The evolution of the rangeland trusts network as a catalyst for community-based conservation in the American West

Drew E. Bennett | Corrine N. Knapp | Richard L. Knight | Erik Glenn

1Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming
2Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, Arvada, Colorado
3Partnership of Rangeland Trusts, Arvada, Colorado
4Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

Correspondence
Drew E. Bennett, Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, University of Wyoming, 804 E. Fremont St, Laramie, WY 82072. Email: drew.bennett@uwyo.edu

Funding information
MacMillan Private Land Stewardship Program at the University of Wyoming

Abstract
Ranching communities in 10 Western states self-organized to create conservation organizations affiliated with state livestock associations and supporting conservation efforts compatible with agricultural production. These “rangeland trusts” collectively conserve over 2.7 million acres through conservation easements. We identify these efforts as a type of community-based conservation based on the collective nature of the efforts and the balance between community needs and conservation. They differ from traditional CBC efforts with ties to industry groups and a focus on private lands that provide public goods. A coalition of rangeland trusts formed in 2006, leading to a form of multilevel governance that establishes operating principles and actively advocates for ranch land conservation. We suggest that existing industry structures can assist to scale out conservation, bridging organizations can facilitate novel interactions and policy change, and tensions on the meaning and implementation of conservation must be navigated at each scale of interaction.

Keywords
American West, conservation easements, governance, land trusts, private lands, ranching, working lands

1 | INTRODUCTION

Community-based conservation (CBC) emerged as a strategy to better align local development goals with biodiversity conservation and as a response to “fortress conservation” that ignored the needs and knowledge of local residents (Brockington, 2002). Multilevel governance often forms in CBC to link actors from the ground up (Berkes, 2007), align conservation policy with community needs (Brosius, Tsing, & Zerner, 2005), and facilitate coordinated action and opportunities for shared learning among network actors (Alexander, Andrachuk, & Armitage, 2016). Berkes (2007) also argues that multilevel governance networks are better able to deal with multiple objectives through use of deliberative processes and partnerships.

Bridging organizations in CBC governance networks help create local organizations, facilitate horizontal network linkages, and increase grassroots input into policy discussions (Odom Green, Schultz, Nekoro, & Garmestani, 2015). Bridging organizations can also increase collaboration among actors by establishing a formal structure for interactions (Kowalski & Jenkins, 2015). In this article, we describe the emergence and interactions of a multilevel CBC governance network based around rancher-led and livestock industry-affiliated conservation organizations known as rangeland...
trusts and a bridging organization, the Partnership of Rangeland Trusts (PORT), that links network actors.

Due to the private lands focus and industry connections, rangeland trusts provide a novel context to consider CBC governance evolution and implications for other industry-conservation partnerships. In the rangeland trust context, we conceptualize “community” not in terms of spatially localized actors with homogenous social structures and shared norms, but as groups of people linked through shared livelihoods and the institutions that shape decisions (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Allison & Ellis, 2001). Additionally, we consider conservation broadly as actions to sustain diverse natural resources, including land, biodiversity, water, and associated human uses—reflecting the range of values among actors involved with rangeland trusts.

We share our perspective on the rangeland trusts’ story and its insights on CBC based on over 50 years of collective experience working on rangeland systems in the American West in practitioner and academic roles. We draw from our experience leading rangeland trust organizations (authors EG and RK), participating in relevant meetings, and interacting directly with producers (authors EG, RK, DB, and CK). We argue that the rangeland trusts experience provides novel insight into the emergence of endogenous, multilevel governance institutions through a conservation network with direct affiliations with the livestock industry.

