



UW Cooperative Extension Service  Profitable & Sustainable Agricultural Systems  Risk Management Agency

## Enterprising Rural Families: A Resource for ag families

By James Sedman and John Hewlett

Production agriculture and agribusiness are most often a family affair. From the smallest family farm to large corporate operations, there is likely a family unit involved making them work. Agriculture is unique; while every operation needs to be an effective business unit to survive, there is a lifestyle-element involved that is often crucial to success as well.

An online resource is available for those involved in a family business entitled Enterprising Rural Families: Making it Work, available at eRuralFamilies.org. This comprehensive, online course focuses on how to combine the needs, values, and visions of people into an effective family business. Enterprising Rural Families (ERF) was developed by a team of professionals from Wyoming, Canada, and Australia, combining visual, audio, and written materials.

### Goals of Enterprising Rural Families

The courses available on the ERF Web site seek to help rural family businesses to achieve several goals.



Families learn to use goal setting and sound business practices for both short- and long-term challenges and to develop long-term resiliency. The courses encourage families to have an awareness and understanding of global relationships and cultural differences, and to use these relationships to their advantage. Families learn to manage for profitability and

opportunity by focusing on the three segments of family business – the individuals, the family unit, and the business enterprise.

### Using Enterprising Rural Families and Getting Started

The course is divided into three sections.

In the first segment, course participants focus on the question of

who they are in the area of their family business. The various theories of family business are discussed, as well as the characteristics of example family businesses. Participants learn how family businesses are unique from other forms of business.

The second section of ERF focuses on where course participants want their family business to go in the future. Participants are encouraged to formulate goals for their business and examine where they fit in the system as individuals, families, and the business as a whole. Families are encouraged to set realistic goals and objectives for themselves and their businesses.

Section three is where families learn how to implement what they have learned. When the course is

complete, families will have a better understanding of how to best proceed with their business.

To get started using ERF, log on to the Web site at eRuralFamilies.org and click one of the two links under CD-Based Courses (<http://erurfamilies.org/>). For a copy of the CD-version of a course, follow the contact us link and a copy will be mailed to you. Course one focuses on strategic planning and goal setting, while course two involves resource planning. The site also offers the opportunity to sign-up for a monthly newsletter that includes insights and columns on family businesses, as well as access to past issues.

For more information on this and other risk management topics on the Web, visit the Western Risk Management Library online at [agecon.uwyo.edu/riskmgt](http://agecon.uwyo.edu/riskmgt).

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## Conservation easements and land trusts: Tools for preserving agriculture and open spaces

By Sandra Frost

Yes, there is a way landowners can preserve the open spaces they own from future development.

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements between a landowner and a land trust or other nonprofit or governmental entity that protect resources by limiting future development of the land, thus conserving agriculture, wildlife habitat, ecosystems, and open space.

Conservation easements have several benefits. The property cannot be developed beyond that described in the easement even when ownership changes. The property remains in private ownership, which allows the landowner to live on it, sell it, or pass it on to heirs. The property continues to contribute to the local tax base.

There are many benefits to landowners who establish conservation easements on their lands. By donating or selling (for full or partial value) a conservation easement in perpetuity, a landowner exchanges certain rights for cash or tax benefits, or both, for the purpose of protecting the land. The landowner retains all other rights. The fair market value of a perpetual conservation easement is equal to the difference between the fair market value of the land without

the easement in place and the fair market value of the land as restricted by the easement.

Conservation easements typically allow agricultural and other traditional uses of the land and generally limit or prohibit most commercial and residential development. The activities prohibited by the easement are only those voluntarily agreed to by the landowner and the organization holding the easement.

Yes, land trusts can be established by citizens in Wyoming. Land trusts and other organizations that hold easements are not required to be environmental organizations. The only requirements in the federal codes are that a private organization be recognized as a public charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, have permanent protection of land on which it holds an easement as at least one of its purposes, and be capable of enforcing the terms of an easement.

"For those considering a conservation easement, my recommendation would be to first think about the goals and values associated with preserving the land, and then you search for a land trust that most closely aligns with those goals and values," says Chris Bastian, an assistant professor in the University

of Wyoming College of Agriculture's Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.

"If your goals are related to wildlife habitat and/or agriculture, you might search for a land trust that has those goals and values in mind," Bastian says.

For more information, please see the UW bulletin *Conservation Easements: Wyoming Update*, B-1177, available online at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/PUBS/B1177.pdf>.

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	Without conservation easement	With conservation easement
Remains eligible for state or federal farm programs	Yes	Yes
Can use land as collateral for loans	Yes	Yes
Can pass the land to heirs	Yes	Yes
Can sell the land	Yes	Yes
Can reserve home lots for children	Yes	Typically Yes
Is subject to local property taxes	Yes	Yes
Can develop residential or commercial subdivisions	Yes	Typically No