

ROUTT COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA COMMUNICATION FORM

ITEM DATE: 12/10/19		ITEM TIME: 1:00 PM
FROM:	PDR Board/Claire Sollars – Kendra Alfieri	
TODAY’S DATE:	12/3/19	
AGENDA TITLE:	FUNDING APPROVAL FOR PDR PROJECT 196 – FISHER MEADOWS	
CHECK ONE THAT APPLIES TO YOUR ITEM:		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACTION ITEM		
<input type="checkbox"/> DIRECTION		
<input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION		
I. DESCRIBE THE REQUEST OR ISSUE:		
See V. (Background)		
II. RECOMMENDED ACTION:		
Consideration to approve the funding of PDR project 196- Fisher Meadows-, in the amount of \$450,000 towards the purchase of the conservation easement and up to \$25,000 for reimbursement of transaction costs; and authorization to sign the Agreement Concerning Conservation Easement between Routt County and Colorado Cattlemen’s Ag Land Trust (CCALT).		
III. DESCRIBE FISCAL IMPACTS (VARIATION TO BUDGET):		
PROPOSED REVENUE: n/a		
PROPOSED EXPENDITURE: \$475,000		
FUNDING SOURCE: Open Space – PDR Fund		
\$450,000 will be applied towards the purchase of the conservation easement and up to \$25,000 for reimbursement of transaction costs.		
IV. IMPACTS OF A REGIONAL NATURE OR ON OTHER JURISDICTIONS (IDENTIFY ANY COMMUNICATIONS ON THIS ITEM):		
None.		

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V. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Routt County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Citizen's Advisory Board met on November 8, 2019 to review Tier II documents for Project #196- Fisher Meadows. The PDR Board recommends approval of Tier II funding in the amount of \$450,000 towards the purchase of the Conservation Easement and up to \$25,000 for reimbursement of transaction costs. The Attorney office has reviewed the submitted documents and while there a couple of housekeeping items there is nothing that would hold up approval.

The final Conservation Easement was valued at \$1,300,000. The PDR program will be contributing \$450,000 (34.62%) to the conservation easement purchase, and the landowner will be donating 65.38%. The PDR Board is pleased to see this project move towards completion and highly commends the landowners' dedication to planning for the future.

The Fisher Meadows Ranch is a key piece of the view shed in northern Routt County. The Ranch's irrigated meadows give rise to aspen woodlands and sagebrush highlands. The Ranch is important big game habitat, and contributes to the high quality of the riparian habitat along the ecologically significant Elk River. The ranch is productive with adequate water rights, producing roughly 318 tons of hay annually. The conservation of this property is critically important to the 30-year landscape level conservation initiative in the Upper Elk River Valley, adding to the 5,590 acres of land already protected by conservation easements within three miles of the property.

It is important to note that approximately 45.40 acres of the conservation easement proposed is currently encumbered by the neighboring Fetcher Ranch conservation easement, conveyed to the American Farmland Trust in 1993 (then subsequently to CCALT in 2008). In 2010, the encumbered 45.40-acre parcel was traded for approximately 78 acres owned by the Stranahan family in a minor boundary line adjustment between neighbors for the benefit of each respective agricultural operation. Later in 2010, the Fetchers amended their conservation easement to include the 78-acre parcel obtained in the trade, providing CCALT the opportunity to update the dated language of the 1993 easement. CCALT now wants to take this opportunity to include the 45.4-acre parcel in a new conservation easement for a total of 436 acres. Including the 45.40 acre parcel in the Fisher Meadows conservation easement will allow an update to improved conservation easement language and ensure the 45.4-acre parcel cannot be ever sold separately from the remainder of Fisher Meadow.

Routt County Resolution No. 95-033 establishes that it is the policy of the Board of Routt County to "conserve, enhance, and encourage ranching, farming and all manner of agricultural activities and operations within and throughout Routt County." It is the intention of Grantor to preserve the ability of the Property to be agriculturally productive, including continuing farming and ranching activities, to engage in future ranching activities, to preserve the agricultural values, open space character, wildlife habitat, and scenic qualities of the Property, thus meeting the stated purpose for use of PDR funds.

VI. LEGAL ISSUES:

All documentation has been reviewed by the County Attorney's Office.
No outstanding items.

VII. CONFLICTS OR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:

None.

VIII. SUMMARY AND OTHER OPTIONS:

None.