2 | EMERGENCE OF RANGELAND TRUSTS AND NETWORK DYNAMICS

The rangeland trust story began in 1995 when the Colorado Cattlemen’s Association (CCA), the state’s cattle industry association, founded the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT)—a not-for-profit entity with the mission of conserving “Colorado’s western heritage and working landscape for the benefit of future generations” (CCALT 2019). Although a livestock association, with a principal mission to advocate for beef producers, was an unusual institution to establish a new conservation organization at the time, several CCA members wished to conserve the agricultural values of their properties in perpetuity due to growing concern over the dramatic rate of agricultural land conversion at the time. Colorado, reflecting broader trends in the region, lost more than 2.5 million acres of agricultural land between 1987 and 2002, mostly due to conversion to rural subdivisions (e.g., 40-acre lot subdivisions)(Knight, 2020). These trends were exacerbated by estate tax policies at the time that drove some heirs to subdivide portions or all of previously intact ranches to meet tax liabilities (Liffman, Huntsinger, & Forero, 2000); a challenge conservation easements can help address by reducing property values and through tax changes adopted in 1997 that allow heirs to exempt a portion of the value of a conservation easement from estate taxes (Wright & Anella, 2007). Since land trusts' missions at the time were focused primarily on nature conservation, some ranchers felt existing conservation organizations did not understand working ranches. Several CCA members decided that the ranching community needed its own organization that would represent their values, pursue agricultural conservation, and be compatible with the dynamics of a working ranch (Knight, 2020; Sherrod, 2009). Existing conservation entities helped CCA launch their own land trust by providing capacity through in-kind staff support, technical resources, and grant funding. This external support helped CCALT emerge and accelerated its evolution by learning from more established organizations.

Other state livestock associations watched as CCALT was established. Notably, the CCALT executive director and several board members attended the 1998 National Cattlemen’s Association’s annual meeting, which was attended by representatives of 16 separate cattlemen’s organizations (Knight, 2020).

The flourishing interest in rangeland conservation led existing rangeland trusts and partners to establish an umbrella organization known as the Partnership of Rangeland Trusts (PORT) in 2006. PORT supports its members by creating a network that allows the rangeland trusts community to share lessons and resources, discuss emerging issues, and advocate for the development of public policy that facilitates conservation for private landowners and agricultural producers (PORT, 2019). Membership now includes eight organizations affiliated with their state livestock associations working in 10 US states (Figure 1). PORT also establishes normative governance rules by requiring its members to agree to several operating principles such as supporting conservation mechanisms that sustain working landscapes but have minimal impact on day-to-day producer operations and a rejection of efforts that lead to increased governmental ownership of land (PORT, 2019). PORT also supports establishment of new agricultural land trusts, such as recent viability assessments in Nebraska and South
Dakota. The voluntary, networked governance of PORT advances the mission of its member organizations by elevating their collective voice in advocating for working land conservation and positions members of the ranching community as core partners in conservation efforts in the American West.

As PORT evolved, the organization increased its political engagement at the federal level by meeting directly with elected officials from members’ state delegations to discuss easements and conservation policy and providing briefings for relevant congressional committees. Building on early external support from conservation groups, PORT expanded this conservation network (including The Nature Conservancy, Land Trust Alliance, and the Trust for Public Land), to include traditional agricultural organizations such as the NCBA and the American Farm Bureau Federation. These partnerships resulted in significant political outcomes, including support for the conservation title of the 2018 Farm Bill, which secured $2 billion in additional funding for conservation easements over the 2014 Farm Bill (Bodin, 2019), amending the policy for federal income tax deductions for conservation easements so that landowners making their living from farming or ranching could benefit from tax incentives, not just high-income earners (Hansen, 2020), and leading efforts to maintain or expand funding for conservation in their states. While PORT’s and its members’ political engagement have been in support of policies that benefit the ranching community’s interests, increased funding and other policy outcomes benefit the broader land trust and conservation communities nationally.

3 | CONSERVATION CONTRIBUTIONS AND TENSIONS

The contributions of rangeland trusts to conservation are significant in terms of land area placed under conservation easement. Since the founding of CCALT (and preceded by Montana Land Reliance, MLR, in 1978), PORT members have conserved over 2.7 million acres through 2019 (Figure S1), an area larger than Yellowstone National Park (roughly 2.2 million acres). MLR, CCALT, the California Rangeland Trust, the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust (WSGLT), and the Texas Agricultural Land Trust, conserve more land through conservation easements than any other state-wide land trusts in their states. PORT members are also increasingly communicating the benefits of conserving private working lands through an ecosystem services perspective and working with economists to estimate ecosystem services values (PORT, 2019), such as PORT’s collaboration in a study in Colorado that estimated that every $1 spent on conservation easements returned $4 to $12 in ecosystem service benefits (Seidl, Anderson, Bennett, Greenwell, & Menefee, 2017).

