



## Introduction

On 19 December 2017, Chaffee County Ranchers gathered to provide feedback and insight to Envision Chaffee County. Hearing the perspective of the hardworking ranch owners is essential to finding common ground and creating ways to ensure that working lands, and the waters, wildlife, views, local foods and economy they support, remain an integral part of Chaffee County in the future.

The Envision team asked local ranchers three questions, and listened to, recorded and analyzed more than 250 answers. The questions were:

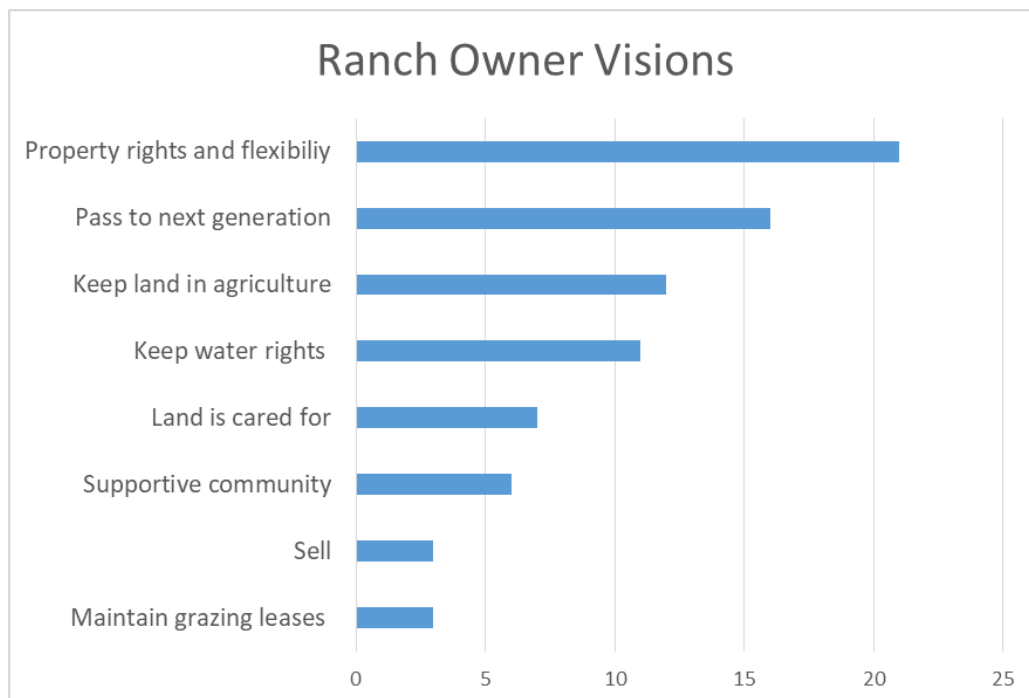
1. What are your future hopes for your ranch/agricultural lands?
2. What is currently working for you with regard to your ranch/ag lands?
3. What needs to change to make your vision reality?

All of the data collected are available in Appendices A-D below, following a summary of what we heard.

### ***What are your future hopes for your ranch lands?***

We heard 86 answers to this question, and strong themes emerged (graph below). The majority of ranchers envision their lands remaining intact or even expanding, staying in agriculture and passing to the next generation. All ranchers emphasized that property rights allowing for flexibility and development of new revenue streams are a critical part of keeping their lands economically viable and in production. Maintaining water rights is another common theme – with concerns expressed about losing current water use/rights and about water rights leaving Chaffee County and the impact that has on adjacent ranches. Having the land cared for or “conserved” is part of the future many see. Finally, being part of a community that understands and supports ranching is a consistent desire – with ranchers hoping to spend less time and expense managing community conflicts. See Appendix B for the full data.

