

California Rangeland Trust

NEWS

Our mission is to provide, promote and safeguard the long-term viability and stewardship of rangeland agriculture and the natural balance of the ecosystem. • February 2002

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TOP 10 REASONS TO CHOOSE A CONSERVATION EASEMENT

By Jack Varian

Our goal at the V6 Ranch is:

1. To keep this land economically productive and open and to manage this land for the good of all. To cultivate natural beauty by slowing down water and using the teachings of Holistic Management to achieve this goal.
2. Pay off ranch debt.
3. Protect family unity by removing the ability to divide the ranch.
4. Program is voluntary.
5. Integrity of Easement is maintained because the California Rangeland Trust is the holder of the easement and does the monitoring.
6. Reduction of ranch value for inheritance tax valuation.
7. Gives permanent home to all the other critters who live on the ranch. (i.e. deer, birds, rabbits, coyote, etc.)
8. It's time to pay back to the land for the good life it has given my family.
9. Private property rights are maintained just as they were before the easement.
10. What is our legacy to the future generations? Do we leave some land open or are we so greedy that we pave it all over?



Jack Varian with Board Chairman Glenn Drown at the 2001 CCA Convention.

EASEMENT ON VARIAN RANCH PROVIDES ANCHOR TO SOUTHERN DIABLO RANGE PROJECT

In a cooperative venture with the Trust for Public Land and long-time area ranchers Jack and Zee Varian, the California Rangeland Trust in 2001 acquired a conservation easement on the 17,000 acre V-6 Ranch near Parkfield. The ranch anchors over 60,000 contiguous acres of an easement project that will protect one of the key cattle production areas of the state as well as several key watersheds, including the headwaters of the Estrella River, a State designated watershed that drains to the Salinas River and Monterey Bay. The Rangeland Trust is actively working with the six other ranches to complete easements within the next three years on the 60,000 acres and has generated keen interest on the part of other large adjacent ranches for a potential block of well over 100,000 acres.

The narrow valleys, rolling hills and steep mountains of the Diablo Range have been an integral part of California's ranching culture since the days of the Spanish land grant ranchos more than 200 years ago. Since

the Varian family purchased the Ranch in 1961, they have continued this tradition and served as exemplary stewards of this unique property, using judicious grazing management to complement the protection of live oak woodlands, valley oak savannas, other important flora and fauna habitat and spectacular scenic vistas from public roadways.

The conservation easement on the V-6 Ranch will ensure that this unique piece of historic California will provide a protected yet productive ranching operation for future generations of this very special family. Jack and Zee attended our fundraising breakfast in Burbank at the CCA convention and Jack gave an inspiring speech on why he and Zee chose to put a conservation easement on their ranch. A portion of his presentation, the Top Ten Reasons for a Conservation Easement on the V-6 Ranch is included above in our newsletter because it expresses what so many of us feel is the essence of our easement program.



FROM THE DIRECTORS ...

Darrel Sweet

The California Rangeland Trust has become a major force in the conservation of California's working ranches. This is no small feat given the enormous size of California, the complex and unique nature of its geography and its politics.

Founded by the California Cattlemen's Association in 1998, the trust has demonstrated that as cattlemen we do care for the grazing lands of California and we are very capable of providing leadership in the efforts to protect it. The Rangeland Trust certainly appreciates the challenges of cattle ranching in the nation's most populated state. California currently has 35 million residents and adds approximately 600,000 new residents annually. In my opinion, the Rangeland Trust's success in the future will certainly help shape the direction of California's cattle grazing industry.

As a founding board member of the Rangeland Trust, I thought that our main accomplishment would be simply doing conservation easements. But, we have all found out there are no simple conservation easements. They are very complex and take time. The Rangeland Trust has preserved and closed on several donated and purchased easements. And, the demand for additional easements from our rancher constituents has been almost overwhelming. Accordingly, we have recently focused a substantial portion of our efforts on conservation planning and developing sensible project selection criteria. This effort will not only make the Rangeland Trust a more efficient organization, but will also maximize the chances of success for our rancher applicants.

