

Our mission is to conserve the open space, natural habitat and stewardship provided by California's ranches.

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## Key Blueridge Range Project Nears Completion

### *Funding Approved for Yolo Land and Cattle to Conserve 7,000 Acres of Rangeland*

When the State of California passed the Rangeland, Grazing Land and Grassland Protection Act in 2002, the California Rangeland Trust's Eastern Blueridge Range project must have been exactly what it had in mind. The program, implemented by the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), seeks to protect California's rangeland, grazing land and grasslands through the use of conservation easements. In February 2004, the Eastern Blueridge Range project, which will place a conservation easement on the Yolo Land and Cattle Ranch, became the first funded through the program. "This conservation easement establishes an example of the kind of range and wildlife resources the WCB would like to see in future projects for this program," said **Al Wright**, WCB's Executive



*Yolo Land and Cattle Ranch*

Director. "Preserving this working cattle ranch as part of the Blueridge-Berryessa Natural Area is an example where public and private partners can mutually benefit from a mosaic of public and private lands to preserve native habitat, including rangeland, over a large region of the state."

The Yolo Land and Cattle Ranch, owned by **Hank Stone**, and his sons **Casey** and **Scott** since 1976, is part of the Blue Ridge-Berryessa Natural Area (BRBNA), which covers over 500,000 acres of inner-coastal rangeland and contains a unique assemblage of ecological communities. It is part of an unbroken string of blue oak woodlands and rangeland consisting of approximately 50,000 acres in the Vaca Mountains. The ranch, studded with ponds and other wetlands, natural stream courses and waterways, and unfragmented open space, provides habitat for native common and rare plants and animals.

The Eastern Blueridge Range project is a partnership between the Rangeland Trust and the Yolo Land Trust that will provide permanent protection through a conservation easement for the nearly 7,000-acre Yolo Land and Cattle Ranch near Woodland. "The Yolo Land Trust has historically put easements only on irrigated row-crop ground, and this partnership with the Rangeland Trust will be precedent-setting for YLT, and will help develop a template to be used for future easement applications in the region," said Scott Stone. "We have talked with other landowners in the immediate area that are also interested in obtaining easements on their ranches, but they are waiting to see how our transaction turns out."

While primary funding for the project came from the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Rangeland Trust and its partner Yolo Land Trust also accessed

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# Report from the Vice Chairman...



Darrell Wood

It is my pleasure as vice chairman to address California Rangeland Trust readers on recent events concerning the ongoing protection of family ranches.

In mid-February, the Rangeland Trust Board and staff, along with several CCA staff and officers, made a legislative visit to our state capital with the mission of educating members of the Assembly and the Senate and their key staff, about the Rangeland Trust, our mission and our current projects, especially our efforts in their respective districts. Legislators were aware of the California Rangeland Trust, but most know little of us, so many questions were asked and answered. They seemed especially impressed to learn of the number of acres under contract for easements as well as the number of acres represented by current applications for new projects. I personally felt both encouraged and most gratified by the enthusiastic response by all the legislators and staff we visited, so much so that I would like to make this an annual event.

It was a special pleasure to have Young Cattlemen's members who are currently college students, including my daughter **Dalice** from Chico State, and **Seth Scribner, Erin Lacy, Sarah Pursley, Kristy Baird, and Anne Cochrane** from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, to accompany us on our visit. It reminded us all that, while we must do everything we can to save family ranches, continuity of management on these ranches relies mostly on our children to carry on our ranching tradition. Including the younger generation helped emphasize to our elected officials that ranchers have a deep commitment to long-term stewardship of our lands. And the protection of the multitude of resources, scenic vistas of working

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*"The protection of the multitude of resources, scenic vistas of working landscapes, endangered plants, clean water, and clean air are a natural result of well-managed cattle ranches."*

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landscapes, endangered plants, clean water, and clean air are a natural result of well-managed cattle ranches. The Young Cattlemen's participation provided ample testimony of the point that these assets have to be handed down to later generations of ranchers who love the land and the ranching tradition as much as their predecessors. This is our future.

Our Young Cattlemen team members also helped underscore our message that if our kids are to remain in ranching for the long term, the ranches themselves must have the opportunity to be profitable. Using a properly designed conservation easement on individual ranches gives the economic portion of the sustainable ranching concept a big boost. It was clear by the responses of the legislators we visited that this message was received loud and clear.

Because of the important work of the Rangeland Trust, the benefits of ranching and rangeland conservation are having an impact all over the west. In fact, the concept of producing beef animals holistically on lands managed with great respect not only for the

environment, but for the welfare of the animal as well, has created a new market niche where consumers are willing to pay a premium for beef produced on these lands. This trend has been recently recognized by cattle

marketing organizations such as Western Rancher's Beef Cooperative (WRB). They specialize in helping their members meet the market demand for higher value by certifying them as natural best cattle along with a certificate that travels with the animals.

