

2023 Conservation Rancher – Tretha Caddell, [Lamb County SWCD #130](#)

Tretha Caddell was selected as the 2023 Conservation Rancher. Tretha Caddell and her late husband, James, have owned and operated the Yellow House Ranch for almost 40 years. Located in the panhandle, the Yellow House Ranch was named after the Casas Amarillas or Yellow Houses Bluff, a local rock cleft formation. The property was once a part of the iconic XIT Ranch, a ranch that spanned hundreds of miles. In the spring of 1984, James and Tretha purchased 20,000 acres from the Matador Land and Cattle Company and officially began their journey to turn the Yellow House Ranch into the cattle operation that it is today. Since the early 2000s, the family has worked with the Lamb County SWCD and NRCS on improving their current rangeland productivity. In 2018, James Caddell enrolled the ranch into the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Through the CSP the ranch received enhancements that have worked to conserve the rangeland and protect sensitive areas on the ranch, including vulnerable watersheds and live springs. A certified range management consultant was contacted to assist with developing a prescribed grazing management plan, a key part of their CSP contract. This grazing plan includes forage inventory to determine stocking rates, drought mitigation, and plans to optimize forage health and availability for livestock. The grazing plan followed by the Caddell family has allowed for pastures to stay healthy even during tough drought situations. Recently the ranch was re-enrolled in the CSP, combining the past plans with new improvements ensuring the Yellow House Ranch keeps up with ever-changing weather cycles and management strategies. Not only does the Yellow House Ranch manage for healthy productive pastures, they also manage for healthy watersheds and to benefit wildlife. In 2015, the Caddell family worked with the TSSWCB to build a Lesser-Prairie Chicken Initiative Plan. Numerous hours were put in by the SWCD partners to ensure the ranch had a grazing plan in place to benefit the vulnerable population of the Lesser-Prairie Chicken. This plan revealed opportunities for the ranch to not only be a productive cow/calf ranch but to also be wildlife minded as well. The Caddell family has worked hard to keep Yellow House Ranch a productive and conservation-focused ranch. One that will be passed down to future family members to continue the conservation goals started with James and Tretha.