

News release

Conservation Easement guarantees conservation of 12,000-acre U of A ranch in southern Alberta

Agreement provides \$3.8 million in funding to create endowment to fund leading-edge agricultural and environmental research

March 9, 2015 (Calgary) – The University of Alberta and Western Sky Land Trust have signed a conservation easement, supported by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, that guarantees the U of A’s 12,000-acre research ranch in southern Alberta will be conserved forever.

It is one of the largest conservation easements ever signed in Alberta.

The conservation easement ensures development will never occur on the U of A’s Rangeland Research Institute – Mattheis Ranch and that it will continue to be used as a research facility to explore new and improved ways to enhance both the environmental and economic sustainability of rangeland ecosystems.

The conservation easement provides \$3.8 million in funding from Western Sky Land Trust to the University of Alberta as compensation against future development. This was made possible through funding by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development’s Land Trust Grant program. These funds will be used as an endowment to provide a sustainable source of revenue to conduct research on the ranch.

Specifically, the endowment will promote rangeland research in critical topical areas not currently being addressed, support the ongoing training of highly qualified personnel who will become the future leaders of rangeland management and conservation in Alberta, maintain the key databases needed by researchers now and in the future, and provide adequate core resources for the proper management of the Ranch.

“I’m pleased with the guarantee the conservation easement provides with respect to conserving the land forever,” said Edwin Mattheis, who, along with his wife Ruth, donated the 12,000-acre ranch to the University of Alberta in 2010 after owning and operating it for more than three decades.

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"This conservation project is a unique partnership between Western Sky and the University of Alberta that allows the project to go above and beyond protecting and enhancing vulnerable prairie habitat," said Jerry Brunen, Executive Director of Western Sky Land Trust. "It will support research and knowledge sharing, and showcase how a working ranch can be well managed using field-proven, science-based practices."

"We've very pleased with the conservation easement as it will provide stable and secure funding to conduct world-class, leading edge research that will provide Alberta ranchers and the energy industry – specifically oil and gas, pipelines and power transmission – with practical information that they can put to use in their operations and affect changes in agricultural land use policy," said Dr. Stan Blade, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences.

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