The Co-op gives an award annually called the Westerner of the Year award. The Rangeland Trust was the recipient for 2003 and was honored at WRB's annual meeting in Reno, this past January.

In closing, I must say that all of you who have invested in the Rangeland Trust by donations, membership dues, or simply by giving your time, are so greatly appreciated by the staff and board. We look forward to the great future ranchers and the Rangeland Trust have in front of all of us.

Darrell Wood, Vice Chair



# Blueridge Range Project

Continued from Page 1

funding from the Great Valley Center through its Agricultural Transaction Program. According to **Holly King**, Agricultural Programs Manager for the Great Valley Center, “This project fits well with the goals for the Center's program in that it permanently conserves productive agricultural land in the Central Valley, promotes complementary public policies and programs supportive of conservation in the region, influences growth patterns, acts as a catalyst for local efforts, and leverages funding,”

Because of the Yolo Land and Cattle Ranch's proximity to urban areas, including megalopolises San Francisco and Sacramento and growing rural communities Vacaville, Davis, Woodland, and Fairfield, the pressure in the area is strong for small ranch and ranchette properties. In the immediate area, there is no other large cattle ranch with a conservation easement, but support for agricultural preservation is deep in Yolo County, where there is strong, long-term local political support for private conservation efforts of all kinds.

Over the years, the Stone family has enhanced the natural resources on their ranch through partnerships with conservation groups, including Audubon California, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship Program (SLEWS). The SLEWS program has brought high school students to participate in the physical development of the on-the-ground conservation projects. The landowners have recently entered into a 3-year Vegetation Management Program with the California Department of Forestry, which allows for controlled spring burning of the lower grasslands and fall burning of brush and debris in the back country of the ranch.

The Stone family's commitment to conservation of their ranch has resulted in its lasting scenic beauty and operational productivity. The Stones

hope that by entering into a conservation easement with the Rangeland Trust and the Yolo Land Trust, other landowners in the region will become interested in obtaining easements as well.



# Conservation Easements and Working Landscapes — Part 1

[Editor's Note— A series of White Papers regarding land use issues in Plumas and Sierra counties is being coordinated by U.C. Cooperative Extension and the High Sierra RC&D in cooperation with Plumas and Sierra County government officials. The papers will include contributions from multiple authors knowledgeable in various land use issues. In the next several editions of its newsletter, the California Rangeland Trust will publish excerpts of these reports as part of its ongoing effort to educate landowners about the various resource management options available to them. For more information about the entire series of White Papers, contact Dan Macon: [Dan.Macon@ca.usda.gov](mailto:Dan.Macon@ca.usda.gov) or Holly George: [hageorge@ucdavis.edu](mailto:hageorge@ucdavis.edu)]

## Introduction

Farmland, ranchland and forest land provide a wide range of values. These working landscapes (privately owned lands that generate income from renewable resources) provide the economic foundation for

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Plumas and Sierra Counties. Privately owned farms, ranches and forest lands also often

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*Conservation easements are voluntary deed restrictions that eliminate or reduce development potential on private land.*

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provide homes for farming and ranching families that manage them. In addition, these lands provide wildlife habitat, watershed functions, open space and scenic vistas.

Local, state and federal agencies and private nonprofit organizations have developed a variety of mechanisms for conserving working landscapes with the ultimate purpose of sustaining the values described above. This white paper examines one of these tools—conservation easements. Conservation easements are voluntary deed restrictions that eliminate or reduce development potential on private land.

## Types of Conservation Easements

According to the Land Trust Alliance, “a conservation easement (or conservation restriction) is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values.” These conservation values may include open space, wildlife habitat, historical values and agricultural productivity (including rangeland and forest land). Most conservation easements explicitly state the purposes for which they were written. The following example is taken from the California Rangeland Trust's standard agricultural conservation easement:

The purposes of this Conservation Easement are to identify, preserve and protect forever the agricultural

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# California Rangeland Trust Named Westerner of the Year

The California Rangeland Trust was chosen as the Western Ranchers Beef Cooperative's (WRB) Westerner of the Year for 2003. The award was presented at the group's annual banquet in conjunction with Profit Conference VIII held at John Ascuaga's Nugget in Sparks, NV., on Saturday, January 3, 2004. Each year, WRB recognizes an individual or individuals who "champion western values." Past recipients include **Lee Pitts, Ellington Peek, Jack Swanson** and **Mike Callicrate**.