However, it isn't how many easements we've done that should be the only measure of our success. Instead, it is also the position of leadership the Rangeland Trust has established when it comes to addressing conservation issues in California. Both government agencies and conservation groups know that when it comes to working with ranchers and

private lands, the Rangeland Trust is becoming a leader. The Rangeland Trust is resolving issues and working creatively towards providing landowners with financial and management options unknown to us when the Rangeland Trust was founded just four years ago.

"...as cattlemen we do care for the grazing lands of California and we are very capable of providing leadership in our efforts to protect it."

—Darrel Sweet

Obviously, it took a lot of time, talent and money for the Rangeland Trust to be where it is today. My grateful thanks goes to the California Cattlemen's Association members who came forward with the proposal and saw to its acceptance by the membership. To

the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation who gave us our founding grant, and the other donors including the James Irvine Foundation, the Department of Conservation, the Great Valley Center. To the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, we especially owe them a sincere thank you. We are so fortunate to live in a state that has fostered such visionary and generous citizens as the Packards.

A special thanks goes to Dan Macon who got the Rangeland Trust off the ground with his talent and dedication and to Nita Vail, a founding director. Nita stepped up and took on the leadership of the Rangeland Trust at a most critical time. To our other staff, Cristi Bozora Creegan, Andy Mills and Joanna Gourley, also thanks. And I can't forget our Rangeland Trust board members, past and present, who have been so dedicated and fun to work with in these challenging first years of our development. Finally, a special expression of appreciation to our growing list of individual donors. It makes our day as board members when your financial contributions are given. It really demonstrates how strong the Rangeland Trust's mission is supported.

Darrel Sweet, Livermore rancher, is a founding Director of the California Rangeland Trust and currently serves as First Vice President of the California Cattlemen's Association. He is stepping off the Board to take on a new role as Transaction Consultant.



Among the ... CURRENT PROJECTS

The year 2001 was exhausting but at the same time satisfying for a hard working Board and Staff, as we were able to add more important milestones to our relatively young history. Highlights included:

JK RANCH, Mendocino County – Just last December, the Rangeland Trust completed this donated easement transaction on a 2,700-acre ranch that will balance cattle grazing and protection of extensive habitat areas with limited vineyard development. The project has attracted much interest on the part of the local community that has been seriously impacted by the trend toward partitions of larger holdings into small, non-productive recreational properties.

DIABLO RANGE, Monterey and Fresno Counties – The Diablo Range Project represents the Rangeland Trust's most ambitious efforts to date, with 17,000 acres under easement (see below), another 17,000 acres in the advanced stages of purchase, and, project applications pending from eight additional ranches representing 133,000 acres. The Packard Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Board have already awarded substantial acquisition funding for this regional project and have committed to additional support.

VARIAN RANCH, Parkfield – The centerpiece of our Diablo Range Project, the Rangeland Trust worked with the landowner and the Trust for Public Land to acquire an easement on this 17,000-acre property. At the landowner's request, the Rangeland Trust became the easement holder and will not only monitor compliance with the easement, but also work with the Varian family to help identify private and government programs offering support for weed management, livestock productivity and wildlife habitat improvements. The property includes sig-

"We were very interested in working with the Rangeland Trust. This organization understands the needs of the ranching community because its creation has grown from grassroots of the agricultural world."

–Jack Varian

nificant oak woodlands and other natural values. Financial supporters included the Wildlife Conservation Board, CalTrans and the Packard Foundation.

