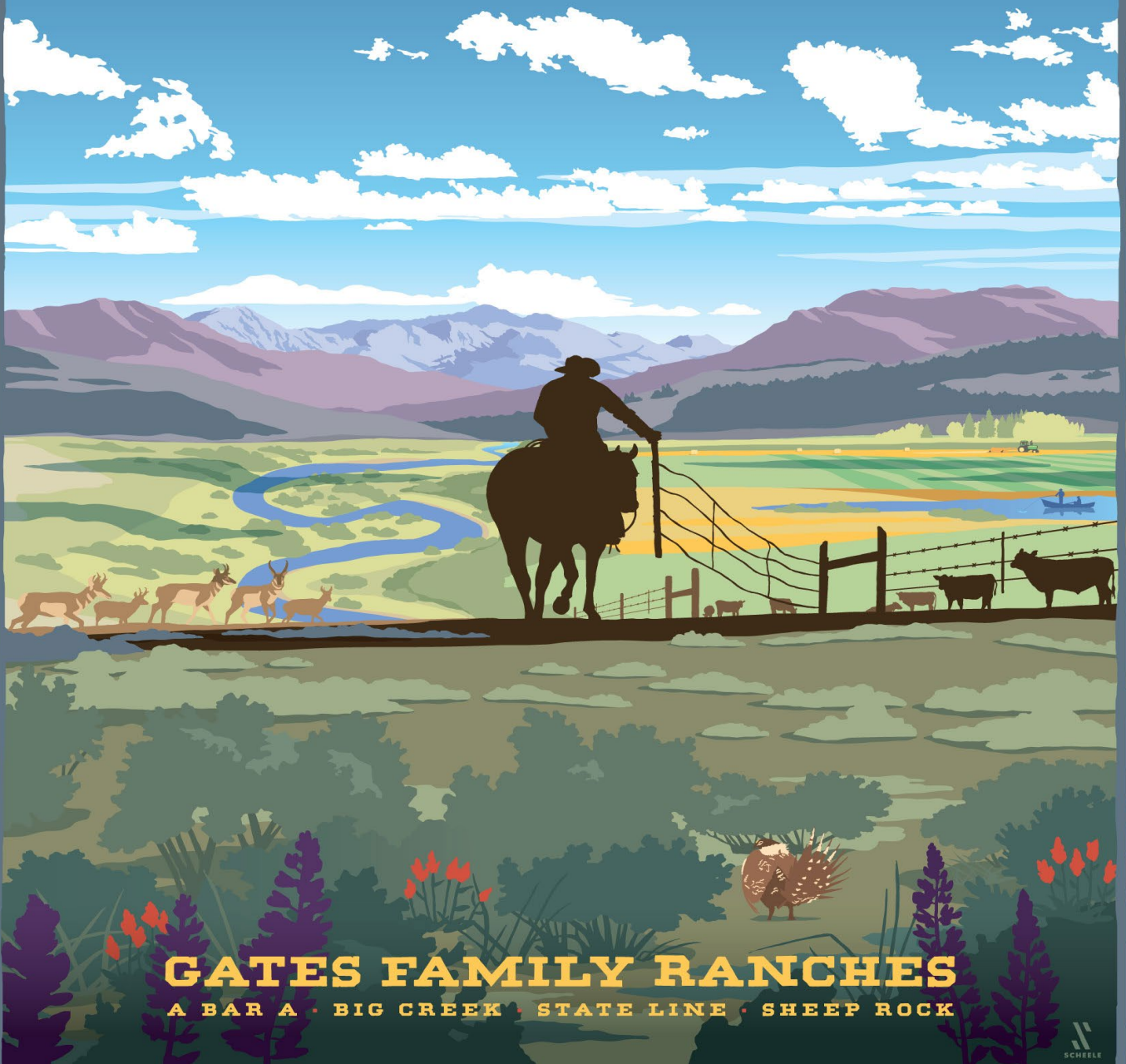




CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP

P R O G R A M



THE SETTING

The Gates Family Ranches (GFR) are committed to “*Extraordinary Stewardship*” in all aspects—financial performance, natural resource management, hospitality services, agricultural operations, and community engagement. This commitment aligns with our Master Plan 2035 and is consistent with the Gates family ownership since 1962. Conservation has been integral to GFR operations for decades, but the launch of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in 2024 amplifies and formalizes our commitment. CSP integrates strategies and analytical rigor to enhance conservation across guest and cattle operations, including rangeland management, wildlife habitats, guest education, community outreach, and partnerships. The success of these initiatives relies on focused, proactive management that creates lasting benefits on the ranches and the surrounding landscape.

