

Attachment 1
1/23/15



RINKER COMPANY

January 22, 2015

Senator Steve Bair
Senate Resources and Environment Committee
Post Office Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0081

Re: Rock Creek Project

Dear Senator Bair:

The Rinker family has been long-time residents of Idaho and has a sincere interest in preserving the history, culture, and natural resources of the State. With our Rock Creek project and donation, we intended to leave a legacy of open space and wildlife habitat for the public of Idaho.

Our conveyance to the Wood River Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy was done in conjunction with Natural Resources conservation Service's Grassland Reserve Program. The agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service protects wildlife habitat while maintaining the property as a working ranch.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has the most appropriate resources and expertise to own and manage the property as a Wildlife Management Area and meet these objectives. Therefore, we strongly support the department's supplemental appropriations request for funds to purchase the Rock Creek Ranch.

When we entered into our transaction with Wood River Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy, we envisioned a conservation property with multiple uses and benefits for people and wildlife. The best way to ensure that vision is through IDFG's ownership. We strongly support this partnership effort.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

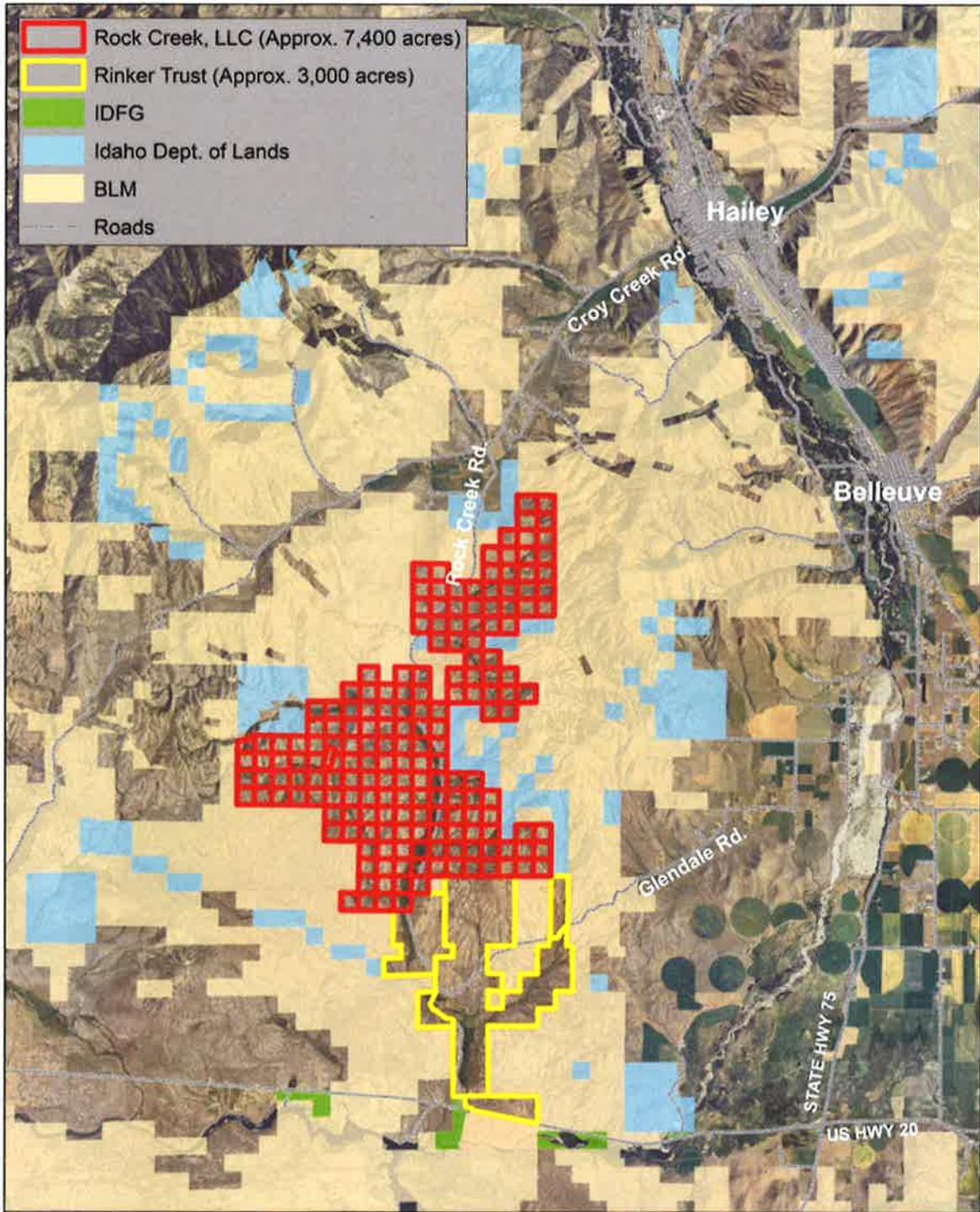
Sincerely,

Bart Rinker

/tb

cc: Honorable Michelle Stennett – Idaho State Minority Leader, District 26
Scott Boettger – Executive Director, Wood River Land Trust
Keri York – Director of Conservation, Wood River Land Trust

Rock Creek Ranch Context Map



0 0.5 1 Mile

Sources: roads & parcel data: Blaine County GIS; management: INSIDE Idaho. Prepared by WRLT on 30 Sept. 2013 for reference purposes only.

