



Background

Yampa Valley Beef was an idea developed out of several discussions among ranchers, Conservancy members, and the local Economic Development Committee (EDC). The concept of selling a beef product that tasted great and protected the working landscapes comes from the Nature Conservancy and their desire to test market this concept. In the fall of 1997 they proposed a small market test of this Idea. At the same time the local economic development committee expanded its membership and formed an agricultural subcommittee. The EDC was looking for a project that could tie the area's ranches and the resort economy closer together and seek ways for Ag to profit from a resort economy. They chose a beef project as this is the largest segment of the local Ag economy.

These committees combined and began the concept of Yampa Valley Beef. Through out 1998 the group met and determined product processing, marketing strategy, and conservation components. Through the year the project gained the financial and in-kind support from the Colorado Dept of Agriculture, Colorado State University, Routt County, Cooperative Extension in Routt County, City of Steamboat Springs, Routt County Cattlemen's and Women's Association, the Nature Conservancy and the Steamboat Springs Chamber and Resort Association.

The Mission of Yampa Valley Beef is "To develop an expanded market for locally produced brand name beef as a tool for improving the economic viability of ranching in the Yampa Valley while preserving agricultural lands and the natural communities they support." To accomplish this mission the company pays a premium for cattle to member ranchers and also requires at least 25% of the cattle must have been grazed on land's protected from development with a conservation easement. Lastly a portion of our annual profits will be given to a land conservation organization annually.

In December 1998 we began selling our first beef products. Hamburger patties were made available and sold to area restaurants and retailers, and premium beef bundles were made directly available to consumers. The first customer of Yampa Valley Beef was Hazies restaurant at the Steamboat Ski Area.

Today March 2000 twenty-two ranchers and business people own Yampa Valley Beef LLC. Yampa Valley Beef's membering ranches manage over 42,000 deeded acres, 15,000 leased acres and over 5,000 acres of land under conservation easement. The average member has ranched in the valley 31 years. Yampa Valley Beef markets its beef to 15 area restaurants, guest ranches, and retail outlets. Hamburger patties are the primary products of the company; and premium beef bundles were offered again for the 1999 Christmas season. Over 25,000 lbs of beef products were sold in the 1999-2000 ski season.

###