BEAR VALLEY RANCH, Colusa County – Working with the American Land Conservancy, the Rangeland Trust took title to a conservation easement on the Bear Valley Ranch purchased by a California ranching company. When this transaction closed escrow last summer, the Rangeland Trust assumed responsibility for holding and monitoring this easement. Major contributors with funding programs included the Wildlife Conservation Board, CalTrans and the Packard Foundation. The Rangeland Trust helped with the development of this easement to conserve productive rangeland in harmony with the preservation of some of the premier wildflower habitats and scenic viewsheds in Northern California.

TOUCH THE EARTH RANCH, Calaveras County – Our first easement project, the Rangeland Trust received a donated easement on this scenic 418-acre ranch in 1999 in cooperation with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy. The ranch is strategically located in an area rich in resources that is unfortunately experiencing rampant subdivision into 5 – 40 acre ranchettes. This year, using the Touch the Earth easement as a demonstration project, we were able to reach out to other ranchers in the area to show other landowners the advantages of the conservation easement alternative. As a result, several new project applications have been received.

TEJON RANCH MITIGATION PROJECT, Kern County – The Rangeland Trust received the donation of a 1,122-acre mitigation project for a nearby industrial development to protect habitat for the San Joaquin kit fox and blunt-nosed leopard lizard. The easement project is unique as it incorporates productive grazing with habitat protection of these federally protected species under a management plan overseen by the Rangeland Trust. The project is particularly gratifying because it bears clear witness that cattle grazing is good for the environment; in this case because good grazing management controls vegetation growth to optimize the natural hunting environment for the kit fox yet provides plenty of cover required by the blunt nosed lizard.



TACK ROOM

Legislative Update



S.B. 984 (Costa) – GRAZING LAND CONSERVATION

The California Rangeland Trust continues to work with Senator Costa's office, the American Farmland Trust and The Nature Conservancy, and others to amend S.B. 984 to create a California Grazing Land Conservation Program and associated program fund to expand grazing land to qualify for state funded conservation easements through the Department of Conservation.

A.B. 1414 (Dickerson & Florez) – AGENCY LAND ACQUISITION

Passed by the Senate and now in the Assembly, this bill requires the Department of Fish and Game to develop management plans and to submit them to public review for all parcels acquired by the Department after January 1, 2002 within 18 months of the recording date of the acquisition. This is a compromise bill that for the first time will provide public scrutiny of the department's management of acquired property when the legislature appropriates the money. The bill also requires the Resource Agency and all of its departments, boards, conservancies and commissions to develop and update a database of land acquisitions and easements acquired and recorded each year. This bill has been sent to the Governor.

A.B. 1398 (Florez) – WORKING LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP

Negotiations continue on drafting a new working landscape stewardship financial incentive fund for encouraging habitat, fencing of riparian corridors and implementation of a grazing plan to improve wildlife and habitat man-

agement. The funds would finance state grants and provide matching funds for similar federal programs.

A.B. 52 (Wiggins) – FARMLAND CONSERVATION

Assemblywoman Wiggins amended this bill to codify the split of potential \$75 million Proposition 40 Park Bond funds along the lines of the negotiated agreement assuring at least one-third of the funds being reserved to fund grazing land easements (potentially \$23.3 million). The bill assigns the Prop 40 funds, if the Proposition passes in March, to potentially be administered by the Department of Conservation.

PROPOSITION 40 PARK BOND ACT

The campaign to pass the March Park Bond has been organized and is focusing on free media, editorial and endorsement support. The \$2.6 billion bond includes almost \$1.3 billion for acquisition and development of land, air and water resources. For the first time the bond defines acquisition of land to specifically include; "conservation easements or development rights." The bond specifically includes \$75 million for funding farmland and grazing land easements. In addition, the bond included resources for other programs for which grazing easements may qualify, including \$300 million for Wildlife Conservation Board, \$200 million for the State Coastal Conservancy and \$267 million for funding of historical and cultural resources preservation. The California Rangeland Trust Board of Directors endorsed this bond measure.

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Rangeland
Trust**

*in protecting the working ranches and
natural areas of California.*

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