

## A FAMILY'S COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION

*By Jessica Kong, Communications Director*

**A**S HE RAISES HIS ARM AND points across the Carrizo Plain from the top of Pilitas Mountain in San Luis Obispo County, one can picture him as a newly minted ensign standing on the bridge of that WWII mine sweeper 74 years ago. He didn't have to be on that boat, seasick, shrouded in an Alaska fog so thick you couldn't see the bow, dressed in clothes meant for Hawaii. As a rancher's son with a degree in Agricultural Economics from UC Berkeley, Jim Sinton wasn't drafted. He could have been home with Norma, his young wife who was pregnant with twins.

Because feeding a nation at war was a matter of national security, the draft didn't apply to farmers and ranchers during WWII. But a comment from a friend as they were riding through the ranch one day weighed heavily on Jim's mind. One afternoon, as Jim and Norma drove through San Francisco, he spotted a sign that said "Naval Officer Procurement" in a second story window. "I said to my wife, I think I'll go up there and see what that's all about. I was in there about an hour and I came out a Naval officer," Jim said.

Now as Jim stands on the Pilitas Mountain ridge on the Avenales Ranch, pointing out the features of the land, one senses the same sense of duty toward the land and his fellow man that caused him to sign that dotted line many years ago. With eyesight and hearing as sharp as his mind, you would never guess he's 100 years old.

Jim's former son-in-law, John Schoettler, wrote the following in a letter to his children, nieces, and nephews:

***Over forty years ago I remember your grandfather's thoughts about the land: We are but stewards of the land and our stewardship should leave it in better condition than when we found it. It recalls the words of Thoreau: "In wildness is the preservation of the world." ...Jim subscribe[s] to this ethic.***

The land we are standing on now belongs to Jim's

grandchildren. The Avenales Ranch has been in the family for five generations. But it's not just the land that passed from generation to generation. Values of duty and stewardship were instilled as well. Jim's son, Steve Sinton, became a founding member of California Rangeland Trust in 1998 and still serves as Emeritus Director. Steve was also awarded a national Steward of the Land Award from American Farmland Trust in 2005. Steve's son, Daniel Sinton, currently

serves as a California Rangeland Trust director. Over the past 50 years, many UC Cooperative Extension studies



“ *In wildness is the preservation of the world.* ”



Carrizo Plain wildflowers from the top of Pilitas Mountain  
Jessica Kong photo

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Avenales Ranch in the springtime.  
Jessica Kong Photos

## A FAMILY'S COMMITMENT CONTINUED....

were conducted on the ranch and it was the original release site for Tule Elk by the California Department of Fish and Game (now Department of Fish and Wildlife) over 25 years ago. (continued on next page)

Seven years ago, the decision to place a conservation easement on the Avenales Ranch – permanently ensuring the family values that have

endured for generations will remain no matter what the future holds – culminated in an application with the California Rangeland Trust.

In the spring of 2017, through

a partnership with the California Rangeland Trust, The Wildlife Conservation Board and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the easement closed, bringing the total acreage conserved by California Rangeland Trust to over 300,000 acres – a landmark achievement for the largest statewide land trust in California.

Rich grassland dominates the landscape on this home to the headwaters of the Salinas River and Santa Maria River. The 12,482 acre Avenales Ranch is composed of 70 parcels surrounded by the Los Padres National Forest in the foothills of the Coast Range. The

Avenales borders the Nick Ranch, conserved by the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, and the Carrizo Ranch, also conserved by the California Rangeland Trust, bringing the combined protected acreage to over 1.8 million acres in this part of San Luis Obispo County.

This connectivity provides unparalleled breeding,

migration, and hunting habitat for many species of wildlife. It is also critical habitat for the California red-legged frog and the California condor. Every

year, the ranch draws members of Sierra Club hiking groups, riding groups, and a private hunting club.

Despite the drastic change in the California landscape Jim has witnessed these past 100 years, the Avenales has largely been unchanged. Thanks to this conservation easement and the Sinton's legacy of conservation, it will remain the same for the next 100. The preservation of this generational treasure and 300,000 acres conserved forever is cause for celebration as the Rangeland Trust approaches its 20th birthday.

**“ We are but stewards of the land  
and our stewardship should leave it in  
better condition than when we found it.**



## PLANNED GIVING SOCIETY TO HOST FIRST ANNUAL LUNCHEON IN FALL

**P**LANNED GIVING IS SIMPLY A GIFT that someone plans today that transfers to the California Rangeland Trust (or another entity) at some time in the future, usually upon the death of the donor. Planned gifts are usually bigger than other kinds of gifts because they come at a time when the donor no longer needs the assets, and when they have the most to give – when they are dividing up their estate.