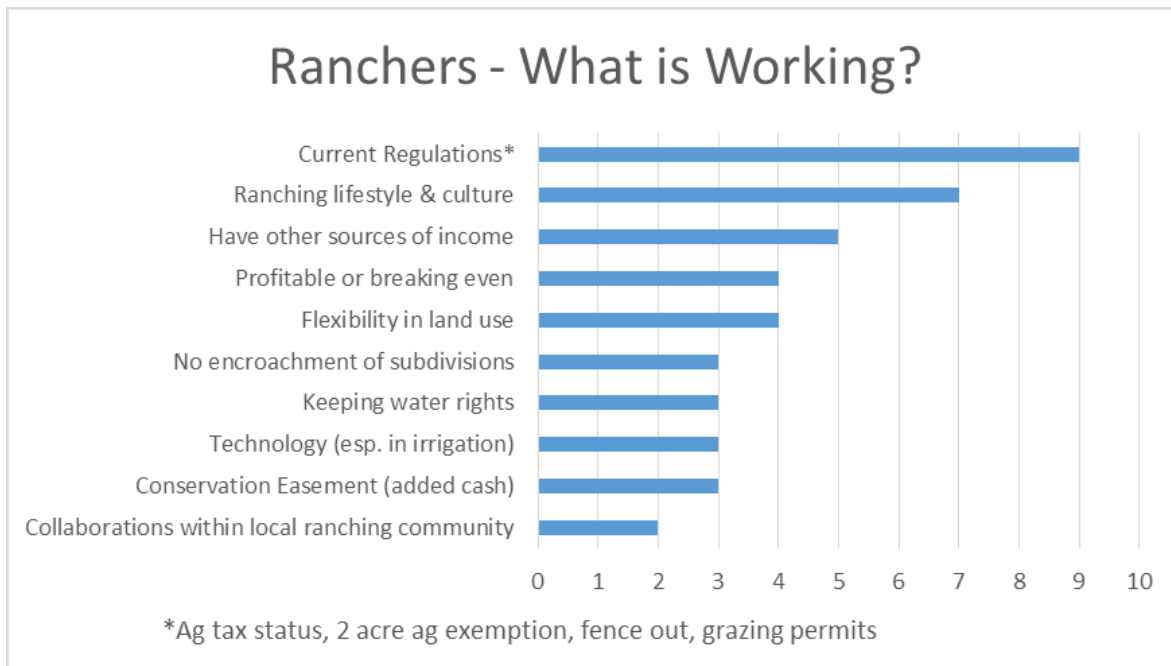
The responses to this question suggest the community vision statement for “A sustainable agricultural community, open rural landscapes and development focused in and around towns” is common ground with ranchers as well as the broader community.





### ***What is currently working?***

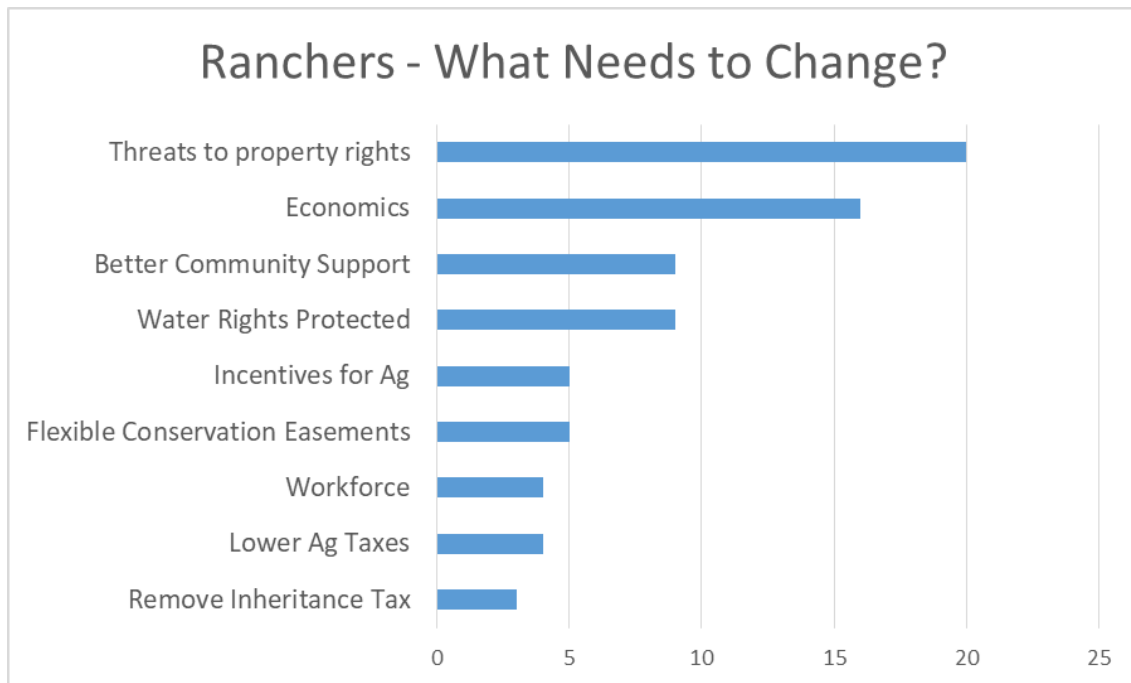
Again we hear strong themes on answers to this question (graph below). Current regulations were noted as critical to agricultural sustainability, including agricultural property tax status, fence-out law, grazing permits on public and state lands, and the 2 acre agriculture exemption. All ranchers attending indicated that they (or a family member) work second or third jobs to maintain their ranch lands, which owners indicated are variably profitable. Again the need for flexibility in land regulation and use was emphasized as important to profitability. Finally, top positive themes rounded out with: a love of the ranching lifestyle, absence of encroaching subdivisions, strong water rights, new technologies and conservation easements providing cash infusion. Full data is available in Appendix C.