The conservation contributions of rangeland trusts go well beyond total numbers of acres conserved, bringing
an agricultural perspective into other critical conservation conversations. For instance, in Wyoming WSGLT has built relationships with livestock producers in state-identified big game migration corridors and prioritizes conservation easement acquisitions of key parcels to maintain wildlife movements (Korfanta et al., 2018). In southeastern Colorado, CCALT and TNC have partnered to conserve a largely intact grassland ecosystem and biodiversity conservation priority in the state where CCALT holds conservation easements to help build support and trust in the local ranching community (GOCO, 2016; EG personal observations). The Northwest Rangeland Trust partnered with the Department of Defense to acquire conservation easements that buffer military lands from encroachment from suburban areas (REPI, 2017). CCALT and WSGLT are also two of four identified land trust partners of the Sage Grouse Initiative, one of the largest regional conservation efforts in US history (SGI, 2019). These partnerships provide an agricultural perspective, build trust across and within stakeholder groups, and make it more likely that future conservation partnerships will be successful.

Although rangelands have been conserved from development and other land conversion, researchers and practitioners debate the compatibility of livestock grazing with biodiversity conservation goals, which is complex, highly contextual, and presents tradeoffs (Brunson & Huntsinger, 2008; Derner, Lauenroth, Stapp, & Augustine, 2009; Hansen et al., 2005; Maestas, Knight, & Gilgert, 2003). Conservation easements are effective at limiting the subdivision and development of land, but have limited influence over management practices such as those that mitigate invasive species (Bennett, Pejchar, Romero, Knight, & Berger, 2018; Pocewicz et al., 2011). Some researchers have also criticized investments in conservation easements for not targeting the most important habitat for species of concern or areas that are not the most at risk of land-use conversion (Merenlender, Newburn, Reed, & Rissman, 2009; Underwood, Klausmeyer, Morrison, Bode, & Shaw, 2009). Rangeland trusts operate by working with willing landowners in a voluntary manner and serve all producers in their regions, limiting their ability to strategically target based on biodiversity conservation metrics.

There are also tensions in the conservation norms and interactions between individuals and organizations at each scale of organization in this multilevel governance system. For instance, individual ranchers or ranching communities may have different visions of conservation, creating tension with how individual rangeland trusts define and implement easements. For instance, in northern Colorado, there is an increasing expectation in the recreation community to have access to private ranch lands conserved with public dollars. While there is support among some ranchers in the region for providing limited public access, these trends clash with conservation norms in the agricultural community at the state level. State trusts also must navigate differing perspectives between state-level norms and PORT norms. For instance, some organizations see a need to take ownership of select properties rather than solely holding an easement, although this does not align with PORT operating principles. Tensions must also be navigated across sectors, such as when several rangeland trusts’ staff and board members effectively pivoted NCA’s position on easements. While these interactions can create friction between differing views of conservation, they also allow for continuing evolution of conservation norms both within the agricultural community and the broader conservation community.

4 | LESSONS FOR CONSERVATION SCIENCE AND PRACTICE

Rangeland trusts demonstrate the emergence of an endogenous, multilevel governance network (Table 1) that has several key lessons for other industry-conservation CBC partnerships. First, rangeland trusts, as many examples in CBC, emerged from grassroots efforts to integrate local (ranching) values and goals into conservation mechanisms. By “rethinking” conservation from within, rangeland trusts were able to mobilize a specific, and beforehand under-mobilized, population around conservation while also raising awareness and evidence of the compatibility of working lands with many conservation objectives (Hansen et al., 2005; Maestas et al., 2003). The focus of this mission resonated with many in the agricultural community concerned about the loss of agricultural land and helped build support for conservation among otherwise skeptical landowners (Sherrod, 2009). This focus also led rangeland trusts to develop conservation easement documents that explicitly consider the agricultural operation and the need to maintain flexibility for the operator while conserving other values such as wildlife or open space. This experience reflects insights in the CBC literature that, in order to remain adaptable to local realities, it is important to place decision-making authority at the most local level possible while allowing for communication among levels (Marshall, 2008). The lesson that emerges is that the producer orientation allowed rangeland trusts to work productively with the livestock industry at the state and federal level and integrate grassroots knowledge to inform higher governance levels and improve social-ecological fit.
| Rangeland trusts network interactions | Specific rangeland trusts examples | Parallels with and distinctions from CBC literature |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| **Grassroots informing higher levels** |                                 |                                                 |
| Aligning conservation policy with rancher knowledge and needs | Reforming federal tax incentives to increase use among ranchers | Attempts to align community needs with conservation (Brosius et al., 2005) but often prioritizes conservation (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila, 2003) |
| | Development of conservation easements compatible with working ranches | Improve fit between knowledge, action, and social-ecological contexts (Lebel et al., 2006; Plummer & Hashimoto, 2011) |
| **Shifting industry positions** | Ranchers convince NCA (now NCBA) to change position on conservation easements | Lobster industry in Maine pushes for increased enforcement to protect stock (Acheson & Gardner, 2010) |

