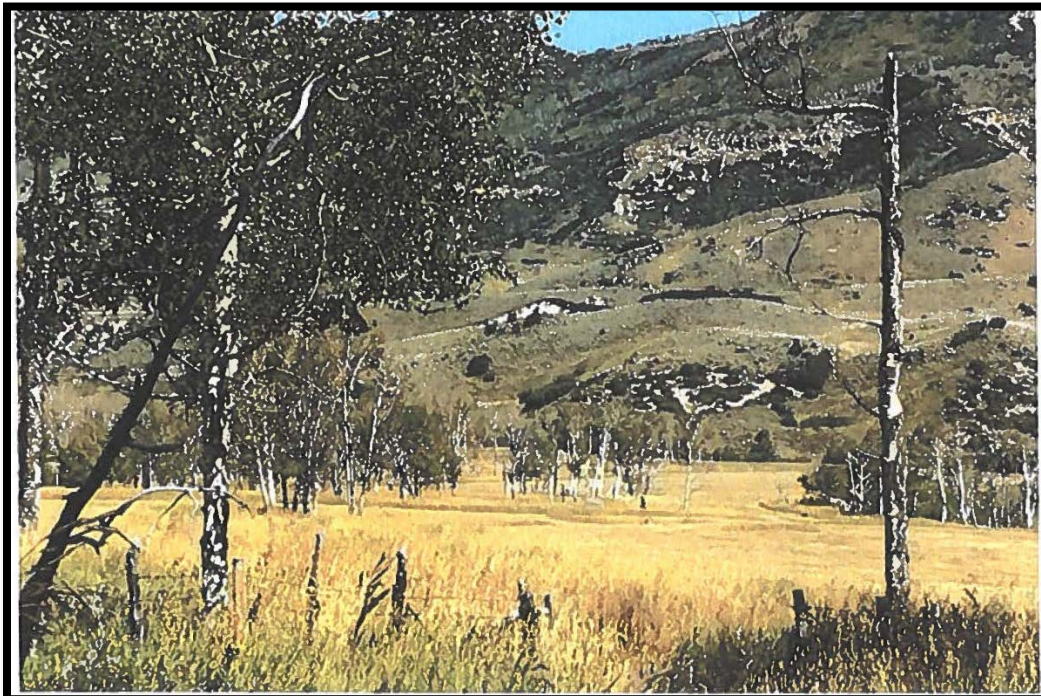
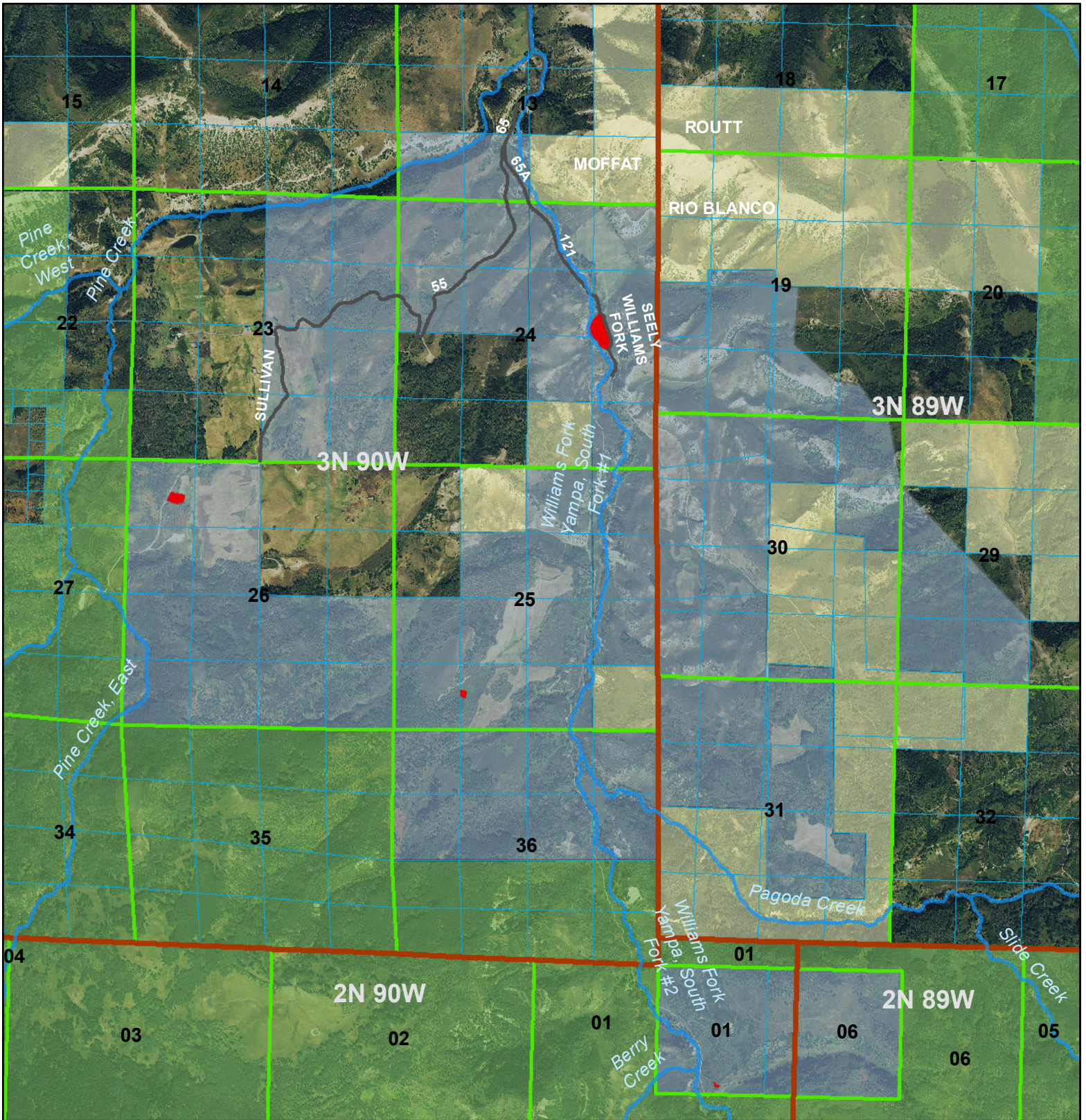