This year, the California Rangeland Trust was honored for its new approach to saving ranchlands for ranching along with its innovative efforts at preserving rural, resource-based communities. Executive Director **Nita Vail** accepted the award on behalf of the Rangeland Trust Board of Directors, along with **Scott Stone, Darrell Wood, and Devere and Garrett Dressler** during the evening presentation, giving credit to her hardworking board of directors.



Photo by Don Bowman

(l-r) Scott Stone, Carolyn Carey, Nita Vail, Darrell Wood, and Devere & Garrett Dressler.

"The goals of the Rangeland Trust are synonymous with the goals of Western Ranchers Beef," said Darrell Wood, a founding member and director of both WRB and the Rangeland Trust. "Both organizations are trying to offer tools to increase profitability for family ranches."

The Rangeland Trust commends Western Grasslands Beef commitment to sustainable ecosystems, family-based beef production and local communities. For more information about WRB, visit [www.westerngrasslands.com](http://www.westerngrasslands.com).



Cristi Bozora Creegan

## Rangeland Trust Bids Farewell to Managing Director

It is with a mixture of both sadness and joy that we bid farewell to **Cristi Creegan**, the Rangeland Trust's first Managing Director. Cristi is leaving to devote her energies to start a family with her husband **Bernard**. Their first baby, a girl, is due in May.

In 1999, while working with another conservation organization, Cristi collaborated with the Rangeland Trust's first Executive Director **Dan Macon** on a project to bridge the gap between the environmental and ranching communities. Through the project, Cristi came to identify closely with the values of the ranching community. She then joined the Trust in June 2000, as our grant writer during a critical period where we were experi-

encing unexpected explosive growth and continued needs for foundation financial support. Cristi jumped right in and eventually took over all financial aspects of the organization, including full responsibility for securing grants necessary to fund our operations, grant tracking, budgeting, day to day financial operations and audits.

Trained as an attorney, Cristi maintained a limited law practice specializing in appellate work, but also became increasingly interested in conservation efforts in her home territory of Lake Tahoe. She has continued to volunteer with the Sierra Nevada Alliance, recently joining its advisory board. She sat on the Board of Directors of Tahoe Tomorrow during its first year, chairing the finance committee to help with grant writing and other fundraising efforts for the new organization.

We will miss Cristi and her most capable leadership and incredibly broad range of skills. But at the same time we are happy to see her move on to the next phase of her life in raising a family with her husband. We all wish the best of luck and great success in the future to this very special lady.

# The California Rangeland Trust's Five Star Ranch Event

*Join the California Rangeland Trust at its  
2004 Fundraising Event  
at Abbie and Mark Nelson's Five Star Ranch  
in Wilton, California on Saturday, June 5th*



*Five Star Land and Livestock*

**C**ome help us celebrate our new brand! Attendees will be treated to hosted cocktails, George Gough's cowboy gourmet barbeque served by Young Cattlemen, bluegrass music by Woodland's Plain Field Pickers and a silent and live auction. Proceeds from the event will go toward supporting the California Rangeland Trust's long term rangeland conservation efforts throughout the state.

Just miles from sprawling Sacramento, the Five Star Ranch is an ideal venue in which to celebrate the Rangeland Trust's commitment to not only conserving rangeland, but also preserving family ranching. **Abbie Nelson**, a fourth generation rancher and breeder, has run the Five Star Ranch for the past twenty years. The Five Star Ranch land base consists of 100 acres of irrigated pasture, 220 acres of winter range and two leased ranches. The Ranch manages 150 registered Angus cattle. The Five Star Ranch reflects the strong traditions and values that the Rangeland Trust works so hard to protect.

Sacramento County's coveted Delta breeze should make for an ideal late Spring evening at the Five Star Ranch in Wilton. The balmy weather will create just the right atmosphere to spur bidding on the many exciting auction items the host committee has gathered, including hunting trips, golfing, coastal trail rides, NFR tickets, bull sale discounts, buckle sets and much, much more.

The Rangeland Trust's Fundraising Chair, **Kendra Wilber**, has coordinated an active fundraising committee composed of local ranching families who have been working hard for several months to make this a most memorable evening. The committee members include **Abbie Nelson, Carole Silveira, Jennifer Rice, Karen Stone, Jakki McDonald, Nita Vail and Emily Franciskovich**.

Don't miss this opportunity to help the Rangeland Trust initiate its recently registered brand! The bargain entry donation of \$75 per person or \$125 per couple makes this the best deal in town.