| Cross-sector interactions |                                 |                                                 |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Conservation and industry tensions | NCA’s (now NCBA) original opposition to conservation easements | Tensions between trophy hunting industry and conservation goals (Lindsey, Roulet, & Romañach, 2007) |
| | Balancing goals of production and conservation | Differences in power and agendas can create tensions between development or livelihood goals and conservation but multiple objectives can be jointly advanced (Berkes, 2007) |
| | Industry opposition to fee simple ownership, public agency acquisitions of land for conservation, and public access for recreation | Community-based conservancies in Kenya have created conflicts among actors over rules of access and control of resources, such as land rights and land uses (Greiner, 2012) |
| Conservation and industry synergies | NCBA’s support shifts political balance around farm bill and conservation easement tax incentives | Sustainable beef roundtables influence industry thinking around conservation with potential for shifts in political support of efforts (Buckley, Newton, Gibbs, McConnel, & Ehrmann, 2019) |
| | Increased acceptance of easements in ranching community results in land protections | Multilevel governance provides opportunity for shared learning among actors better able to deal with multiple objectives through deliberative processes and partnerships (Alexander et al., 2016; Berkes, 2007) |
| | Traditional conservation organizations assist with establishment of rangeland trusts | External support often necessary for establishment of local conservation institutions but local institutions may breakdown following withdrawal of external support (Balint & Mashinya, 2006; Lewis & Phiri, 2009) |

| Bridging organizations |                                 |                                                 |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Encourage social learning | PORT annual meetings provide forum for sharing lessons, experiences and resources (e.g., easement templates, | Sub-regional networks allow for greater adoption of conservation practices by setting up relationships of reciprocity (Marshall, 2008) and increases |

(Continues)
PORT emerged as a key bridging organization in the governance network that linked rangeland trusts, industry associations, and conservation partners outside the livestock industry. While the emergence of rangeland trusts was initially supported by both public and private entities in the conservation community, PORT began to fill this role by supporting the creation of agricultural land trusts in other states and providing a forum for social learning that allowed rangeland trusts to share knowledge and resources. PORT's bridging role also allowed for horizontal network connections that linked traditional industry groups and conservation interests in the creation of influential political coalitions, such as the coalition that increased conservation funding in the 2018 Farm Bill. By building bridging capital through non-traditional alliances, structures can be established for interactions among actors that can lead to future conservation outcomes (Kowalski & Jenkins, 2015; Odom Green et al., 2015). We also suggest that rangeland trusts have built connections among urban and rural interests around open space and local food systems as evidenced by the high proportion of rangeland trusts' membership (i.e., donors) coming from urban and non-agricultural backgrounds (Knight, 2007; RK and EG personal observations). The evolution of the rangeland trust network and PORT's bridging role is informative to other CBC efforts in demonstrating how outside interests can support capacity building and promote self-sufficiency among resource users as institutions evolve and how network connections among industry and traditional conservation interests can be harnessed to pursue joint goals.

