

PINEDALE ANTICLINE PROJECT OFFICE (PAPO)

1625 West Pine
PO Box 768
Pinedale, Wyoming 82941
Attention: Project Coordinator 307-367-5386

APPLICATION FOR FUNDING (use additional sheets if necessary)

1. GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name: Richie Ranch Conservation Easement

General Location (distance and direction from nearest city/town, attach map at a scale not less than 1/2" = 1 mile): The property is located along US Highway 191, approximately 1 mile south of Boulder.

Legal Location of Project (attach map at a scale not less than 1" = 2,000').

Township: T 32 N

Range: R 108 W

Section(s): 21, 28, 33

County: Sublette

Surface Ownership (check all that apply): Federal State Private

**If project includes a mosaic of land ownerships (e.g., mix of federal, state and/or fee lands), provide a breakdown for each specific owner by acres and percent of total project area.

Contact Information for Affected Parties or Agencies:

2. APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name/Organization: Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Mailing Address: 5400 Bishop Blvd.

City: Cheyenne

State: WY

Zip Code: 82006

Daytime Phone # 307-777-4653

Fax # 307-777-4602

Email Address: Kerry.olson1@wyo.gov

Point of Contact (if different from above) Kerry Olson

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

General Project Type (check all that apply):

Land Use/Livestock X

Land Use/Recreation

Cultural X

Wildlife X

Air

Other

Describe Project Proposal (e.g., mechanical treatment, water improvement, etc.)

Conservation Easement

Total Project Acres (if applicable) 1379 acres

Acres Indirectly Affected (if applicable, explain)

4. OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT, AND BENEFITS TO PAPO OFF-SITE MITIGATION STRATEGIC GOALS.

Private lands in the Boulder and Pinedale areas are being developed for rural residential development at extremely high rates. Immediately northwest of the Richie property is the Kochever Minor subdivision which includes the Highline Trailer RV Park with more than 40, frequently occupied spaces. Other area subdivisions include the Boulder Commons, Big River, and Big Country Ranches. The scenic views of the North Fork River and the Wind River Range make the Richie property highly desired for subdivision and development.

The Richie Ranch project will conserve high value wildlife habitat, migration corridors, breeding areas, and cultural resources. A conservation easement will prohibit subdivision and development of private lands in an area under intense pressure for small tract home site construction. The project will also include conveyance of public fishing easements on the New Fork River and the East Fork River. Cultural resources remaining from the abandoned community of New Fork will also be conserved. PAPO Goals 1 and 5 will be addressed.

The conservation easement will be held by the Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust (WSGALT) and the public access agreements will be held by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

5. DIRECT/INDIRECT EFFECTS ON OTHER RESOURCES. (if applicable)

The property contains habitat that supports populations of mule deer, moose, elk, pronghorn, bobcats, raptors, various species of waterfowl and migratory song birds, and numerous others. The majority of the property is included in the Greater South Pass Sage-Grouse Core Area. Sage grouse use the property for feeding and brood rearing. Local biologists have observed use of the waterways and associated sloughs by trumpeter swans. In addition, approximately 59 species considered as known or suspected recent residents and identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Wyoming's Statewide Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) including moose, northern river otter, pygmy rabbit, vagrant shrew, bald eagle, northern goshawk, merlin, sandhill crane, boreal toad, Columbian spotted frog, roundtail chub, cutthroat trout species, and others.

The Richie conservation easement may indirectly affect surrounding private lands by remaining as a large block of undeveloped agricultural land with quality wildlife habitat in an area of rapidly expanding development. All lands in the area support tremendous numbers and varieties of wildlife species. The need for unobstructed areas for wildlife passage to and from riparian zones and other quality habitat will continue to increase as development continues. Retention of open spaces should enhance use and enjoyment of thousands of acres of adjacent public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The proposed Richie public fishing areas will further enhance fishing opportunities currently available on these public lands.

6. POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE EXPANSION OF PROJECT. Explain

Due to a family connection, the Richie project is a direct result of work accomplished on the Sommers and Grindstone conservation easements supported by JIO/PAPO. The Richie family owns additional lands with high wildlife values in the area, and may consider conservation easements for these properties in the future. The Department and WSGALT anticipate the project will attract interest of other area landowners in private lands conservation. The Richie family owns other lands in the area that may become available for conservation easement placement in the future.

7. LIST ALL PROJECT PARTNERS/COOPERATORS, THEIR ROLES AND/OR CONTRIBUTIONS

Wyoming Game and Fish Commission – Project lead, funding, technical advice
Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust – Technical assistance
Natural Resources Conservation Service – Funding, technical assistance
Pinedale Anticline Project Office – Funding
Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Account Board - Funding
Wyoming Game and Fish Department Habitat Trust Fund – Funding
Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition – Funding
Landowner – Bargain sale

8. PROJECT MONITORING AND REPORTING (Describe how monitoring and reporting will be done, and how it relates to the objectives)

A Baseline Documentation Report will be prepared for the conservation easement. The report will establish the natural and physical condition of the property subject to the easement. The report will provide the basis for future monitoring efforts. The Wyoming Stock Growers Agricultural Land Trust will monitor the conservation easement for compliance with terms and conditions at least once each year. Monitoring reports will be available for review by all project partners.