Capital Press

The West's **Ag** Weekly



Idaho ranch sold to conservation groups

Carol Ryan Dumas

Published:

May 28, 2014 10:34AM

Last changed:

May 28, 2014 11:53AM

One of the largest undeveloped properties in southern Idaho's Wood River Valley is now conserved for wildlife, clean water and public access through the efforts of local landowners, public agencies and conservation groups.

HAILEY, Idaho — One of the largest undeveloped properties in the Wood River Valley will now be conserved in perpetuity through a collaborative effort of the owners, the Wood River Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The 10,400-acre Rock Creek Ranch, owned by the Rinker family, was recently sold to the Land Trust and Conservancy at a fraction of its fair market value and protected through easements through NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative funding.

The land contains critical wildlife habitat for sage grouse, which are at risk of being listed as an endangered species. It also provides important habitat for elk and mule deer and encompasses the entire Rock Creek drainage, said Keri York, director of conservation for the Land Trust.

The land is surrounded by BLM land, and the project expands sage grouse habitat to 70,000 acres of private land under conservation easements in the pioneer Mountain area within a larger 2.3 million acre landscape.

In addition to wildlife protection and providing public access, the long-term goal of the project is to turn ownership and management of Rock Creek Ranch over to Idaho Fish and Game, York said.

"It's a big project and took a lot of partners to get it done," said Lou Lunte, state deputy director of The Nature Conservancy.

NRCS funding was really important to the success of the project, he said.

The property was a long-term real estate investment and was originally intended for residential development by Idaho and California developer Harry Rinker and his family, said Trent Jones of Hall and Hall, the brokerage firm that handled the sale.

The family loves the land and the wildlife and collectively decided to dissolve the property with the concept of giving back to the community and southern Idaho, which has given so much to the Rinkers, he said.

The Rinkers received \$3.7 million from NRCS for the easements and \$2.2 million from the Land Trust and Conservancy, while the fair market value was at least \$12 million, York said.

"We are deeply grateful to the Rinker family for making such a wonderful and lasting gift to our community and wildlife," said Scott Boettger, executive director of the Land Trust.

The undeveloped ranch has been high on the Land Trusts' priority list for a long time, York said.

"It really has an impact on the landscape and connectivity of public lands for the protection of wildlife and water resources," she said.

The project is a large-scale, once-in-a-generation opportunity for both wildlife and the community, Lunte said.

The Land Trust and Conservancy have applied to the Blaine County Land, Wildlife and Water Program to obtain funding to help Fish and Game purchase the property, York said.

People started homesteading the land in the late 1800s, with 35 homesteads at one time. The Tews family of Shoshone owned a good portion of the land and ran cattle there in the mid 1900s. The Purdy family of Picabo still leases land on the ranch to graze cattle, which will continue, Jones said.

The property also comes with 10,000 acres of BLM grazing allotments, York said

Area rancher Wade Prescott said keeping the ranch intact is better than developing it. He supports the Rock Creek Ranch deal as long as the ranch is managed properly and cattle continue to graze it. Running the land as a ranch will keep down the weeds and fire potential, which will help protect sage grouse and other wildlife, he said.

Running cattle out of Carey, Idaho, and living in the area for 60 years, Prescott said sage grouse and deer were abundant there when he was younger. But the environmental movement decreased cattle and sheep numbers on grazing land, with a correlating decrease in wildlife, he said.

Lands need to be managed to protect wildlife habitat, and grazing needs to be viewed as an asset rather than a detriment, he said.

A tour of the land on Thursday to celebrate the purchase provided glimpses of the sizable landscape, rich with clear running streams, springs, wetlands, sage brush, bitter brush, grasses, forbs, willows, and aspen.

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User Comments

IDFG acres owned (Jan. 2015) and fee in lieu of taxes paid (June 2014).

County	Acres Owned (fee-title)	FILT Paid in 2014
ADA	11,318	\$5,559
ADAMS	27	\$0
BANNOCK	3,316	\$1,284
BEAR LAKE	3,275	\$1,188
BENEWAH	2,224	\$8,303
BINGHAM	2,042	\$8,323
BLAINE	1,064	\$802
BOISE	2,947	\$2,413
BONNER	3,320	\$7,382
BONNEVILLE	11,998	\$4,774
BOUNDARY	3,144	\$18,644
BUTTE	4	\$0
CAMAS	6,120	\$6,963
CANYON	2,739	\$7,119
CARIBOU	1,788	\$1,115
CASSIA	895	\$1,869
CLARK	173	\$69
CLEARWATER	519	\$1,581
CUSTER	1,414	\$2,143
ELMORE	7,254	\$3,033
FRANKLIN	5	\$0
FREMONT	18,828	\$9,857
GEM	323	\$1,765
GOODING	2,231	\$4,180
IDAHO	1,158	\$1,842
JEFFERSON	13,599	\$11,455
JEROME	201	\$47
KOOTENAI	7,199	\$11,228
LATAH	328	\$1,329
LEMHI	573	\$789
LEWIS	3,718	\$3,687
LINCOLN	120	\$37
MADISON	145	\$104
MINIDOKA	13	\$4
NEZ PERCE	78,553	\$43,948
ONEIDA	0	\$0
OWYHEE	1,109	\$2,675
PAYETTE	844	\$3,520
POWER	120	\$7
SHOSHONE	12,077	\$12,922
TETON	475	\$1,269
TWIN FALLS	111	\$877
VALLEY	938	\$244
WASHINGTON	10,110	\$4,613
Total	218,360	\$198,962

