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Preserving our ecosystem through a provincial Heritage Rangeland Designation and Conservation Easements

The Alberta government is working with the OH Ranch to preserve a vast tract of grassland ecosystem for future generations, with a provincial heritage rangeland designation, and through conservation easements.

OH Ranch is one of the oldest ranches in Alberta, with a 125-year legacy of grazing and stewardship. The ranch is committed to providing top quality, high performance stock and genetics suitable for any cattle operation while maintaining and preserving environmental sustainability and the unique history and traditions of ranching in Western Canada. OH Ranch has four cattle operations in Alberta; OH Longview, OH Pekisko, OH Bassano and OH Dorothy and one in Hungary (Rio Alto Ranch). The Alberta ranches run a combined total of 2,000 head of Angus and Angus cross cattle. www.ohranch.com
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What is a Heritage Rangeland?

A provincial heritage rangeland designation is intended to preserve and protect natural features representative of Alberta's prairies. Heritage rangelands are a classification within Alberta's Parks system. The designation is allowed under the *Wilderness Area, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act*.

Heritage Rangelands play an important role in watershed functioning, natural carbon sequestration, maintenance of biodiversity, wildlife habitat for species at risk as well as offering limited opportunities for managed outdoor recreational activities such as hunting, fishing and hiking. www.tpr.alberta.ca/parks

What does a Heritage Rangeland designation mean for the OH Ranch?

For the OH Ranch, the public grazing land portions of the Longview and Pekisko sections of the ranch are now designated as heritage rangeland. The heritage rangeland designation helps protect about 10,200 acres (41.28 square kilometers) of public land that has consistently been ranched under grazing leases by the OH Ranch. The designation helps preserve a way of life through the continuation of traditional ranching practices that have stewarded and managed sensitive native prairies in southern Alberta for generations.

Why is the Heritage Rangeland designation for OH Ranch important for Albertans?

The OH Ranch is one of the oldest ranches in Alberta – with a 125-year legacy of grazing and stewardship. The Heritage Rangeland designation, together with the conservation easements on the private land will preserve significant fescue ecosystems in southern Alberta. OH Ranch Heritage Rangeland is also a celebration of Alberta's ranching culture, and ensures the continuation of a ranching legacy. The designation ensures the protection and preservation of this important tract of land for generations to come.

<http://www.tpr.alberta.ca/parks/consult/OHRanch/default.aspx>

What are conservation easements?

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements between a private landowner and a qualified land trust which limits the amount and type of development that can occur on a property. Easements are negotiated to preserve the natural character of the land, and its ecological integrity, scenic values and/or scientific and educational potential.

The OH Ranch is working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Southern Alberta Land Trust Society on conservation easements for their Longview and Pekisko ranch lands, and with Ducks Unlimited on easements for the Dorothy and Bassano ranch lands. The easements will be registered against the land title, ensuring that current and future owners manage the land according to terms of the easements.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is a private, non-profit organization working for the direct protection of Canada's biodiversity through the purchase, donation or placing of conservation easements on ecologically significant lands.

As Canada's leading national land conservation organization, NCC partners with individual landowners, government, corporations and other organizations to achieve the direct protection of our most important natural treasures. We also secure mineral rights and timber rights on properties.

Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to conserve more than 2 million acres (over 800,000 hectares) of ecologically significant land nationwide. www.natureconservancy.ca/ab
Contact: Bob Demulder, Regional Vice President – Alberta Region Tel: 403.262-1253 Cell: 403-613-6460
bob.demulder@natureconservancy.ca

The Southern Alberta Land Trust Society (SALTS) is a locally based, rancher-driven, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the ecological, productive, scenic and cultural values of Alberta's Eastern Slopes, prairie and foothill regions. www.salts-landtrust.org/
Contact: Alan Gardner, Executive Director Tel: 403-282-7011 Cell: 403-861-6808 403 e-mail: salts_ed@shaw.ca

NCC and SALTS are the conservation associations chosen by OH Ranch to be the holders of the conservation easements being placed on its Longview and Pekisko ranch lands. The OH Ranch is also working on conservation easements with Ducks Unlimited for the ranch lands in Bassano and Dorothy.

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) a national, private, non-profit organization committed to conserving wetlands and their associated habitats for North America's waterfowl, other wildlife and people. From coast to coast, DUC is on the front lines of conservation. For 70 years, DUC has positively influenced nearly 25 million acres of habitat across the country. www.ducks.ca/
Contact: Kristina Dembinski, Tel: 780 930-1240 e-mail: k_dembinski@ducks.ca

Can any type of development occur on this rangeland in the future?

The designation protects the land from development for residential, commercial or recreational purposes. Although minimal industrial activity has occurred on the ranch to date, existing mineral right commitments will be honoured. Any future sale of mineral rights will be subject to a 'no surface access' restriction.

How does the Heritage Rangelands designation support the objectives of the land-use framework?

This designation supports the Draft Land Use Framework's objectives of exploring ways to promote conservation and stewardship and protection of the diversity of Alberta's land. . This combined use of the two different conservation tools – the Heritage Range designation and conservation easements – increases the protection of this landscape and is one example of fulfilling the objectives of the draft land use framework.

Will the public have access to the Heritage Rangeland for recreational opportunities?

The activities allowed in the past are expected to continue (e.g. hunting, fishing, hiking). Recreational access to the land requires prior contact with the leaseholder. Motorized recreational access is not permitted.

How many other areas in Alberta have a Heritage Rangeland designation?

There is one other heritage rangeland, the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland, located about one hour north of Pincher Creek. It was established in 1999.

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