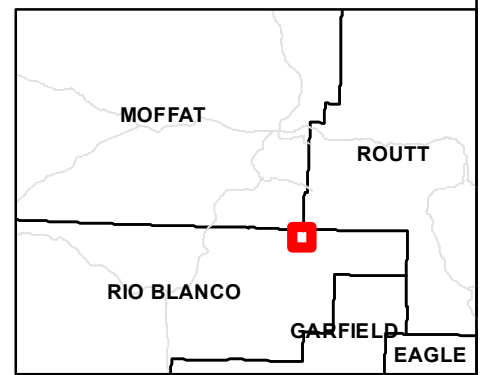
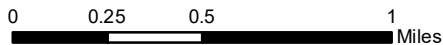
Photo 2



GIS Unit

Crystal Creek Ranch SHA Conservation Easement 20-068 Rio Blanco & Moffat Counties

- Building Envelopes
- Crystal Creek Ranch SWA
- Medicine Bow & Routt National Forest
- BLM





COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Meeker (Area 6)
73485 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641
P 970.878.6090 | F 970.878.6077

December 8, 2022

Rio Blanco County Commissioners
555 Main Street 3rd Floor
Meeker, CO. 81641

RE: RSH Land Company Conservation Easement Acquisition

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Bill de Vergie and I am the Area Wildlife Manager for the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) in Meeker. We are presenting you this letter in hopes of gaining your support for a conservation easement land acquisition the CPW is negotiating with the owners, RSH Land Company, of the Crystal Creek Ranch. This project was initiated under a Request for Proposal as part of the CPW's Habitat Protection Program in 2020 and the funds for this project have already been appropriated.

Crystal Creek Ranch is comprised of 3,460 acres of land located in Rio Blanco County approximately 30 miles northeast of Meeker on the South Fork of the William's Fork River. Crystal Creek Ranch lies in close proximity to CPW's Indian Run State Wildlife Area (SWA) and adjacent to the Routt National Forest. This property is a heavily used migration corridor for both deer and elk and will advance Executive Order (D 2019 011) for "Conserving Colorado's Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors." It also provides spring, summer and fall range habitat for deer elk and valuable habitat for a variety of other wildlife species. It is the desire of the owners, RHS Land Company, to protect this land for future generations.

CPW respectfully requests your support for this conservation easement on the Crystal Creek Ranch property. Your signature on the bottom of this letter will show support for this project. If you could please return this letter to me at the address above or email to me (Bill.devergie@state.co.us) that would be appreciated. If you have any questions, please call me at (970) 878-6061. Thank you for your time and interest in this matter.



Sincerely,

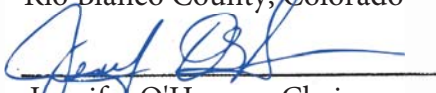


Bill de Vergie
Area Wildlife Manager

We support/do not object to this proposal.

Date: 01/10/2023, _____

Board of County Commissioners of
Rio Blanco County, Colorado



Jennifer O'Hearon, Chairman

Ty Gates, Commissioner

Doug Overton

Doug Overton, Commissioner