

Glenwood Springs

# Post Independent

## City now enclosed by open space

Jackson Ranch places another 85 acres under conservation easement

**By Greg Massé**  
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 March 6, 2003



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Rancher Carter Jackson walks his land to check on his calves. Jackson and his wife, Louise, just finalized a deal with Aspen Valley Land Trust to place an 85-acre parcel of their land under a conservation easement. Including this parcel, the Jacksons have preserved 292 acres of their ranch, the largest area of preserved Roaring Fork River bottomland in the Aspen Valley Land Trust's assemblage of easements in the region.

**Jim Noelker/Post Independent Photo**  
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**GLENWOOD SPRINGS -** Pictures, paintings and relics from across the Roaring Fork Valley adorn the walls and tables inside Dr. Carter and Louise Jackson's ranch house,

illustrating their love for this beautiful area.

But an unquestionable measure of that love comes in a lasting gift they've bestowed to the people of the Valley: a glimpse into a simpler past.

On Tuesday, the Jacksons and Aspen Valley Land Trust finalized a deal that blocks one last piece of the Jacksons' ranch from ever being developed. The parcel measures 85 acres - including a large irrigated hayfield - located just south of Glenwood Springs on the west side of Highway 82.



Rancher Carter Jackson.  
**Jim Noelker/Post Independent Photo**  
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"We thought it's important to save some agricultural land as open space and try to save some of the past for the future," retired veterinarian Carter Jackson said.

With this latest donation from the family, 292 acres of the Jackson Ranch are now preserved by conservation easements. It's the largest area of preserved Roaring Fork River bottomland in the Aspen Valley Land Trust's 7,500-acre assemblage of easements in the region, said Land Trust director Martha Cochran.

Cochran explained the difference between donating land and donating a conservation easement.

"Basically, when you do a conservation easement like they did, they donate development rights," she said. "This is a major donation, dollar-wise."

The land still belongs to the Jacksons and they can sell it if they wish, but the development rights that give land a much higher dollar value in the real estate market have been stripped away.

"They can sell it, but nobody can ever develop it," Cochran said. "The theory is in the West, all land is valued for development. By taking away development rights, you leave the land for other purposes."

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The Jacksons are encouraged to keep using the land as ranchland. And that's just what they're doing.

"I'm the chief help who drives the pickup in the morning to feed the cows," Louise Jackson said.

And this time of year, it takes a lot to feed the cows.

"I'm calving right now," Carter Jackson said.

The couple is hoping for 35 calves this spring.

Each year, the Jacksons harvest the newly-donated hayfield to feed their herd.

Aside from guaranteeing that the land won't be developed, the easement donation, like all donations, has another tangible benefit - tax breaks.

"It's a tax write-off," Cochran said. "In Colorado, this year at least, there's also a tax credit."

Carter Jackson said the process of donating a conservation easement is lengthy, but the most important decision comes very early in the game.

"You want to give it a lot of thought because it's in perpetuity, however long that is," he said.

The deal is an especially good one for Glenwood Springs.

"What I think is so great about this is that cities spend millions for a green belt around their urban areas," Cochran said. "We've got mountains to the north, canyons to the east and west and Carter and Louise to the south."

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