### ***What needs to change for your vision to be a reality?***

What needs to change for agriculture to be sustainable in Chaffee County? Again, we heard strong themes in response to the question (graph below, and raw data in Appendix D).

The most common response was around **maintaining property rights** and eliminating “red tape”. Ranchers indicated that land use regulations can have unintended negative consequences for agricultural sustainability and expressed extreme concern that any proposed changes should be carefully evaluated with landowner input to fully understand potentially negative impacts to working lands. For example, allowable lot size can impact conservation easement values and the value of ranch lands as loan collateral. The need for versatility in adding revenue streams to support the overall ranch – from solar farms to cabins – was also emphasized. A few ideas were offered as solutions to explore in this area, including a transferable development rights program that could work for Chaffee County and an exemption process for single 2 acre lots this is more streamlined (all solution ideas generated are available in Appendix A).



The second focus was around **economics** and the need to find ways to help improve revenue or decrease costs. How much the public is willing to help by financially supporting protection of agricultural lands, water and wildlife habitat was an important point of discussion. Many interesting ideas were offered here, including:

- Increased compensation for improving or providing critical winter range for wildlife (noting that current compensation is limited and complicated to obtain)
- More flexible variations of conservation easements
- Conservation lease agreements
- Different tax consideration for “true” agriculture
- Discounted electric rates for irrigation
- Public funding for conservation easement costs or increased benefits
- Development of a local market for beef
- Community funding to buy or protect water rights (funding, pro-bono legal support)

A need for **better community understanding of and support for agriculture** was also expressed. Ranchers expressed concern that increasing time spent resolving issues with new neighbors, mountain bikers etc. takes time, and in some cases money for legal fees, away from profitable ranch operations. One examples included time spent informing/negotiating with new neighbors about cleaning ditches (“I used to be able to clean my ditches in the time it now takes just to talk to all the people living along the ditch”). Another involved conflicts with mountain bikes and cattle (“many bike trails were originally trails we use to get cattle to summer pastures – we should have input on trail design). Some ideas for potential solutions in this area included:

- A mechanism for rancher input into new biking trails
- Development of a mechanism to provide ranchers a more effective voice, perhaps like an advocacy group

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- Strong enforcement of Right to Ranch regulations
- A program to make ranches/agriculture a source of pride in Chaffee County, and
- Expanded community supported ditch cleaning, as way to connect people to working lands.

Concern was, again, raised about **water** – specifically the future security of water rights, the impacts to downstream ditch users when water is taken out of irrigation, the threat of developers damaging water rights, and the expense of legal battles to maintain current water rights. Ideas for solutions included:

- Stronger protections for water rights for ranchers after a neighbor sells water rights, and
- Development of Alternative Transfer Mechanism for sharing water between agricultural and municipal use – while increasing ranch revenue, and
- Some sort of community support for water rights (funding, pro-bono legal help...)

Finally, a need for low cost workforce rounds out top themes. One suggestion in this area was:

- Classes through high school/CMC to work on ranch during summer for credit (education)

## **Conclusion**

There is common ground between the majority of ranchers and the broader Chaffee County Community. In the Envision Survey, over 96% of 1,200 respondents indicated that agricultural lands are important to Chaffee County quality of life; supporting open spaces, wildlife habitat, local water rights, culture and economy. The majority of ranchers in this session indicated that they want to stay in production, pass their ranches to the next generation or see them continue in agriculture, see the land remain productive/conserved, maintain local water rights and minimize conflicts with encroaching subdivisions and the community in general. Finding ways to do this, without changing property rights or values, is difficult – as loss of agricultural lands to development in many Colorado mountain community testifies. We hope this listening session and the information shared by local ranchers can be a first step in finding solutions that work for Chaffee County as we work together to create a future with sustainable agriculture, rural landscapes and development focused in and around towns.

All information gathered in the Listening Session is captured verbatim in the Appendices below:

- Appendix A – A list of rough solution ideas
- Appendix B – Input on ranchers vision for the future
- Appendix C – What is current working, and
- Appendix D – What needs to change.

Thank you again to the many ranchers who gave their time and energy to share their thoughts and ideas.



