

# Conservation Easement Near Telluride Protects Gunnison Sage Grouse Habitat



BAKER RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT, ON IRON SPRINGS MESA, IN SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

Working cooperatively with landowners Chris and Deann Baker, TLR accepted a conservation easement in December 2005 covering 120 acres of the Baker's property in San Miguel County. This is the second easement the Bakers have donated on their property, bringing total protected acreage on the ranch to 280.

Also in 2005, TLR worked with the Bakers to apply to the Colorado Division of Wildlife for funding to purchase a third conservation easement from the Bakers covering an additional 500 acres, bringing the total of protected acreage to 780. CDOW has approved

bringing the total of protected acreage to 700. CDOV has approved the new proposal, and TLR hopes to close Baker Easement #3 by years end, 2006.

As reported in 2003, Baker Ranch is in the heart of critical wildlife habitat for the Gunnison sage grouse. A once prolific rangeland species whose numbers have dwindled to less than 3,000, today biologists point to habitat fragmentation by road building, fencing, housing development and livestock grazing as the culprits responsible for the birds decline. Easement-required restrictions on Baker Ranch limit the subject acreage to no residential development, limited road building and maintenance, fences that discourage raptor perches, and a livestock grazing management plan that keeps cattle off during spring breeding season, and pulls cattle by early fall to maintain winter feed for the grouse.

With the donation of Baker Easement #2 at the end of 2005, TLR holds 9 conservation easements that altogether total 2235 acres. Combined, these easements reduce 65 potential residential development rights to 6.

A tally of TLR conservation easements as of December 31, 2005 looks like this:

<b>Easement name</b>	<b>Year donated</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
Cimarron Ridge	2001	Cimarron Mtns.	Ouray County 1,000
Garard	2002	Ironton Park	Ouray County 150
Down Valley Park	2003	Placerville	San Miguel County 5
Fall Creek	2003	Wilson Mesa	San Miguel County 470

			County	
Baker Ranch I	2003	Iron Spgs Mesa	San Miguel County	160
Mystic Valley I	2004	Hastings Mesa	San Miguel County	110
Mystic Valley II	2004	Hastings Mesa	San Miguel County	110
Mystic Valley III	2004	Hastings Mesa	San Miguel County	110
Baker Ranch II	2005	Iron Spgs Mesa	San Miguel County	120



CIMARRON RIDGE CONSERVATION EASEMENT\*  
 CIMARRON MOUNTAINS, OURAY COUNTY

\*note: above photo documents Canadian Thistle problem scheduled for eradication in 2006.