While distinct activities characterize ranch operations—A Bar A focuses on hospitality, and Big Creek, State Line, and Sheep Rock center on agriculture—the landscape and natural resources are stewarded and connected as one. Wildlife needs the ability to migrate; water must be carefully protected; the condition of the rangeland is essential to livestock and wildlife beyond fence lines, state borders, and ownership entities. It is crucial to address the health of the environment and the sustainability of the landscape together, working seamlessly with hospitality and agricultural management teams. Extraordinary stewardship will contribute to a sustainable future for this rare property.



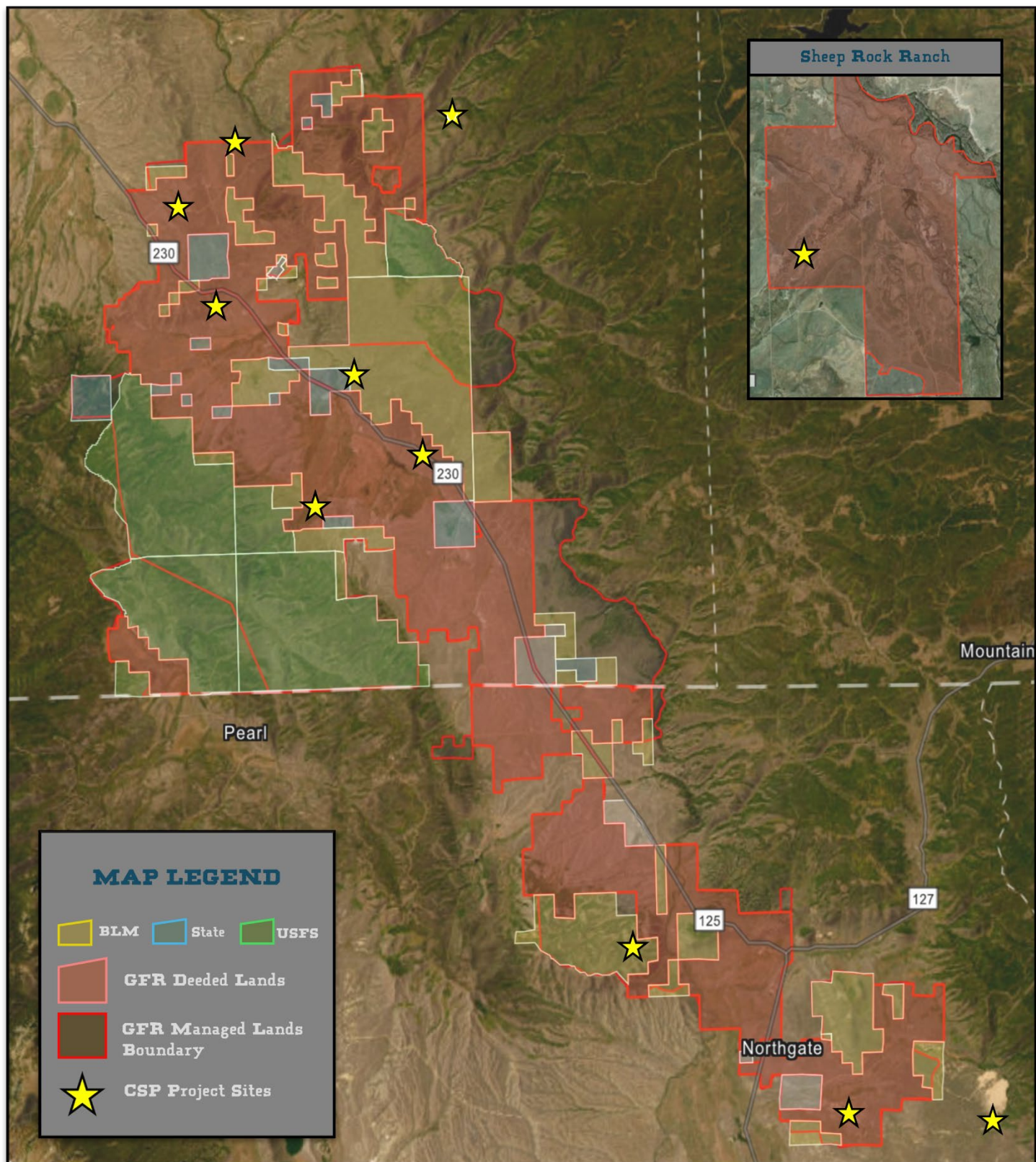
CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM - VISION

