

The Elkhorn Ranch

Through the Diligent Efforts of Dedicated Individuals, Roosevelt's Cradle of Conservation is Now Protected in Perpetuity

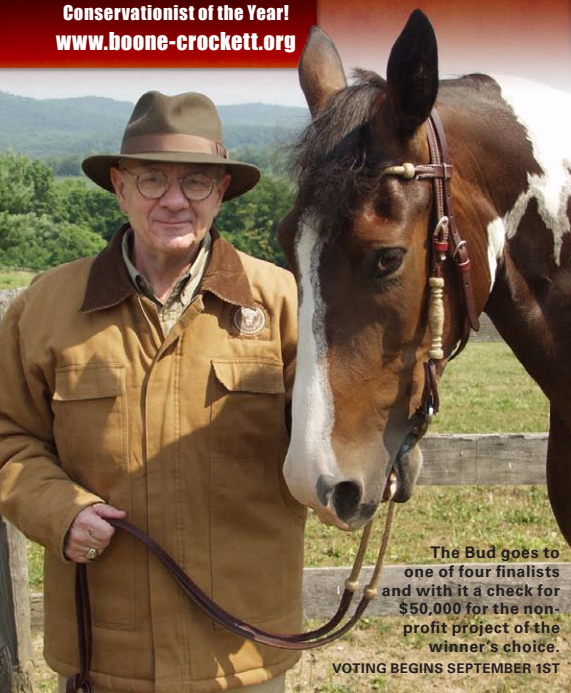
By **Tony Schoonen**
B&C Chief of Staff and
Professional Member

You Can Help Conserve the Elkhorn Ranch!

Help secure the rest of the \$500,000 challenge sum by voting for **Lowell E. Baier** as **Budweiser's Conservationist of the Year!** If selected, Baier would receive \$50,000 to go toward the project.

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VOTE TODAY!
for B&C's **Lowell E. Baier** as
Conservationist of the Year!
www.boone-crockett.org



The Bud goes to one of four finalists and with it a check for \$50,000 for the non-profit project of the winner's choice.

VOTING BEGINS SEPTEMBER 1ST

As Executive Vice President of the Boone and Crockett Club as well as 35-plus years as an activist in the conservation community, Lowell E. Baier was the principal spokesman and driving force in orchestrating and negotiating the federal government's complex acquisition of Theodore Roosevelt's Elkhorn Ranch in Medora, North Dakota, the largest remaining remnant still in private ownership of this historic ranch. The property consisted of 5,200 deeded acres and an 18,350-acre grazing allotment.

The Chairman of the Boone and Crockett Club's Government Affairs Committee and past President of the Club, Robert Model, Past President Dan Pedrotti, and Lowell E. Baier were personally asked on May 18, 2005, by Secretary of Interior Gale Norton to spearhead this project after the National Park Service had failed to acquire the ranch in 2002-2003 due to local political opposition, and the state of North Dakota thereafter failed in 2003-2004 for similar reasons. Baier, who is a member of the Club's Government Affairs Committee, lived in Washington and has a legal and commercial real estate transaction background, was detailed by the committee's chairman to work closely with Under Secretary of Agriculture for the Environment and Natural Resources, Mark Rey, a B&C Club member who has jurisdiction for the U.S. Forest Service that took the lead for the government.

As the project progressed and significant political opposition ensued, Baier and Model solicited the support of and coordinated some 50 national wildlife/conservation organizations and a number of prominent individuals to lobby the North Dakota governor and Congressional delegation over an 18-month period to motivate and secure the political will to endorse the acquisition, and \$4.8 million in funding from the President's Fiscal 2007 Land and Water Conservation Fund. Baier worked in tandem with the under secretary throughout this grueling 18 month period, which included negotiations with two senators and one congressman from North Dakota, the United States House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees, the current governor and five former governors of North Dakota, the director of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, the North Dakota Petroleum Council, the Billings County commissioners, the Medora Grazing Association, and the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation.