*So mark your calendar for June 5th and call the Rangeland Trust office at  
(916) 444-2096 for reservations, or simply mail your donation to:  
California Rangeland Trust, 1221 H Street, Sacramento, California, 95814*

# The Rangeland Trust Welcomes New Board Member and Staff Member

## *Michele M. Clark, Transaction Director*



*Michele M. Clark*

The Rangeland Trust staff continues to grow with the addition of **Michele Clark**. Michele joined the Rangeland Trust in February 2004 to coordinate the conservation easement transaction program. Prior to coming to the Rangeland Trust, she practiced real estate law for 20 years. She was western regional counsel for the Trust for Public Land from August 2000 until March 2003 and was in private practice with the Sacramento firm of McDonough, Holland & Allen from 1988. Michele received her law degree from Rutgers University in New Jersey, and practiced law in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and in Florida prior to returning to California. She has taught a variety of real estate courses at seminars sponsored by the Land Trust Alliance and the Great Valley Center.

## *Jennifer Rice, New Board Member*



*Jennifer Rice & Family*

The North Coast region is fortunate to now be represented on the Rangeland Trust Board of Directors by **Jennifer Rice** of Herald, whose husband **Rich** is originally from Humboldt County, where the family maintains an active ranching operation. Jennifer is a multi-talented woman who works as a regional account manager with Aventis Pharmaceuticals, graduated with great distinction from McGeorge School of Law in 1995, is immediate past president of the Board of Directors of the Arcohe Union School District, and is mom to **Daniel**, 12, and **Katie**, 8. Jennifer has been working with the Rangeland Trust as a volunteer attorney since early 2003 and is a member of the conservation committee and fundraising committee, currently working on the spring fundraiser at the Five Star Ranch in Wilton. Jennifer's enthusiasm and professionalism will be a great asset to the Rangeland Trust.



### California Rangeland Trust Board of Directors

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**Mike Bennett**  
*Ducor*

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*Staff Assistant*  
**Emily Franciskovich**

## FAREWELL TO FOUNDING BOARD MEMBER CINDY NOBLE

The Board and staff of the California Rangeland Trust want to thank founding Board member **Cindy Noble** for her six years of dedication and commitment to the organization. Cindy, a member of a long-time ranching family in Plumas County, participated in many aspects of the Rangeland Trust over the years, including acting as fundraising chair, Board secretary, and Board liaison for conservation projects and outreach efforts in the Sierra Valley. Her efforts to promote the work of the Rangeland Trust at the statewide and regional levels has helped make the Rangeland Trust the organization that it is today. Thank you, Cindy, for everything you've done.



# Thank You Donors!

(October 2003 to April 2004)

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Devere & Laurie Dressler	Allen & Susan Minker	Donald Wood
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## Conservation Easements and Working Landscapes

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productivity, open space created by working landscapes, and natural plant, [fish] and wildlife habitat provided by the rangeland environment ("Easement Purposes"). The parties intend that the Easement Purposes be achieved through continued ranching and grazing uses, as well as other agricultural uses, of the Easement Area as herein provided.

Most conservation easements "run with the land," that is, they exist in perpetuity. Like road easements, they are recorded in the public records and become a permanent restriction upon the land. Consequently, the restrictions contained in the conservation easement stay with the land regardless of ownership. On the other hand, a few conservation easements last for specified terms. Such limited term conservation easements are not legally enforceable as conservation easements under the California Civil Code governing conservation easements. The new Grasslands Reserve Program (created by the 2002 Farm Bill) provides for 30-year term easements. Conservation easements are recorded in the county (or counties) in which the land is located. As such, conservation easements are public documents and are available for public review.

Conservation easements may be donated or sold to a qualified easement holder. Most importantly, every conservation easement is tailored to fit the unique needs of the property, the landowner and the easement holder. No two conservation easements are exactly the same.



## Coming Events Roundup



### ***29th Annual California Preservation Conference:***

***April 28 – May 1***

This event is presented by the California Preservation Foundation, the Presidio Trust, the National Park Trust, the Ft. Point & Presidio Historical Association, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy at the spectacular Presidio in San Francisco. Rangeland Trust Executive Director Nita Vail will be speaking on a panel entitled “Cultural Landscapes – Strategies for Preserving Privately Owned Properties” on Friday, April 30th. For more information, please see [www.californiapreservation.org](http://www.californiapreservation.org).

### ***Great Valley Center Regional Conference:***

***May 5th & 6th***

For information, please see [www.greatvalley.org](http://www.greatvalley.org).

### ***Range Ride:***

***May 27th***

The 4th Annual CCA/CRT Range Ride will be held in Alameda County on the Koopmann Ranch. The ranch has a 31-acre mitigation easement for the California Tiger Salamander. Please call the Rangeland Trust at (916) 444-2096 or the California Cattlemen’s Association at (916) 444-0845 for more information.

### ***2004 California Rangeland Trust Fundraiser Event:***

***Saturday, June 5th***

Abbie and Mark Nelson’s Five Star Ranch in Wilton, California (see article on Page 4)