Although the rangeland trust movement has been successful in many metrics, there are also tensions and tradeoffs with other conservation interests across governance levels. For instance, most livestock associations affiliated with state rangeland trusts actively oppose the reintroduction of large carnivores. Similarly, these organizations and their affiliated livestock associations oppose the transfer of private lands to public ownership and support landowners in determining public access rights. These positions do not align with the conservation objectives of other actors and create a tension in situations where the positions are in direct opposition, such as the increasing expectation in segments of the outdoor recreation community to have access to private lands conserved with public funds (EG personal observations). Rangeland trusts must navigate these dynamics and at times adapt their own policies while influencing adaption among other actors in the network. These tensions then can be productive, as they help to evolve and adapt the thinking of all stakeholders.

One notable difference in the evolution of the rangeland trust network compared to other case studies in the CBC literature is how the network organization mirrors the livestock industry's network with parallel

---

**TABLE 1** (Continued)

| Rangeland trusts network interactions | Specific rangeland trusts examples | Parallels with and distinctions from CBC literature |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Bridge agricultural and conservation actors | PORT facilitates increased interaction between traditional conservation organizations and agricultural actors | Bridging organizations can establish formal structure for interactions and collaborations among actors (Kowalski & Jenkins, 2015) |
| Self-organization and establishment of governance principles | Creation of PORT and development of shared norms | Governance rules or norms can emerge through voluntarily coordination and self-enforcement often in response to rigid governmental structures (Folke et al., 2005) |
| Creation of social capital to support emerging trusts | Bring resources and knowledge to those interested in expanding in other landscapes | Bridging organizations can help support the creation of local organizations (Brown, 1991) |
| Capacity to advance conservation policy | Lobby for new policies to support conservation | Bridging organizations can increase grassroots influence on policy (Brown, 1991) |
| Increase cross-sectoral interactions | See section on cross-sectoral interactions (above) | |
organizations at each level (Figure 2). The existing structure serves as a template from which to build and scale with clear industry intersections that can be used to advocate for conservation within existing organizations with significant political influence at state and federal levels. Particularly impactful was the rangeland trusts’ engagement with the national livestock association (NCA/NCBA) that transformed this powerful industry voice from opposing conservation easements to advocating for conservation funding over a 20-year period. We note that CBC has been criticized for neoliberal tendencies (Igoe & Brookington, 2007) and the rangeland trust movement has largely operated within a neoliberal institutional structure characterized by strong private property rights and public financial incentives for private actors. Yet, rangeland trusts have been able to effectively operate within this neoliberal political climate to achieve conservation outcomes and may provide an example for other CBC efforts in similar contexts where industry networks already exist and can be used to establish conservation organizations that mirror the network structure and advocate for conservation from within.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

Rangelands trusts provide a novel context to examine CBC concepts and may be instructive for how conservation efforts can engage the agricultural industry across multiple levels. This case illustrates how endogenous conservation governance intuitions emerged from within the ranching community but were supported by public and private external entities. The success of rangeland trusts have positioned members of the ranching community as key partners in major conservation initiatives in the American West, facilitating collaboration where it was previously

---

**FIGURE 2** Representation of the rangeland trusts network (PORT includes eight rangeland trusts operating in 10 states but only three are represented in figure for illustrative purposes). Solid arrows represent formal affiliations and dashed arrows represent informal network connections.
challenging, but also generating some tensions and tradeoffs for both ranching and conservation communities. This community-initiated and industry-supported endeavor highlights how conservation is not monolithic and can be defined and operationalized differently. Making these differences apparent can open up the possibility for more productive dialogue among stakeholders and catalyze conservation action across local to national scales.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
We are grateful to Tessa Wittman for help preparing Figures 1 and S1 and to Jessica Perry for graphic design support for Figure 2. We also thank the Associate Editor and reviewers for their valuable insights and feedback. This work was supported by MacMillan Private Land Stewardship Program in the Ruckelshaus Institute at the University of Wyoming.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
R. L. K. serves on the board of CCALT and PORT. E. G. serves as the executive director of CCALT and the board president of PORT.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS
All authors conceived the article. Drew E. Bennett and Corrine N. Knapp drafted the manuscript and incorporated feedback and edits from all co-authors.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
This article did not use primary data.

ETHICS STATEMENT
IRB approval or other ethics review was not needed for this article.

