



NEWS

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Historic Rodeo Grounds Ranch Protected

Stanley, Idaho – The 157-acre Rodeo Grounds Ranch, which once hosted the historic 4th of July Custer County Rodeo in the 1930's, is now permanently protected, The Trust for Public Land announced today. The property, located just 5 miles north of the town of Stanley, Idaho, was one of the largest unprotected properties still remaining in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

The purchase of development rights on the Rodeo Grounds Ranch ensures that the land will never be subdivided or developed, enhancing scenic and recreational values, and enhancing community fire protection. The easement purchase was accomplished in partnership with the Sawtooth Society, a local community based non-profit dedicated to protecting the unique qualities of the Sawtooth NRA.

The last benefit is particularly important with the increasing occurrence of massive fires such as the Halstead Fire in 2012 (which burned more than 182,000 acres just outside the Sawtooth NRA near Stanley) and last month's Beaver Creek fire at Ketchum, causing devastating damage and costing millions of dollars to control and contain.

Huge fires in Idaho and around the West have raised public awareness of the risks of developing subdivisions in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). A 2013 report by independent nonprofit research group Headwaters Economics shows that federal wildfire protection costs have tripled in the last decade (\$1 billion annually to more than \$3 billion since 2002), due to a combination of more severe fire seasons and from home construction in the WUI. (A copy of the report is available at <http://headwaterseconomics.org/wildfire/fire-cost-background.>)

The Trust for Public Land paid \$3.27 million to place a conservation easement on the land, which will be managed by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Sawtooth NRA, allowing continued historic use and private ownership of the property, while conserving its scenic values and recreational access for anglers to Valley Creek, which runs through the property.

“Our aim is to ensure that this beautiful area remains intact and open, a place where world-class outdoor recreation, traditional land use, and irreplaceable wildlife habitat co-exist for the benefit of all,” said The Trust for Public Land Northern Rockies Director, Deb Love. “This conservation easement is an investment that will pay off in so many ways, preventing inappropriate development, safeguarding the land’s natural values and guaranteeing recreational access for anglers to Valley Creek.”

“The Rodeo Grounds Ranch is the most historically important and largest unprotected scenic property in the Stanley Basin, a vital piece of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area,” says Paul Hill, president of the Sawtooth Society. “The Society is particularly pleased to have partnered with The Trust for Public Land and the Forest Service in a joint effort to preserve this special place in perpetuity.”

“Investments in conservation easements can pay off quickly compared to the costs of defending structures in the WUI,” says Ray Rasker, Ph.D, Executive Director of Headwaters Economics. “Federal wildfire suppression costs have averaged more than \$3 billion per year. Our research shows that roughly one-third of this cost, or one billion dollars, is spent defending structures. Preventing future subdivisions in extremely fire-prone areas is the most effective way to control these costs.”

Funding to purchase the conservation easement came from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Money for the fund comes from fees paid by oil and gas companies to drill offshore, and not from taxpayers.

"The Forest Service appreciates The Trust for Public Land's assistance in the acquisition of the conservation easement for the Rodeo Grounds Ranch on Valley Creek," says Nora Rasure, Regional Forester for the Forest Service. “The ranch, with its stunning views of the entire Sawtooth Range, was extremely vulnerable to subdivision and development. Now this threat has been removed, protecting the visual quality and the important landscape of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area."

The Trust for Public Land has completed eight projects in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, from a one-acre parcel in Stanley to the 1,800-acre Piva Ranch.

Founded in 1972, The Trust for Public Land is the leading nonprofit working to conserve land for people. Operating from more than 30 offices nationwide, The Trust for Public Land has protected more than three million acres from the inner city to the wilderness and helped generate more than \$34 billion in public funds for conservation. Nearly ten million people live within a ten-minute walk of a Trust for Public Land park, garden, or natural area, and millions more visit these sites every year. Learn more at [tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org) (<http://www.tpl.org>)

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