## **Appendix A**

### **Compilation of Raw Solution Ideas for Further Discussion**

#### **Property Rights**

- Make exemption process for simple two-acre lot not as expensive and keep the process simple
- Find a transferable development right option that works for Chaffee County
- Remove the Open Space Requirement from subdivision language in Land Use Code

#### **Economics and Incentives for Ag**

- Help with developing alternative revenue streams from land/operations to support agricultural business bottom line
- Mechanism like 1% for Conservation or Conservation Finance Measure that is designed to support agriculture
- Space for lower taxes for true Ag (versus people with 4 horses or 3 llamas)
- Conservation lease
- Better payment for wildlife forage with less red tape
- Lower rate for electricity used for irrigation
- Local market for beef at higher price
- Ability to lease out for agricultural lands
- Incentives and funds to buy water rights to keep local ag community viable
- Find ways to increase compensation for Elk/Deer use of crops

#### **Water**

- Need more protection for water rights of people who continue to ranch when a neighbor sells their rights
- Develop Alternative Transfer Mechanism concept for sharing water between agricultural and municipal use

#### **Easements**

- Landowners need to receive more money for protecting their land with conservation easements; the “low” CE values are not enough compensation.
- Public funding of easement costs
- More flexible easements



### **Community**

- Public education on Ranch issues/challenges/value?
- Rancher input into biking trails and impact to ranching
- Local ranch advocacy group or a mechanism that amplifies their voice (like Gunnison Legacy?)
- County support for fairgrounds and ag-related activities/gathering places

### **Workforce**

- Source of low cost labor? Volunteers. Interns?

### **Legal**

- Legal fund to support ranchers (water law, developers, ...)
- Community pro-bono legal to support?

### **Ranchers vs Developers**

- Need tighter regulations on developers adjacent to ranches – water, fences, impact studies



## ***Appendix B – Raw Data***

### **QUESTION 1: What are your future hopes for your ranch/agricultural lands?**

#### **Raw data from Facilitator Summaries (multiple responses in parenthesis)**

Kim:

- Keep it in the family (4)
- No death tax on transfer (3)
- Maintain lease land (2)
- Maintain property rights – “if I want to sell it I sell it” (2)
- Not sell lands
- Receive \$ for leaving ag land as ag land (leased by ag)
- Family can decide – no outside pressure
- New community members learn about ag/ranching culture
- Public fund to help defend water rights
- A workforce to help work lands – “someone to build a good fence”
- Make a living off the land – value of beef = pound of pot

Lucy:

- Right-to-ranch policies given to everyone and enforced (6)
- See ag lands stay the same – current ag production/use (5)
- Grow size of operation (3)
- Grazing permits on public land continue (2)
- “Public” pays for open space (2) – 96%
- Keep pasture for lease available
- Get smaller or bigger
- Not special use permits that limit uses – support personal rights for use of property
- Speed limits that work for ag users – equipment, animals on road
- Have fencing standards on developed lands to keep livestock out
- Protect water rights – ditch use
- Better interaction with visitors

Cindy:

- Preserve right to do whatever we can on our Ranch to stay in business (subdivide off 2 acre lots, have a solar farm, gravel pit, cabins – whatever) (12)
- Retain our grazing leases (12)
- Not sure what will happen with the ranch (9) – (some say they have no children and don’ t know what will happen when they are gone)
- Able to pass the ranch on to our children (3)
- Our kids can be successful with the ranch (3)
- Retain our water rights and ability to use them



Greg:

- Keep the land intact – i.e. Do not break up the ranch into smaller pieces
- Retain Freedom of Choice in terms of landowner has control over future
- Retain original value of uses and options that were in place when land was acquired
- County residents have greater understanding of agricultural community culture
- First in use is first in right
  - Early landowners can't be constrained by late-comers/new arrivals
- Continued improvements to property/means of production
- Increase the number/availability of federal grazing permits
- Increase access to/availability of private land for expansion of grazing operations

***Comments Compiled from Participant Worksheets  
(By theme in order of frequency):***

**Property Rights**

- Fewer or no new laws and regulations caused by the newcomers (city dwellers) that stop or limit property rights
  - Less regulation requirements
  - Increased opportunity and allowed uses for landowners
  - To be able to zone for uses I envision most suitable for the various lands I own. I know where the bog holes are and what other issues are good or challenging on each parcel.
  - No loss of private property rights
  - Freedom of choice based on decisions I choose to make for my property
  - Use your land as you see fit
  - Preserve private property rights
  - Preserve development rights, if necessary
  - No restrictions, property rights
  - To preserve the ability to use my land as I see fit
  - To not have limitations on my private property
  - Property freedom
  - No limits on what I can do with my ranch to make it survive
  - Preserve right to subdivide into 2-acres if needed
  - Use land as needed – gravel pit; solar farm; cabins
  - Not be required to supply open space to the people of the county at the rancher, farmer and ag property owners' expense
  - Ability to have the freedom to continue to use as we have or the ability to sell or subdivide
  - Personal property rights
  - Diverse land use without county regulations or neighbors' input
- No county rules that impact ag





