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Conservation Outcomes and Social Relations: A Comparative Study of Private Ranchland Conservation Easements

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Abstract

Conservation easements have increased dramatically but their social and ecological outcomes are largely unknown. To examine the influence of social relations and institutional structure on easement design and conservation outcomes, we compared two regions where land trusts hold conservation easements protecting large areas of private ranchland. In the northern New Mexico region, the land trusts are part of a conservation agency closely tied to the state government. In the southern New Mexico region, the land trusts are part of a conservation agency closely tied to the federal government. We examine the effects on land use, conservation outcomes, and alternative land uses of these organizations (NCS). Easements entail a combination of collaborative and regulatory

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approaches, and their embedded social relations are important for conservation outcome assessment. These findings have significant implications for how conservation programs are designed, monitored, enforced, and evaluated.

Keywords:

collaboration

conservation effectiveness

evaluation

grazing

nonprofit organizations

policy outcomes

policy outputs

private land conservation

property rights

regulation

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