Lead an integrated, rigorous and outcomes-focused conservation program that enhances the value of the Gates Family Ranches and natural resources in the North Platte Valley.

WHAT WE DO

CSP mobilizes financial and management resources to amplify a broad range of strategic outcomes. Our past conservation and enhancement successes are notable, yet often secondary to other objectives. Now, the structure is in place to systematically accelerate and improve conservation efforts and optimize outcomes for all aspects of ranching operations.

CONSERVATION PROJECT SITES





CSP PROJECT PRIORTIES

CSP evaluates, initiates and oversees both discrete and ranch-wide conservation projects coordinated with hospitality and agricultural activities. The common theme is conservation benefit and natural resources enhancement. Projects are generated through a systematic approach that identifies internal needs and draws on opportunities with outside partners, sponsorships, and agencies that share common goals and initiatives. All CSP projects impact one or more of the following priorities:

WATER

Protect, Augment & Improve Water Resources, Water Quality, Availability & Water Rights

RANGELAND

Protect & Improve Land Stability, Connectivity, Ecological Health, Optimal Grazing for Livestock & Wildlife

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Protect & Improve Wildlife Habitats (Forests, Grasslands, Wetlands & Fisheries), Migration Corridors, & Biodiversity

CONSERVATION PROJECT SUMMARIES

The starred conservation projects referenced on the map and listed below are ordered from North-to-South beginning at Sheep Rock Ranch.

★ **The Nature Conservancy Easement (Inholding at Sheep Rock Ranch)**

Sheep Rock Ranch has been a part of the Gates Family Ranches since 2015. A 639-acre parcel located within the ranch was purchased by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 1999, retaining a conservation easement created under previous non-Gates family ownership. The easement provides additional conservation work on the North Platte River that benefits Sheep Rock meadows.

★ **Mullen Fire Reseeding and Cheatgrass Mitigation**

A partnership effort to reestablish healthy rangeland and forest ecosystems after the 2020 Mullen Fire includes reseedling and invasive weeds mitigation efforts through partnership with USFS and Carbon County Weed and Pest. GFR is an active partner in this ongoing effort, which has treated over 1,000 acres since 2020.

★ **Pat Pasture Wildlife-Friendly Fencing**

The 2024 A Bar A Wildlife Fencing Project converted four miles of existing barbwire and high-tensile fences into wildlife-friendly fencing. This project improved migratory routes, reduced wildlife injuries and improved Big Creek's ability to manage grazing resources.

★ **Wildlife Migration Project – *Under the Wire* Film**

A story about connectivity and stewardship to protect wildlife migration. Through partnerships, the project included photographing and monitoring a pronghorn migration on GFR. The results from this project converted additional wildlife fencing and produced a short documentary conservation film called *Under the Wire*.