## **Pass to next generation**

- The next generation has the opportunity to continue in ranching if they want or to make a decision that fits their situation – subdivide, agriculture, conservation, etc.
- Keep family close and hope they can make a living here if they choose to stay
- Be able to pass on to future generation without subdividing
- Viable agriculture, but if that is not feasible, then the ability to use this property in a way that benefits my family.
- That my kids can continue to ranch here if they want to
- Be able to pass it down for more generations
- Being able to pass lands to future generations
- To pass it on if they want it. If they don't, then I would want them to sell it for all the money they can get.
- That our children/grandchildren have opportunity to love the land and live off the land economically, and that they are allowed to make the decisions about the land without outside pressures.
- Family members that can return/stay to run the ranch – keep it in the family
- I want my children to be able to have this land even if they lease it because they can't afford to live on it
- Pass to children and be successful
- Be able to grow, raise next generation doing what we love
- Leave to next generation, however, dilution of ownership and succession must be met
- Generational support (tax)
- That it will be a vibrant, successful working ranch. It is surrounded by other successful working ranches without pressure/vandalism from increasing numbers of both residents and visitors.

## **Keep the land in agriculture**

- To remain as ag land
- The cattle market stays at a level (\$) that allows us to stay in business
- A market remains for ag products (hay, beef)
- Ability to continue to change operations as economy and other forces change
- Receive compensation from people who want to have ag land in their community – i.e., get paid to leave land as ag land, not necessarily forever (conservation easement) but on a year-by-year basis – for example: keep a hay field in a neighborhood and be compensated by acre for leaving it in an ag status.
- I want to continue doing what I love, cattle ranching, until such time as I want to retire
- Ranch continues as ranch
- I want to keep all I have and possibly add to it
- Not need to sell off lands
- Not needing to sell lots
- Figure out how to keep running it when we're too old



## **Keep Water Rights**

- Keep water rights and have enough water to keep hay ground producing
- It stays productive without outside pressures on the water and water rights.
- Keep water
- Not having to fight to keep our water
- Keep/protect water rights – no rule changes
- Better protection of water and land (not allowing city/county to buy land for water or selling water off the land)
- Water rights and access to water to be protected
- I think all water should stay in the county. I know its private property, but every drop that leaves hurts everyone else. We live in a desert; we need water to keep it green.
- My ranch is already in a conservation easement. My main concern is the water. As other ranches are sold around me the water is being sold to the Front Range or exchanged for well permits. Taking water out of existing ditches affects my ability to water my land because it affects the overall water aquifer, which affects my water rights.
- Keep water rights in individual ownership
- Keep water – protection of ditch right-of-ways; use of piping culverts in subdivision

## **Land is cared for**

- See the land cared for so it does not turn to sandy desert
- Conservation
- Conservations easements – still not sure make a living
- Continues as a wildlife corridor
- Less land development
- Better opportunity for conservation easements with higher funding
- Keep all ag land ag. There is plenty of junk land to build homes on. Currently, my land is in a conservation easement, but my biggest concerns are encroaching Poncha Springs, stray dogs, stray people, and my water flooding out people who have built where historically water ran.

## **A supportive community**

- To educate new (and old) residents regarding our agricultural culture! Part of this is our historic freedom to do what's necessary to survive.
- Neighbors let us operate as we see fit for our best interest
- People entering county embrace/learn culture
- For town Salida residents to understand and respect different ways of lifestyles (rural farming)
- Be able to ranch without having to constantly fight for my rights – water, ditches, drive down the highway in a tractor without getting killed
- Ranch lands should be treated with equal respect as any privately owned enterprise, business, etc. Opportunities for agricultural enterprise should never have to be disregarded or maligned by any other enterprises.



## **Grazing Permits**

- BLM and forest permits stay viable without excessive unfavorable pressures which limit their use for grazing.
- Maintain state lease land part of ranch – don't have them take it back to develop
- Keep public land grazing leases

## **Sell**

- If you could make a living ranching it would be ideal to keep it a working ranch. You cannot make a living and it is too hard to get approval from this community for additional income-producing ventures. Our hope is to be able to sell it at a reasonable market value to anyone that has a legal, moral vision for its use.
- Sell to rich guy who doesn't like neighbors

## **Others**

- Affordable living cost
- It rains regularly and the sun shines 315 days a year
- Keep down overcrowding
- It would be nice to expand, but now there is no way it works economically
- No inheritance tax
- Increase production by pivot sprinklers
- Less bikes
- Fencing standards
- Incentives (tax) to keep land working
- Workforce



## Appendix C

### QUESTION 2: What is currently working with regard to your ranch/ag lands?

#### Facilitator Summaries (multiple responses in parenthesis)

Kim:

- Good lawyers
- Right-to-ranch support
- Crop sharing with local ranches
- Leaving Colorado a fence-out state
- Conservation easement
- Lifestyle
- Ranching community supports each other
- Water rights (defended \$)
- Technological innovation

Lucy:

- Conservation easements work – no more funding for conservation
- Need continuing right to subdivide

Cindy:

