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Unique ranch protected for future

By Josh Nichols
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Roc Creek Ranch is entirely surrounded by public land.

The 200-acre parcel of ranchland blends in nicely with its surroundings.

Now, because of an agreement

between the landowner and local agency, it will remain that way.

John Walton, of Grand Junction, recently donated the Roc Creek Ranch to the Mesa Land Trust as a conservation easement, prohibiting any future development of the land.

The property is located about

23 miles southwest of Gateway, just north of the Mesa County and Montrose County border.

"This is a flagship conservation accomplishment," said Steve Acquafresca, land protection specialist with the Mesa Land Trust.

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► **LAND:** Area protected from any development

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"The Roc Creek Ranch is a real gem of a property — an authentic mountain paradise."

Because it has been donated as a conservation easement, the land will continue to be used for livestock ranching, hunting and other natural purposes in the future.

Acquafresca said had Walton not donated the easement, the land's future likely involved subdividing and development.

"John Walton deserves a lot of credit," Acquafresca said. "His actions to protect the land will have substantial public benefit."

Walton's Roc Creek Ranch is completely surrounded by Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service land.

Employees with the Land Trust recognize that such "in-holdings" are desirable targets for subdivision and development — and so did the landowner.

"Having no desire to ever see this property split-up and developed, the conservation easement is a good tool to keep the property as a working ranch landscape while I am here working the place — and beyond, even after I am gone," Walton said.

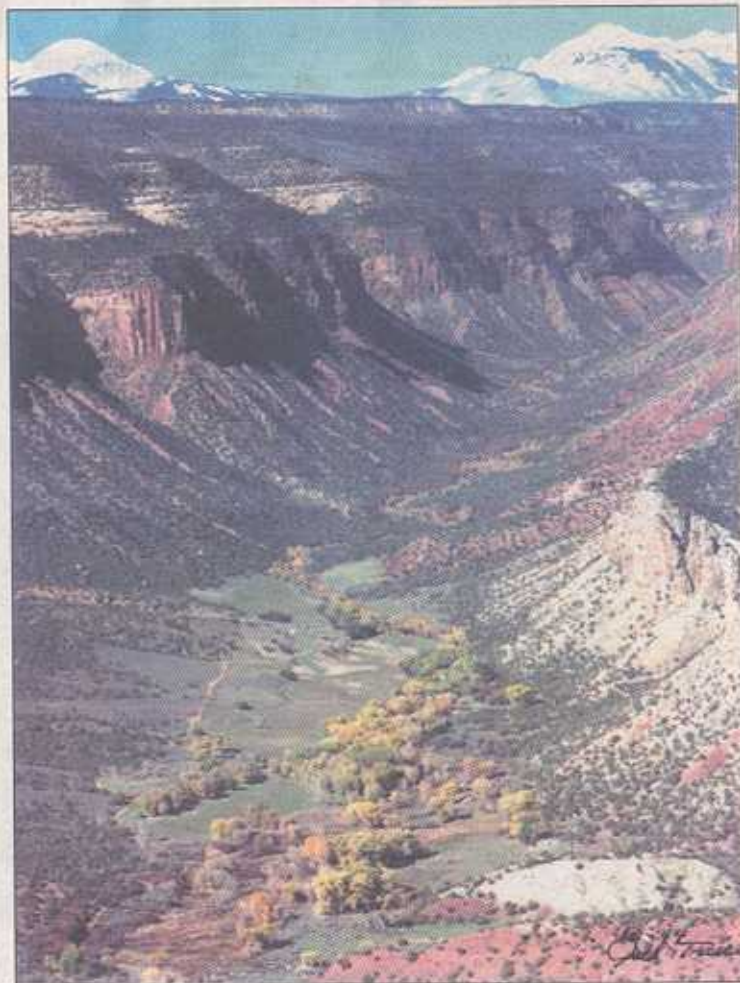
The property features numerous tree, grass and shrub species and is bisected by Roc Creek, which hosts a self-sustaining population of trout species.

What you now see at the Roc Creek Ranch will forever be what you get.

"This property has tremendous wildlife and scenic value," said Rob Bleiberg, executive director of the Mesa Land Trust. "We're delighted to work with John Walton to protect it for future generations."

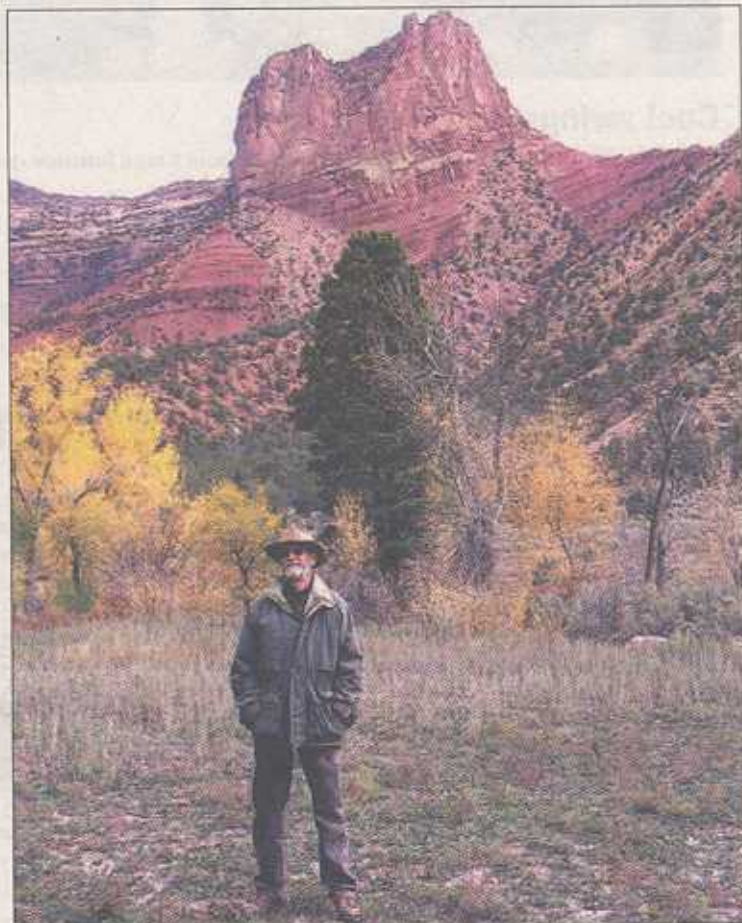
With the addition of the Roc Creek Ranch property, the Mesa Land Trust now holds conservation easements on more than 43,000 acres of working landscapes, wildlife habitat and open space in Mesa County and the surrounding area.

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Courtesy photo

An aerial view of the Roc Creek Ranch property located in southwestern Mesa County. The land is totally surrounded by Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service land.



Roc Creek Ranch owner John Walton of Grand Junction stands on his 200-acre property he recently donated to the Mesa Land Trust. By donating the land as a conservation easement, Walton has guaranteed that the land about 23 miles southwest of Gateway will never be developed.

Courtesy photo