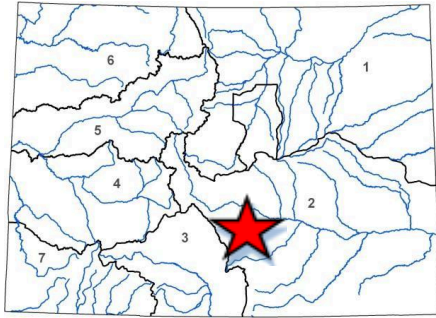




Water Plan Grant Program



LOCATION	
County:	Custer
Basin:	Arkansas

DETAILS	
Total Project Cost:	\$425,900.00
Water Plan Grant Request:	\$250,000.00
Recommended amount:	\$250,000.00
Match Commitment:	\$175,900.00
Grant to Match Ratio:	59/41
Project Type:	Other
Primary Project Category:	Agriculture
Measurable Result: 9,250 linear feet of stream protected; 1,184 acres of preserved habitat	

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT), a non-profit organization that partners with landowners to protect agricultural land and natural resources, is seeking a Colorado Water Plan grant to support the Rusk Ranch's Beckwith Parcel Conservation Easement Project. The project is located just outside the community of Westcliffe, close to DeWeese Reservoir.

This project would establish a perpetual conservation easement on the 1,184-acre Rusk Ranch to conserve the land and its associated water rights, including 4/9 interest in and to the Freer, Beckwith & Kennicott Ditch No. 104, Priority No. 118 for 9.99 cubic feet per second (cfs) out of Swift Creek, 100% interest in Shauner Lake and the Amelia Ponds and Additional decreed well and spring rights. It will also protect 9,250 linear feet of Swift Creek and 1,184 acres of habitat.

The easement has been thoughtfully designed to maintain or enhance the property's water resources as part of the region's larger water system, ecological integrity of the habitat, and ensuring that the ranch's existing agricultural operations remain viable and productive for future generations. The project supports the Arkansas Basin Implementation Plan's goals including support for projects that better manage vulnerable agricultural supplies and maximize utilization of water users entitlements in addition to sustaining a productive agricultural economy in the basin that sustains viable rural, agricultural based communities. The property hosts over 620 acres of emergent, herbaceous, continuously saturated land via its ditches and approximately five acres of flooded stream bed. The property hosts a 1.3-acre pond and 989 acres of wetlands. The property has senior water rights and provides habitat for numerous wildlife species, including several designated as Tier 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan.

Grant dollars would be used to support due diligence and easement acquisition costs for this perpetual conservation easement. Specifically, CWCB funds will contribute to the 'bargain sale' purchase of the conservation easement with the already awarded Great Outdoors Colorado-funded transaction cost assistance from Keep It Colorado. The estimated donation value of the Rusk Ranch Beckwith Parcel Conservation Easement is \$825,000 with \$107,950 in due diligence costs.

The project has secured \$50,000 in a cash match from Keep It Colorado as well as \$7,950 coming directly from the landowners.

Funding Recommendation:

Staff recommends a Water Plan Grant award not to exceed \$250,000.00 to the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust for the Rusk Ranch's Beckwith Easement Project.