- We are still here and surviving
- We love our lifestyle, culture
- Right-to-ranch is some help (although most of the provisions are covered in state law)

Greg:

- Price of cattle, i.e. selling cattle to feedlots
- Increasing demand for product, including locally
- Improvements in irrigation technology
  - More efficient use of water – sprinklers, lining ditches
  - Disagreement, though, over impact of this on ground water recharge – i.e. flood irrigation versus sprinklers
- Partnerships with small land owners
  - Moving cattle around to smaller pastures for grazing
    - Increases available pasture land
    - Keeps small parcels in ag/productive
    - Agreements have to be solid – some folks agree to this to get Ag tax status and then never actually host any cattle.
- Agricultural Subdivision Exemption
  - Allows dividing a small piece of land from main parcel without much paperwork/expense
  - Discussed terming it a “Simple Agricultural Land Division” to avoid some of the regulatory issues regarding exempt wells
- Water Management/Flow Management



- Flow program is helping uphold and stabilize flows in second half of summer.
- There is generally a more stable flow regime/less fluctuation due to construction of storage
- Trans-basin water is adding to flow reliability.
- Right to Ranch Policy/Regulations
  - Supports flexibility in land use code in support of agriculture
- Tax Status/Agricultural Valuation
  - Assessor's office does a good job of analyzing use and applying proper tax classifications

**Comments Compiled from Participant Worksheets**  
**(By theme in order of frequency):**

**Current Regulations**

- Allowing ranchers continued access to federal/state land; allow them to trespass on private land to get cattle to high country or pasture-to-pasture.
- Fence out not in law
- Flexibility – continue two-acre minimum (ag exemption)
- Leaving Chaffee County as a fence out state
- Property tax incentives on ag lands
- Tax benefit
- Tax benefits for ag status
- The ability to grow crops and graze cattle on both private and public lands
- The only ranches that will survive are the ones that have enough cows and have an abundance of forest, state and BLM leases – protect the right to grazing leases.

**Culture**

- Good environment to raise a family
- I'm able to operate more or less autonomously without outside interference
- Lifestyle
- Lifestyle on the ranch
- Some family
- We currently can choose our own quality of life
- We get to live on a beautiful place and have no neighbors to bother us

**Other Income Sources**

- Have many other incomes
- Not expecting to be successful the way past generations were
- Not much! Equipment costs, weather obstacles and market fluctuation deems it necessary that you “love the lifestyle” and subsidize your living with other sources of income.
- Not very much is profitable. It's simply a lifestyle to enjoy privacy, the scenery, wildlife we have worked to obtain and preserve. One has to have another job, including me, to support the ranch.
- One or more family members working in order to support current activity



## **Economics**

- I run a tight ship financially and my ranch is currently viable
- It's actually pretty good right now
- Day-to-day income/expenses
- We hay and have cattle and can break even on these two things – most times

## **Flexibility of Land Use**

- Being free to make property decisions
- Freedom of property rights
- Future land use has not been restricted
- Use of land for multiple purposes

## **Water**

- Water management
- Water rights
- Water has stayed on land to keep it green

## **Technology**

- Better irrigation systems increased yield
- Irrigation technology improvements
- Technical innovations (equipment)

## **Conservation Easement**

- Conservation easement
- Ours is in a conservation easement with Colorado Cattlemen's Association; it was the only way to pay off siblings and consolidate ownership.
- The conservation easement gave me money to put in new watering systems and other ways to make ranching pay

## **Minimal Encroachment of Subdivisions**

- Minimal conflicts of people/houses
- No encroachment of subdivisions

## **Others**

- NRCS money for improvements
- Active agriculture and land management has kept it green
- Being able to adapt to changes quickly
- Chaffee County right-to-ranch ordinance has been an encouragement, but it seems to be a rather slippery slope when dealing with dishonest developers who ignore the rancher's rights. Needs enforcement by law!
- County commissioners' past and hopefully present support
- Crop share with other local ranchers
- Increased demand for ag products
- Downsizing to be able to manage current levels of ag activity
- Good lawyers
- Hard work, higher cow market prices, rain and snow

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- Long-term affordable leases
- More latitude for other use of land
- Support of local business
- We are getting the most from the crop production as possible and calf production. It is just enough to cover expenses; markets are down now.
- We are working way too hard
- Weed operations are working because there is money to be made
- Seeking special niche as opposed to larger ranching operations
- Collaboration with other ranches
- Community of support from ranchers
- Right-to-ranch support/rules
- Use of neighboring 40 acres recently purchased land to graze cattle on



## Appendix D

### QUESTION 3: What do you think needs to change in order for your future hopes (dreams, wishes and best-case scenarios) to be true?

