



NEWS RELEASE

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RANGLAND TRUST OF KANSAS RECEIVES FIRST ACRES FOR AMERICA GRANT IN STATE HISTORY

(TOPEKA) - The Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) recently was awarded the first ever Acres for America grant in Kansas by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and Walmart. The \$650,000 grant will be used to conserve the Ballet Ranch located in the Red Hills of Kansas.

“From its large working prairie to its rare caves, this property is a wonderful fit for Walmart’s Acres for America Program,” said Todd Hogrefe, director of the NFWF Central Regional Office. “During my visit to the property last summer, I had the opportunity to appreciate these habitats firsthand, but I was equally impressed by the strong land stewardship ethic I observed from the partners. I was truly inspired by their shared commitment to preserving this remarkable property.”

RTK will partner with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWPT); The Nature Conservancy; and the Miller family, owners of the ranch, to place a perpetual conservation easement on more than 9,000 acres of grasslands. The project will ensure suitable habitat for sensitive and declining wildlife species, including the long-nose snake, cave-dwelling bats, lesser prairie chicken and numerous grassland-obligated birds, while maintaining the viability of a fourth-generation working cattle ranch. It also will help sustain native mixed-grass prairie, streams and riparian areas throughout the property, thus preserving the open space and scenic landscape of the Ballet Ranch.

“Aside from the funding provided, NFWF’s confidence in RTK to lead this distinguished project means a great deal to our organization. As a small land trust, this project will increase RTK’s conservation efforts by 73%,” said RTK Executive Director Lynn Gentine.

The Ballet Ranch adds to the conservation scale and value of the adjacent Z-Bar Ranch, which consists of more than 40,000 acres. Together, these conservation investments of more than 50,000 acres represent an upwelling of recognition and regional support.

Unlike many neighboring states, Kansas is without a designated state conservation fund. For two decades, the state lost nearly three acres of agricultural land an hour to development. Therefore, collaborations such as this, that bring together state and private entities, make conservation possible in Kansas. KDWPT and NRCS are two partners that played a key role in making the Ballet Ranch project possible.

“NRCS is looking forward to continuing our partnership with RTK and other Kansas partners with similar missions,” said NRCS State Conservationist Karen Woodrich. “This project could lead to another successful application to help protect this property with a conservation easement through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). ACEP provides eligible entities and landowners the opportunity to protect working farms and ranches so the property remains in agriculture production.”

RTK is a nonprofit conservation organization, affiliated with the Kansas Livestock Association, whose purpose is to preserve Kansas’ ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes.