

Diamond H Ranch donates easement

By JEFF GEARINO - Southwest Wyoming bureau | Posted: Thursday, February 25, 2010 12:00 am |

GREEN RIVER -- A portion of a century-old cattle ranch in southwest Wyoming will be preserved under a conservation easement, according to Wyoming Game and Fish Department officials.

Green River Regional Office spokeswoman Lucy Wold said the department worked with a variety of partners to secure a 2,400-acre conservation easement with the Diamond H Ranch located near Kemmerer in Lincoln County.

The commercial Hereford cattle ranch is owned by Myles, Corby, Michael and Rachel McGinnis.

The Diamond H Ranch dates back to 1886 and includes 7,200 deeded acres and 110,000 acres of leases on Bureau of Land Management and National Forest lands.

Game and Fish habitat biologist Ron Lockwood said discussions with the ranch owners about the easement had been ongoing since 2008.

He said the easement -- which holds several permanent streams that support populations of various fish species including Colorado River cutthroat trout -- should protect multiple wildlife habitats and will benefit many wildlife species.

"The Diamond H has important conservation values with unique topographic formations and open scenic vistas of great importance to the local ranching community and the public," Lockwood said this week in a media release.

The easement acreage includes crucial winter range and yearlong range for elk, deer, moose, sage grouse and antelope.

Lockwood said the agency has also documented antelope movement through the area to summer ranges to the north, making the easement an important migration corridor.

He said the easement is particularly important because lands directly adjacent to the property are being subdivided for other uses.

"This conservation easement will secure long-term protection of these habitats from subdivision and will ensure a viable livestock operation and wildlife habitat in the future," he said.

Landowner award

Lockwood said the McGinnis family and the Diamond H Ranch were the recipients of the Game and Fish's 2009 Landowner of the Year Award for the Green River region.

He said Corby McGinnis also serves as the chairperson for the Southwest Sage Grouse Working Group.

"The McGinnises have a full understanding that conserving and enhancing all habitats benefit not only wildlife, but their ranching operation as well," Lockwood said.

He noted although public access was not included in the conservation easement, which is generally the case for this type of easement, hunting and fishing on the Diamond H Ranch is allowed with landowner permission.

Other project partners include the Jonah Interagency Reclamation and Mitigation Office, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, The Conservation Fund, the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund,

the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative, the Game and Fish Habitat Trust Fund, the Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

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