★ **Mule Deer Initiative**

A 2014 partnership with Wyoming Game and Fish Department to improve mule deer habitat within the designated migration corridor. Areas of overgrown sagebrush on GFR and public lands were treated to improve the forage quality and rangeland health.

★ **Big Creek Pipeline**

A partnership project with the BLM and the Natural Resources Conservation Service completed a four-mile pipeline, that expanded reliable water sources and grazing capacity at Big Creek Ranch to improve rangeland quality. This project eliminated the need to manually transport water to the area during drought conditions.

★ **Big Creek Sagebrush Treatment**

Ongoing efforts to treat overgrown sagebrush enhance rangeland resources by promoting the growth of native plant species that support sustainable grazing practices and improve the nutritional and ecological quality of forage and habitat for cattle and wildlife.

★ **Big Creek Fish Passageway**

In 2018, a reconstructed diversion dam and fish passageway was created on Big Creek to allow trout to migrate over critical irrigation infrastructure. A multi-year study, including tagging and tracking trout movement, proved a 90% success rate with the new structure, compared to only a 10% passage with the previous dam.

★ **Independence Mountain Water Developments**

In 2024, four new water developments sites were completed, converting natural springs into sustainable watering sources for cattle and wildlife using low-tech infrastructure. Water development enhances GFR by expanding protected water rights, reliable water availability, improving grazing efficiency, and reducing impacts on other more sensitive water resources like wetlands and stream banks.

★ **Waterfowl Nesting Study**

A 2018 research project conducted by a CSU graduate student surveyed North Park, including irrigated meadows at State Line. The study highlighted positive impacts of effective water management and flood irrigation on wildlife habitat. The study has educated others about the value in protecting water rights and private land conservation.

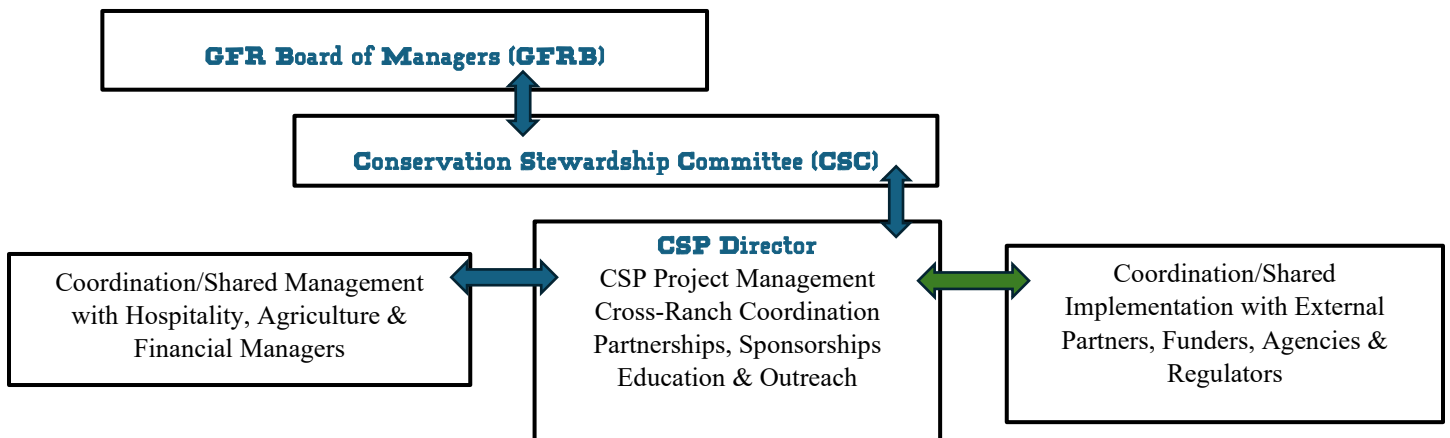
★ **North Sand Creek Partnership**

A multi-stakeholder partnership led by CSU's Center for Collaborative Conservation addresses sedimentation damage in North Sand Creek, a primary water source for Blankenship pastures on State Line Ranch (private land). The problem comes from recreational off-road vehicle activities on the Sand Dunes (public land) upstream from State Line, necessitating a complex process with many stakeholders over many years to find solutions. Restoration efforts, still pending, include revegetation, low-tech in-stream sedimentation traps, changes in diversion points and new irrigation infrastructure.