#### *Facilitator Summaries (multiple responses in parenthesis)*

##### Kim:

- Actively advertise Gunnison County
- Use global warming
- More power in the hands of the land owner
- Less power in the hands of the neighbor
- Educate newcomers about water rights and ranching culture
- Overall economics – assets not declining
- Land rich = cash poor
- Eco-tourism
- Price of beef
- Fewer regulations on sub-division
- Affordable housing
- Influence of special interest groups too great
- Things getting passed without input or knowledge
- Infrastructure that supports vehicle travel effectively
- Allow ranchers to have historical access to state lands maintained
- Grant-funded ag
- More children – more help/workers – can afford to pay min. wage – no one wants to work for min. wage – local school/university students get credit + work experience
- Create interest – make ranching cool
- Education – knowledge of open range – what are the facts/rights
- Weighted votes based on acreage
- Fewer people – more people with ranching culture
- Legal fund to support ranchers

##### Lucy:

- Incentives and funds to buy water rights (from 96%) to keep local ag community viable (7)
- Need tighter regulations on developers adjacent to ranches – water, fences, impact studies (4)
- Bike impact problems (4):
  - Reduce the number of bike trails and limit the number of bikers
  - Reduce the impacts of bike trails on grazing/ranching (location, numbers of users)
  - Many “bike” trails were originally cow trails and ranchers need to be able to use these for moving cattle
  - Work on teaching bikers that ranchers have right to do their work and manage their cows on public lands
  - Who decides that bike trails get put on maps? This is a problem.
  - Bike races on roads shut down ranch business
- Need more protection for water rights of people who continue to ranch when a neighbor sells their rights; when sales happen, ditches and wells and the aquifer levels need to be protected so





that water rights and uses for ranchers who remain are kept intact (3) – (Hill Ranch dry up was cited as example of bad policy)

- Make sure the next generation can ranch (2)
- Incentive from 96% to help ag operations continue
- County support for fairgrounds and ag-related activities/gathering places
- Add Envision core team members who ranch (Jim LaRue?)
- County committee/ombudsman to advise on ranch issues
- Loss of productive lands – pasture, irrigation
- Fight weed impacts on ag from neighbor properties (tumbleweeds)
- Protect water so that ranches can continue – consider impacts of water changes
- Allow ATVs on public lands for ranch use
- Make exemption process for simple two-acre lot not as expensive and keep the process simple
- Stop trespass and vandalism on ranchlands and ranch infrastructure (ditches, equipment, buildings, land)
- Landowners need to receive more money for protecting their land with conservation easements; the “low” CE values are not enough compensation.

Cindy:

- Get rid of the inheritance tax, forever.
- Decrease our operating costs:
  - Decrease Ag land taxes (get the people who are “freeloading” on the Ag tax status with a few horses off and pass on savings to real operations)
  - Decrease power cost for irrigation (have a different price from Sangre Electric to run irrigation pumps etc.)
- Increase Revenue
  - We need the ability to be flexible with our lands (able to develop gravel pits, solar farms, cabins, sell off 2 acres)
  - Find ways to increase compensation for Elk/Deer use of crops (one person had 5,000+ elk in a season and was compensated \$1,400 – or 28 cents per elk. Big game populations are dropping – compensate more to improve severe winter habitat etc. “Current CPW system is so complex we don’t use it at all” “we had our place fenced”
- Educate new people about why we need public lands grazing rights, why we need to clean ditches (so we don’t have to spend days explaining to neighbors instead of cleaning the ditch)
- Promote economic diversity so our kids can find good jobs to augment ranch earnings
- Find a transferable development right option that works for Chaffee County
- Help Agricultural land owners have a voice/vote that is commensurate with our acres and impact to the community (we are only 60 or so people so we don’t have a voice)

Greg:

- Find mechanisms for subsidizing agriculture
- Implementation of something like a Conservation Leasing program
- “Shorten the legislative session to one month”
- Community Supported Agriculture



- Mechanism like 1% for Conservation or Conservation Finance Measure that is designed to support agriculture
- Fix the Inheritance Tax so that it does not force sale of land to pay taxes
- Develop Alternative Transfer Mechanism concept for sharing water between ag and municipal use
- Remove the Open Space Requirement from subdivision language in Land Use Code
- Help with developing alternative revenue streams from land/operations to support agricultural business bottom line

## **Comments Compiled from Participant Worksheets** **(By theme in order of frequency):**

### **Threats to Property Rights**

- Completely open use of land without government oversight
- Do not mandate more restrictions or land codes/zoning that limits our ability to use conservation easements.
- Do not limit our property uses
- The public needs to understand that prosperity cannot be mandated. The key to keeping land from being heavily developed is to give the landowners the flexibility to do whatever they need to do.
- Ranchers need to have maximum flexibility to do multiple enterprises and change with the times without being hamstrung by zoning, etc. (within reason).
- Let us property owners be versatile and go different directions with our property to stay viable.
- Fewer restrictions on private property just on what the neighbors desire
- More support for private land owners know how to use their private land
- Maintain option of selling parts of private lands for development
- For agricultural property owners to be able to do whatever they want to do with their lands. Sometimes impossible situations arise, and the land owners need to pull out of their land bank without penalties.

