

## **Private Partnership Creates Model to Balance Wildlife Habitat and Working Ranchland Conservation**

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Flagstaff, Arizona -- The Grand Canyon Trust (GCT) and The Conservation Fund announced today that they have purchased an exclusive option from the Kane Ranch Land Stewardship & Cattle Company, LLC to buy the Kane and Two Mile Ranches, which own or control grazing permits on nearly 900,000 acres north of the Grand Canyon. The grazing allotments of the ranches share a boundary of approximately 80 miles with Grand Canyon National Park including some of the most varied wildlife habitat in the West. The ranches include 1,000 acres of private land in House Rock Valley, along the Vermilion Cliffs and on the Paria Plateau. Tied to this base property are federal and state grazing permits for nearly 900,000 acres.

The recent purchase option was summed up by Jim Babbitt, member of a local ranching family and the Grand Canyon Trust Board, who said: " The Trust can choose to spend its time lobbying, submitting comments and filing lawsuits or it can do on-the-ground conservation work - in this case, we have chosen the latter on a dramatic scale."

GCT and The Conservation Fund are spearheading fundraising efforts to secure \$4.5 million to acquire and preserve the working ranchlands and grazing permits from the Kane Ranch Land Stewardship and Cattle Co. If the partners are successful, a portion of the ranchland will be protected as a sustainable working ranch.

"This project is creating a model for working ranchland conservation across the West," said The Conservation Fund's president, Larry Selzer. "The Fund is committed to forging partnerships with private landowners to find balanced solutions for increasingly complex conservation challenges. By integrating economic and environmental objectives, we are pioneering a unique brand of conservation that protects one of the most spectacular landscapes in the nation, safeguards important wildlife habitat, and preserves the ranching heritage that defines a way of life."

Much of the Kane Ranch is made up of the sky island of the Kaibab Plateau, considered by biologists to be of regional if not global ecological significance. It is home to the world famous Kaibab mule deer herd and has the highest density of remaining old growth

ponderosa pine forest in the southwest. Together, the Kane and Two Mile ranches safeguard important habitat for a variety of rare fish, plants and wildlife including Apache trout, California condors, bald eagles and peregrine falcons.

"This historic purchase presents the Trust and The Conservation Fund with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to tie together three national monuments, two national recreation areas, eight wilderness areas and one of the nation's crown jewel national parks, the Grand Canyon," stated Bill Hedden, Executive Director of the Grand Canyon Trust. "We will operate the ranch with an overriding goal of protecting endangered wildlife and plants and will work with The Conservation Fund to create a showcase for sensitive habitat restoration and sustainable grazing strategies on public lands."

In addition to protecting important wildlife habitat, the acquisition of the Kane and the Two Mile ranches provides the Trust and the Fund with an opportunity to establish a model for large-scale sustainable ranching. As a demonstration project, the partners will develop a process to identify the lands most suitable for grazing, reduce grazing pressures on sensitive lands, restore and revitalize important wildlife habitat, and develop new tools for sustainable grazing practices.

As stewards of the last vast tracts of remaining old growth forest on the Kane Ranch, the partners are committed to reducing old-growth logging and promoting the re-establishment of healthy fire regimes.

"Stepping into these big shoes as a major public lands stakeholder in the region, we look forward to continuing our cooperative, collaborative relationships with the federal and state agencies, the public and our conservation partners to achieve our goal of preserving these important lands. Without such protection our children and grandchildren may not have the opportunity to experience the beauty this area has afforded previous generations," Hedden concluded.

The Grand Canyon Trust is a conservation advocacy organization working towards a region where generations of people and all of nature can thrive in harmony. Its mission is to protect and restore the Colorado Plateau, its spectacular landscapes, flowing rivers, clean air, diversity of plants and animals and areas of solitude and beauty. Grand Canyon Trust is headquartered in Flagstaff, Arizona with satellite offices in Scottsdale and Moab, Utah. More information on the Trust may be found at our website: [grandcanyontrust.org](http://grandcanyontrust.org).

The Conservation Fund works with public, private, and nonprofit organizations to determine the nation's top conservation priorities and implement effective long-term strategies including land acquisition, community and economic development initiatives, and leadership training. Since 1985 The Conservation Fund and its partners have permanently protected more than 4 million acres of important wildlife habitat, working landscapes, and recreation areas. For the third year in a row, the Fund was named the nation's top-rated environmental nonprofit by the American Institute of Philanthropy. With a 1 percent fundraising cost, the lowest of all environmental groups in the country, and a program allocation of 96 percent, the Fund is unmatched for its efficiency and effectiveness.

**### END NEWS RELEASE ###**