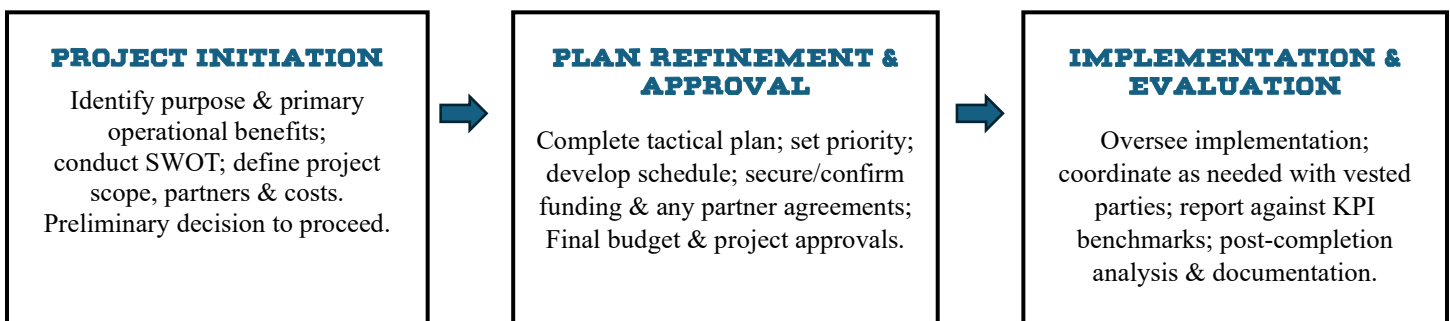
THE CSP ORGANIZATION PROCESS & THE TOOLS

Led by a dedicated CSP director and supported by a conservation-focused board committee, CSP augments in-house expertise with external talent through consultants, partnerships, networking, and sponsorships. In summary, CSP develops project plans, coordinates and refines plans with appropriate internal managers and external partners, and measures results.



CSP EVALUATION PROCESS

Each project or initiative undergoes a rigorous evaluation. Once accepted, a project will be scheduled based on funding availability, seasonal issues, coordination with impacted operational areas and any partners. CSP has its own budget and can share costs with hospitality and agriculture when mutual savings or benefits exist.





CSP OPPORTUNITIES – HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Education

CSP provides tours and presentations for interested guests, sponsors and partners held privately and through A Bar A's Ranch Learning Series. Conservation education is also provided to local school classes and includes field trips to the ranches.

Networking

CSP explicitly works with local agencies, non-profits and universities to learn and identify opportunities. Staff attend conferences, and CSP may convene its own small conferences starting in 2026.

Sponsorships

Individuals have an opportunity to fund projects of mutual interest, subject to final GFRB approval. Sponsorships have tight guidelines and are not tax-deductible but have been used to fund important projects that could not be handled within the normal budget. Sponsorships can be small or large; they can be one-time or multi-year.

Partnerships

CSP has worked with many partners over the years to implement larger scale projects and apply public funding opportunities. CSP works with state and federal agencies, non-profits, foundations and universities.

Conservation Stewardship Committee (CSC)

As part of the governing board structure, the Conservation Stewardship Committee (CSC) has internal and external members who can serve on a project-basis or as regular voting members. The CSC is chaired by a GFR board member, includes the CSP director and select staff, and has up to four external members, all qualified in conservation management.

If you would like to learn more about any project, have a tour or discuss partnerships, sponsorships or brainstorm a new idea, please contact the CSP Director:

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