- Less regulation
- Less red tape
- Freedom to sell/subdivide easier
- Be able to do what we need to be able to continue ranching in every aspect
- Government regulation – state and local
- County regulations – land use permits gone!
- Rancher landowners need to be included in land-use policy
- People moving here and thinking they need to place rules and regulations on the area without much thought of impacts on ag
- People that are moving here need to quit changing rules
- Influence on policy/county laws that require greater financial input from ranching community when our income remains the same or going down (% weighted; 1 person not equal to 1 vote)

### **Economics**

- Increased value of ag production



- Another income source would help
- Expenses need to decrease
- Ideas for crops that can produce larger incomes without large increases in expenses
- Beef prices
- Better local market for selling livestock
- Better overall economics for ranching – higher beef prices, reasonable labor prices
- Diversification
- Operation costs increasing at an increasing rate – taxes, insurance, equipment, seed, fertilizer

### **Incentives for Agriculture**

- Hate to say it and don't want it, but if folks want ag to survive we will eventually need to be subsidized if we are to hold it together.
- \$\$\$ movement of increased growth in county to ranch businesses – how can we unite/create opportunity?
- Improve incentive to get our family to want to keep it going
- Help with utility expenses for pumping water
- Incentive for land owners to keep their lands and operate or lease out for ag purposes
- Replenishing assets (barns, tractors, etc.)

### **Better understanding/relationship with community and outdoor recreation (bikers)**

- Trails on public lands – not able to have trails all over grazing land
- Communication to new land owners about water rights, branding of animals, open range
- Respect for ag practices
- Right-to-ranch needs to be handed to every new person that buys property close to ag lands – keep productive ag in ag.
- Right-to-ranch needs to be given to every homeowner in Chaffee County
- Right-to-ranch needs to be enforced
- Lack of community understanding or appreciation or involvement
- More right-to-ranch info to “new” neighbors (ex: ditch easements; cattle easements)
- Less encroachment from new property owners around us

### **Water**

- Less government or quasi-government control telling us what we can and cannot do with our lands!  
Don't take our water and dry up the land!
- Sales of land that are being granted for subdivision and wells that will need to be drilled – where will the water come from?
- Water rights protected
- Secure water for ag use in Chaffee County
- Development in the County and those who wish to develop lands adjacent to working ranches should be held to a higher standard of research into who owns ditch rights in the area, or what is the source of the irrigation water. Maybe there should be legislation to this effect so developers do not damage someone's water right before the owner has ever been notified of such activity!



- Find ways to protect the water rights of the ranches that will stay ranches. Depletion of the water aquifer needs to be addressed if you want to keep ranches.
- Front Range water requirements – look to valley water for their water use requirements
- Water staying on the ag lands
- Developers coming in and changing ditches and water flow and water easements – there is no support for ranchers to defend themselves against these deep pockets. These people dare ranchers to sue them knowing we will run out of money before them.

### **Conservation Easements**

- Conservation easements are not permanent – 15 or 30 years; lease?
- Term limit to conservation easements
- Group to encourage land owners to conserve land and explain how to accomplish
- Be able to protect the lands with conservations easements that make sense.
- Chaffee County to support easements

### **Taxes**

- Reduced taxes
- Property taxes for ag need to come down
- Don't allow properties that aren't truly ag to pay ag taxes
- Tax rates based on larger developments

### **Workforce**

- Classes through high school/CMC to work on ranch during summer for credit (education)
- Need workers – can't find any help
- Need workforce
- Hiring others in the community (credit?)

### **Inheritance Tax**

- The damned inheritance tax needs to be gone and stay gone!
- Remove and keep inheritance tax out
- Inheritance taxes

### **Others**

- Salida and Poncha Springs sure could help by not sending their waste downstream
- Reduce Colorado legislative session to 30 days/year
- A number of oil wells would help!
- Type of people being drawn to our community (“hipsters” are most likely not feeding hay to horses)
- Define ag and ranching
- Stop calling sustainable ag if you get grants
- Land prices being reasonable for ranch land so I can increase our ranch
- Live longer
- Fence laws
- I would like to see some ranchers on your board!
- Push for developments to build on non-productive land

**Envision Chaffee County**  
**Rancher/landowner listening session – December 19, 2017**



- We can't have any more Friends Ranch developments
- State speed limits in ag areas need to be lowered and more signage on these rural roads to warn drivers of tractor/equipment on roadways
- Subdivision fencing OUT!
- Good snowfall
- Slow tourism push
- Do not see need for much change; maybe fewer people