

# THE ASPEN TIMES

## Child family garners honor

**Aspen Times Staff Report**  
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The late Bob Child and his family have been honored by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as ranchers making significant contributions to improving wildlife habitat on their land.

The Childs received the "Landowner of the Year" award for 2004 during the National Western Stock Show in Denver earlier this month.

The Childs were selected because their 1,500-acre ranch is a model of balance between conservation and a working cattle ranch, according to a statement from the wildlife division.

Bob and Tee Child purchased the ranch in the early 1960s. Their way of life was threatened by a proposal to turn nearby Haystack Mountain into what would have been the Roaring Fork Valley's fifth and possibly largest ski resort. Bob Child led the battle against the proposal in the local political arena for 10 years until he convinced Congress to designate the public land in question as wilderness. That protection prevented the possibility of development.

In more recent years — after land values in Pitkin County soared — the Child family still stood to make tens of millions of dollars by subdividing and selling the property in 50- and 30-acre lots. They chose to downzone the vast majority of their property while achieving permanent protection for the wildlife habitat and agricultural heritage of the ranch through easements.

Bob and Tee Child moved to central California in 1995. Tee Child died in 2000, and Bob died in December 2002 at age 79. Steve and Molly Child now oversee the ranching operation.

The family has ensured the public has access to the wilderness by the ranch by establishing a parking and trail easement on their property. Hunters, anglers, hikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, local schoolchildren and a variety of other recreational users have all benefited immensely from the Childs' selfless vision of their property, according to the nominating petition.

The Child family was nominated for the Landowner of the Year award by the Pitkin County commissioners and Aspen Valley Land Trust.

The Childs practice numerous wildlife-friendly procedures on the ranch. They use special fencing that allows for deer and elk migration, leave a second cut of hay and alfalfa in their meadows for wildlife and stock Colorado River cutthroat at their own expense.

"The Childs have sacrificed and worked tremendously hard to ensure that wildlife has a place on their ranch and in the Roaring Fork Valley," said Ken Morgan, private lands habitat specialist for the wildlife division. "They have created an exemplary blend of productive cattle ranching and wildlife conservation while improving their local community by assuring public access for recreation. Both the Roaring Fork Valley and the state of Colorado have benefited due to their efforts."

Every year since 1982, the wildlife division has recognized a Landowner of the Year for the state of Colorado.



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The prestigious award is part of the Landowner Recognition Program, which works to enhance communications between landowners, the DOW and sportsmen in order to work toward common goals.

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