Because of the project's national significance, Baier's dedication successfully secured a \$500,000 challenge grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to close the purchase on April 25, 2007. Baier was also instrumental in organizing a national fundraising campaign to raise the challenge sum of \$500,000 for the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service (which manages the adjacent Theodore Roosevelt National Park) for habitat and riparian restoration, environmental mitigation, grass banking utilizing native prairie grasses, relief pastures for local ranchers during fires, drought, etc., educational programs, and interpretative signage and exhibits. The challenge funds will

be managed by a stewardship committee chaired by the Boone and Crockett Club.

Lowell Baier coined the phrase “The Cradle of Conservation” to characterize that the very idea of conservation of America’s natural resources and protection of its scenic wonders was inspired and conceived by Theodore Roosevelt at the Elkhorn Ranch, and is well documented by Roosevelt’s own books and diaries written during his time in the West. Roosevelt lived and ranched here from June, 1884, until December, 1887. During this period, he traveled by horseback extensively throughout the Dakota and Montana Territories, what are today Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and the Dakotas. He came to recognize how vulnerable the Western lands were to the uncontrolled predation of man. He witnessed first-hand the destruction and pillaging of the West by rapacious logging and mining industries, which polluted the rivers and despoiled the landscape; the decimation of game by commercial hunting for the purposes of feeding the laborers building the transcontinental railroads, the loggers, and the miners; the denuding of the prairies by stockmen overgrazing their sheep and cattle herds; and the pillaging of what was then America’s only national park—Yellowstone—set aside a mere decade earlier. Theodore Roosevelt wrote extensively about his experiences and the revelations that led to his conceiving the conservation of America’s natural resources in six books between 1885 and 1907. Roosevelt’s experiences in the Badlands and Montana Territory later resulted in his reputation as “the first conservation president,” so characterized by his renowned contemporary and Pulitzer Prize winning biographer Edmund Morris. It was at the Elkhorn Ranch where America’s conservation ethic was born, which has since become a part of America’s cultural and national identity. (See *The Cradle of Conservation*:

Theodore Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch, an Icon of America’s National Identity, by Lowell E. Baier, Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal, Vol. 28, No. 1, Winter 2007. A reprint of this article also appeared in the Summer 2007 issue of *Fair Chase*.)

After Roosevelt died in 1919, a significant effort was made to establish a park in the North Dakota Badlands to me-

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morialize Roosevelt’s legacy there. In 1934, a regional memorial park was established and operated by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) with two sections, a North Unit and a South Unit. In 1947, President Truman signed Public Law No. 38 that created the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park, which in 1978 became the Theodore Roosevelt National Park under President Carter, and added the 218-acre “Elkhorn Unit” where Theodore Roosevelt’s ranch buildings were located. This area borders the ranch that is the subject of this nomination. The 24,070-acre North Unit lies some 35 miles north of the 46,159-acre South Unit, leaving a significant void between the two units, centered within which is the Elkhorn Unit, and now (through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Forest Service and Park Service) the addition of the 23,550-acre remnant of Theodore Roosevelt’s original Elkhorn Ranch—the proverbial donut hole. The significance is obvious. The Theodore Roosevelt National Park with Roosevelt’s Elkhorn Ranch securely in the center is now complete, some

73 years after its initial creation.

White House officials have closely monitored the acquisition of the Elkhorn Ranch since 2005 as a part of the President’s Cooperative Conservation policy initiative. During the past 24 months, this project has brought together the state of North Dakota, its Congressional delegation, the country’s 50 major wildlife and natural resource conservation organizations, the Forest Service (USDA), National Park Service (DOI), and local officials. A White House visit is planned this year to commemorate the acquisition. In addition, Baier encouraged the town of Medora, North Dakota, to file an application in May, 2007, to secure a Preserve America designation from the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The designation will be awarded this year in conjunction with the anticipated White House visit to celebrate the acquisition of the Elkhorn. Building on the Cradle of Conservation theme, the town of Medora expects to enlarge its destination tourist trade to include the eco-tourism market, further promoting the national significance of the Elkhorn Ranch.

The Cradle of Conservation is now protected in perpetuity through the work of the Boone and Crockett Club, and its Government Affairs Committee, principally its Executive Vice President, Lowell E. Baier and its Chairman, Robert Model. ■