ORCID
Drew E. Bennett https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7589-641X

ENDNOTE
1 The founding of MLR preceded CCALT but we note that MLR is an anomaly among PORT members in that its founding was not associated with its state livestock industry, although agricultural conservation is core to its mission, the connection to its state’s livestock association came later.

REFERENCES
Acheson, J. M., & Gardner, R. (2010). The evolution of conservation rules and norms in the Maine lobster industry. Ocean and Coastal Management, 53(9), 524–534.
Agrawal, A., & Gibson, C. C. (1999). Enchantment and disenchantment: The role of community in natural resource conservation. World Development, 27(4), 629–649.
Alexander, S. M., Anduchuk, M., & Armitage, D. (2016). Navigating governance networks for community-based conservation. Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment, 14(3), 155–164.
Allison, E. H., & Ellis, F. (2001). The livelihoods approach and management of small-scale fisheries. Marine Policy, 25(5), 377–388.
Balint, P. J., & Mashinya, J. (2006). The decline of a model community-based conservation project: Governance, capacity, and devolution in Mahenye, Zimbabwe. Geoforum, 37(5), 805–815.
Bennett, D. E., Pejchar, L., Romero, B., Knight, R., & Berger, J. (2018). Using practitioner knowledge to expand the toolbox for private lands conservation. Biological Conservation, 227, 152–159. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2018.09.003
Berkes, F. (2007). Community-based conservation in a globalized world. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 104(39), 15188–15193.
Bodin, M. (2019). The farm bill: Celebrating passage of a key land conservation resource. Saving Land. Retrieved from https://www.landtrustalliance.org/news/farm-bill-celebrating-passage-key-land-conservation-resource.
Brockington, D. (2002). Fortress conservation: The preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, Tanzania (p. 192). Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press.
Brosius, J. P., Tsing, A. L., & Zerner, C. (2005). Communities and conservation: Histories and politics of community based natural resource management cp. 500. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
Brown, L. D. (1991). Bridging organizations and sustainable development. Human Relations, 44(8), 807–831.
Brunson, M. W., & Huntsinger, L. (2008). Ranching as a conservation strategy: Can old ranchers save the new west? Rangeland Ecology and Management, 61, 137–147.
Buckley, K. J., Newton, P., Gibbs, H. K., McConnel, I., & Ehrmann, J. (2019). Pursuing sustainability through multi-stakeholder collaboration: A description of the governance, action, and perceived impacts of the roundtables for sustainable beef. World Development, 121, 203–217.
Campbell, L. M., & Vainio-Mattila, A. (2003). Participatory development and community-based conservation: Opportunities missed for lessons learned? Human Ecology, 31(3), 417–437.
Dermer, J. D., Lauenroth, W. K., Stapp, P., & Augustine, D. J. (2009). Livestock as ecosystem engineers for grassland bird habitat in the western Great Plains of North America. Rangeland Ecology and Management, 62, 111–118.
Folke, C., Hahn, T., Olsson, P., & Norberg, J. (2005). Adaptive governance of social-ecological systems. Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 30, 441–473.
Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO). (2016). GOCO awards more than $10.7M in second round of protect initiative funding. Retrieved from https://www.goco.org/news/goco-awards-more-107m-second-round-protect-initiative-funding.
Greiner, C. (2012). Unexpected consequences: Wildlife conservation and territorial conflict in Northern Kenya. Human Ecology, 40, 415–425.
Hansen, A. J., Knight, R. L., Marzluff, J. M., Powell, S., Brown, K., Gude, P. H., & Jones, K. (2005). Effects of exurban development on biodiversity: Patterns, mechanisms, and research needs. Ecological Applications, 15(6), 1893–1905.
Hansen, B. (2020). One million acres and counting: A brief history of the Montana Land Reliance. In R. Knight (Ed.), Colorado...
Cattlemen’s agricultural land trust: Twenty-five years of keeping working lands in working hands. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press.

Igoe, J., & Brookington, D. (2007). Neoliberal conservation: A brief introduction. Conservation and Society, 5, 432–449.

Knight, R. L. (2007). Bridging the great divide: Reconnecting rural and urban communities in the New West. In L. Pritchett, R. L. Knight, & J. Lee (Eds.), Home land: Ranching and a west that works. Boulder, CO: Johnson Books.

