

# THE ASPEN TIMES

## Deal closes on Grange's Basalt ranch

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**Aspen, CO Colorado**  
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BASALT — Locals governments completed a \$5 million deal on Wednesday to conserve land near Basalt that has been ranched by four generations of the Grange family.

Pitkin and Eagle counties teamed with Basalt to buy conservation easements on 187 acres of land owned by Billy Grange, his sister-in-law Tina and Tina's four kids. The cattle ranch is located just downvalley from Big O Tires in Basalt. Most of the ranch in on the south side of Highway 82 but a pasture is on the north.

The governments also bought 16.6 acres of wetlands and Roaring Fork River frontage owned by the Granges on the north side of Highway 82.

A second phase in the deal next year will conserve an additional 44 acres south of the Rio Grande Trail.

Pitkin County contributed \$3 million of its open space funds to acquire the conservation easements. Eagle County chipped in \$1.25 million and Basalt donated \$750,000, according to Barb D'Autrechy, program specialist for Pitkin County Open Space and Trails.

The governments received a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado for \$828,228 to help with the purchase. Those funds will reduce the three governments' shares by pro-rated amounts, D'Autrechy said.

Billy Grange told The Aspen Times last October that he was getting bombarded with calls from developers wanting to buy the 246-acre spread. The family rebuffed the offers. They just wanted to run their cattle operation. Billy's grandfather, Joseph, settled on the property in 1916 after immigrating from Italy.

Jimmy Grange, Billy's older brother and Tina's husband, died in a ranch accident in 1993. Billy runs the ranch with his nephews, a niece and Tina.

The conservation deal allows the Granges to continue working the land for as long as they want. They can improve two existing homes on the property, which date back to 1899 and 1907, and they can develop a third lot with a home of up to 5,750 square feet. The agreement also allows limited development of agricultural buildings. Otherwise, the development potential is permanently extinguished.

Basalt Town Council members hailed the deal Tuesday night as a way of preserving a rural buffer around the town and helping agriculture survive in the valley. The Granges are one of a handful of families that still make their living from a ranch in the Roaring Fork Valley.

Basalt officials plan to thank the Granges for conserving the land in a public ceremony this fall. Mayor Leroy Duroux noted the Granges could have sold the land for considerably more than \$5 million and that their generosity benefited the entire midvalley.

The Granges receive Colorado income tax credits that they can sell or use in return for conserving the land.

A view from the Roaring Fork River looking south highlights land at the Grange family ranch near Basalt. (Courtesy Pitkin County Open Space and Trails)



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There are also federal tax advantages to land conservation.

Pitkin County Open Space and Aspen Valley Land Trust will hold the conservation easements on the ranch. The county and Roaring Fork Conservancy will hold conservation easements on the riverfront property.

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