

September 13, 2008

Heritage designation preserves ecological legacy of 125-year-old ranch

Longview... One of Alberta's largest areas of native grassland on one of the oldest ranches in the province will be preserved for future generations through a heritage rangeland designation and conservation agreements.

"The heritage rangeland designation allows us to preserve this unique and treasured landscape," said Premier Ed Stelmach. "In addition to protecting the land, this designation preserves a way of life and celebrates traditional ranching and land stewardship practices that are older than the province."

The heritage rangeland designation helps protect about 10,200 acres (41.28 square kilometers) of public land rich with grasslands, forests, willow groves, shrublands and wildlife. The area has consistently been ranched under grazing leases held by the OH Ranch. This designation ensures the continuation of traditional ranching practices that have stewarded and managed sensitive native prairies in southern Alberta for generations.

"For many years, we have looked after the soil, the water and the wildlife on this land," said Daryl K.(Doc) Seaman, owner of the OH Ranch. "I am very pleased that we have been able to work with the Government of Alberta and conservation groups to find a way to preserve this ranch and this unspoiled landscape for the generations that will follow me."

The OH Ranch will continue to hold and pay for the grazing leases on the public land portions of the Longview and Pekisko sections of the ranch that are now designated as OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland. A draft management plan will be developed and made available for public review and comment. The process to place the privately owned sections of the OH Ranch under conservation easements is underway, led by OH Ranch with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Southern Alberta Land Trust Society (SALTS). When the easements are in place, the land will continue to be managed as one operating ranch to conserve the native grassland ecosystems.

"OH Ranch is a remarkable conservation project, providing habitat for a number of different species," says Bob Demulder, Regional Vice President for the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). "This is a great example of how conservation should happen – government, land trusts and landowners all working together to conserve significant lands and waters for the species that depend on them. NCC is proud to be part of this significant announcement."

The conservation easements will constrain future development on the private land. The easements will be registered with the land titles, ensuring that current and future owners will manage the land according to the agreed terms.

"By taking this action the Seaman family is showing its true commitment to the conservation and stewardship of our foothills grasslands," said Craig Smith, President of SALTS. "This is an example of how private property owners and the government can work together to protect our environment and ranching heritage."

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Backgrounder attached

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