9. RESEARCH POTENTIAL

The project is not designed for research, but the landowners may consider research project on lands included in the conservation easement.

10. PERMITS AND AUTHORIZATIONS REQUIRED PRIOR TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (including but not necessarily limited to the following):

PERMIT OR AUTHORIZATION	REQUIRED		SUBMITTED		APPROVED	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Cultural Resource Inventory		X				
COE Section 404 Permit		X				
Cooperative Agreement(s)		X				
NEPA Analysis		X				
Pesticide Application Permit		X				
Private Landowner Agreement(s)	X					
Sensitive Species Clearance		X				
Surface/Ground Water Permits		X				
T/E Species Clearance		X				
Other (explain)						

11. TOTAL PROJECT COST (Attach detailed budget)

Project Planning and Design	\$ 20,000 _____
Project Implementation	\$ 2,500,000 _____
Project Operation and Maintenance	\$ 5,000 _____
Total Required	\$ 2,525,000 _____

12. MATCHING FUNDS ANTICIPATED IN CASH (list source and amount)

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program – \$1,250,000 (Granted)
 Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust - \$400,000 (Requested)
 Pinedale Anticline Project Office – \$250,000 (Requested)
 Wyoming Game and Fish Department Habitat Trust Fund – \$100,000 (Application pending)
 Wyoming Governor’s Big Game License Coalition – \$25,000 (Application pending)
 Landowner – Bargain sale

13. ANTICIPATED “IN KIND” MATCHING FUNDS (list source, valuation, and valuation method)

No in kind assistance is anticipated.

14. PERCENTAGE OF FUNDING ON HAND OR COMMITTED

50%

15. TOTAL PAPO FUNDING REQUESTED: \$ 250,000

16. EXPECTED/ANTICIPATED LIFE OF PROJECT (LOP)

Perpetual X > 50 Years _____ 25-50 Years _____ < 25 Years _____

Explain Basis for Projected LOP:

17. PROJECT TIMELINE AND ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE. Explain

It is anticipated the project will be completed by September 30, 2012.

18. ATTACHMENTS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Project Design _____

Letters of Support _____

Management Plan _____ Long Term _____ Short Term _____¹

Monitoring Plan _____ Long Term _____ Short Term _____¹

Relevant Past Experience _____ Other _____ Explain:

¹ Long term is defined as greater than (>) 5 years; short term is less than (<) 5 years.

19. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PAPO CONSIDERATION

Despite Wyoming's abundant natural resources and low human population density, wildlife habitat and open spaces are being threatened throughout the state. Wildlife habitat fragmentation resulting from various forms of conversion of agricultural lands is a primary concern of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). Disruption or loss of migration corridors, crucial winter ranges, and important parturition areas resulting from homesite development, road construction, fence and utility installations, and other landscape alterations are impacting wildlife populations throughout Wyoming. Private lands with recreational attributes in Sublette County are being converted from agricultural based uses to small-tract home-sites at rates among the highest in the country. The primary objectives of the proposed Richie conservation easement are to ensure that private lands remain in agricultural production, and that threats of habitat fragmentation by small-tract home site developments and other activities are reduced or eliminated.

The biological, fiscal and recreational attributes of the project have been thoroughly evaluated by Department biologists and administrators, and have been determined to exceed established minimum criteria for conservation need, public benefit, and wildlife benefits including benefits to sensitive species. Anticipated

partners include the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Account Board, the Wyoming Wildlife Heritage Foundation, the Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition, and others.

WGFD has a long history of land conservation and habitat improvement efforts in the state, including conservation easement acquisitions in areas with important wildlife values. WGFD's wildlife habitat conservation efforts are guided by administrative and strategic programs like the Strategic Habitat Plan (SHP), the SWAP, the Habitat and Access Evaluation Process (HAEP) and by individual species strategies included in annual reports such as the Threatened, Endangered, and Nongame Bird and Wildlife Investigations, Wyoming Bat Conservation Strategy, and Big Game Job Completion Reports. (The HAEP is the process through which properties are scored and prioritized based on biological and public access characteristics. The Richie property received extremely high scores through the HAEP that compared favorably to other properties with similar attributes). WGFD staff includes professionals specializing in real estate appraisals, habitat improvement and monitoring, wildlife population management and monitoring, property development, property rights compliance, and law enforcement.

WSGALT has become one of the state's leading conservation easement stewards, with a strong commitment to retention of farm and ranch operations. Their work has led to conservation of thousands of acres of high quality agricultural lands with important wildlife habitat.

The Richie Ranch project offers an opportunity to demonstrate advantages of long-term conservation protection of private land.

20. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: this project and requested funding is subject to approval by the

PAPO Pinedale Anticline Mitigation Management Board.

Kerry Olson

Signed

Kerry Olson

Printed Name

Lands Resource Biologist

Title

10/1/2011

Date