Knight, R. L. (2020). The origin of the Colorado Cattlemen’s agricultural land trust. In R. Knight (Ed.), Colorado Cattlemen’s agricultural land trust: Twenty-five years of keeping working lands in working hands. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press.

Korfanta, N., Rashford, B., Pocewicz, A., Schacht, E., Alley, B., & Luchsinger, J. (2018). Wyoming conservation easements: Lands, services, and economic benefits. Laramie, WY: University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources.

Kowalski, A. A., & Jenkins, L. D. (2015). The role of bridging organizations in environmental management: Examining social networks in working groups. Ecology and Society, 20(2), 16.

Lebel, L., Anderies, J. M., Campbell, B., Folke, C., Hatfield-Dodds, S., Hughes, T. P., & Wilson, J. (2006). Governance and the capacity to manage resilience in regional social-ecological systems. Ecology and Society, 11(1), 19.

Lewis, D. M., & Phiri, A. (2009). Wildlife snaring – An indicator of community response to a community-based conservation project. Oryx, 32(2), 111–121.

Lifman, R. H., Huntsinger, L., & Forero, L. C. (2000). To ranch or not to ranch: Home on the urban range? Journal of Range Management, 53(4), 362–370.

Lindsey, P. A., Roulet, P. A., & Románach, S. S. (2007). Economic and conservation significance of the trophy hunting industry in sub-Saharan Africa. Biological Conservation, 134(4), 455–469.

Maestas, J. D., Knight, R. L., & Gilgert, W. C. (2003). Biodiversity across a rural land-use gradient. Conservation Biology, 17(5), 1425–1434.

Marshall, G. R. (2008). Nesting, solidarity, and community-based environmental governance beyond the local level. International Journal of the Commons, 2, 75–97.

Merenlender, A. M., Newburn, D., Reed, S. E., & Rissman, A. R. (2009). The importance of incorporating threat for efficient targeting and evaluation of conservation investments. Conservation Letters, 2, 240–241.

Odom Green, O., Schultz, L., Nekoro, M., & Garmestani, A. S. (2015). The role of bridging organizations in enhancing ecosystem services and facilitating adaptive management of social-ecological systems. In C. R. Allen & A. S. Garmestani (Eds.), Adaptive management of social-ecological systems. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Partnership of Rangeland Trusts (PORT). (2019). Our mission. Retrieved from https://rangelandtrusts.org/mission-1.

Plummer, R., & Hashimoto, A. (2011). Adaptive co-management and the need for situated thinking in collaborative conservation. Human Dimensions of Wildlife, 16(4), 222–235.

Pocewicz, A., Kiesecker, J. M., Jones, G. P., Copeland, H. E., Daline, J., & Mealor, B. A. (2011). Effectiveness of conservation easements for reducing development and maintaining biodiversity in sagebrush ecosystems. Biological Conservation, 144(1), 567–574.

Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI). (2017). Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Retrieved from https://www.repi.mil/Portals/44/Documents/Current%20Year%20Fact%20Sheets/JBLM.pdf.

Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI). (2019). Partners. Retrieved from https://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/about/partners/.

Seidl, A., Anderson, D., Bennett, D., Greenwell, A., & Menefee, M. (2017). Colorado’s return on investments in conservation easements: Conservation easement tax credit program and great outdoors Colorado. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University.

Sherrod, L. (2009). Working wildlands. In R. L. Knight & C. White (Eds.), Conservation for a new generation. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Underwood, E. C., Klausmeyer, K. R., Morrison, S. A., Bode, M., & Shaw, R. (2009). Evaluating conservation spending for species return: A retrospective analysis in California. Conservation Letters, 2, 130–137.

Wright, J. B., & Anella, A. (2007). Saving the ranch: Fresh eyes on taxes, development, and conservation easements. Rangelands, 29(3), 13–20.

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

**How to cite this article:** Bennett DE, Knapp CN, Knight RL, Glenn E. The evolution of the rangeland trusts network as a catalyst for community-based conservation in the American West. Conservation Science and Practice. 2021;3: e257. [https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.257](https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.257)