We remain grateful to those who have given such gifts as well as to those who have told us of their future intentions. The California Rangeland Trust is forming a Planned Giving Society to be able to thank individuals – hopefully, long before the gift arrives. We are still thinking of a good name for this group – such as: The Rangeland Trust Heritage Circle. We are looking at a very inviting place for a state-wide luncheon. We will be inviting all those who have informed us of a future gift to be our guest and to bring a friend. We expect to posthumously enter Sheila Varian in this honorary society in deep appreciation for her 2016 gift.

We will be preparing plans for the Fall luncheon soon. If you have made estate plans or are in the process of doing so, give us your name so we include you in this special inaugural luncheon.

## SKIPPING THIS YEAR TO CELEBRATE BIG!

Come June next year you'll want to shine your boots and dust off your hat! Our 20<sup>th</sup> year celebration will take place at Hearst Ranch Old San Simeon Village. **June 16, 2018** is the date. Bigger and better than ever before, mark your calendar now so you don't miss *A Western Affair* to remember.



2017

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Steve Sinton Photo



Steve Sinton Photo



Steve Sinton Photo

## MARCH 2017 CALIFORNIA RANGELAND TRUST SPRING GATHERS

On March 19, friends and supporters gathered on the Spanish Ranch and Rock Front Ranch to learn more about the Rangeland Trust's efforts to conserve the two ranches. The morning started with coffee and a spectacular wildflower tour on the Spanish Ranch and concluded with a BBQ provided by Jim Glines on the Rock Front Ranch.

Nita Vail Photo



Nita Vail Photo



Steve Sinton Photo



Steve Sinton Photo



Kathy Stegman Photo



Kathy Stegman Photo



Kathy Stegman Photo



Kathy Stegman Photo



Kathy Stegman Photo




# EMERGING ROLE OF RANGELANDS IN CARBON CREDIT MARKETS

SEVERAL EFFORTS ARE NOW UNDERWAY IN California promoting rangelands as another landscape that can capture and store carbon, one of the key drivers of climate change. Carbon credit markets, such as California's Cap-and-Trade Program, seek to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere by avoiding the release of additional carbon and/or increasing the amount of carbon stored in vegetation and soils. These developing projects seek to identify financial incentives for ranchers and land managers to implement specific land management practices developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)\* or permanently conserve rangeland resources using conservation easements that increase and/or retain stored carbon. Once implemented, ranchers would be able to sell carbon credits or environmental credits for water or air quality, or endangered species. The benefit to ranchers is a new revenue source, improved soil health and water retention, and the potential for "climate friendly" marketing to add value to ranch products.

The Rangeland Trust has been asked to participate in three of these projects and each is briefly highlighted below. More information can be found on our website at [www.rangelandtrust.org/carbon-credits](http://www.rangelandtrust.org/carbon-credits). A project summary table, fact sheets, links and contact information are posted at this link. In the coming months, Rangeland Trust staff will be reaching out to landowners with easement-protected properties and those on our waiting list to solicit participation in one or all of these projects.

**Creating Marketable Environmental Credits on Range and Pasture Lands:** Led by the consulting firm Terra Global Capital under an NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant, the project seeks to incentivize implementation of the NRCS conservation practices by providing access to GHG markets to sell carbon credits and additional credits for other conservation practices such as improved water quality, pollinator and wildlife habitat. The goal is to secure approval of a rangeland protocol for the voluntary GHG credit market that works for ranchers.

**Carbon Farming:** Led by the Carbon Cycle Institute, this project promotes the use of a "carbon farm plan" that emphasizes carbon as the organizing principle for the management of agricultural and natural landscapes. A comprehensive carbon farm plan is developed with assistance from NRCS or a local Resource Conservation District. The plan incorporates NRCS practices\*, which can include compost application, that increase carbon storage in rangeland vegetation and soils. GHG and other environmental benefits are quantified.

**Grassland Project Protocol:** In this project, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), hopes to develop a grassland protocol that rewards landowners that use conservation easements to permanently protect their grasslands and prohibit conversion to cultivated agriculture. Once the easement is in place, the landowner can generate revenue through the sale of carbon offset credits. 

*\*The NRCS practices can be reviewed at <http://bit.ly/2o0KWHs>*

## LEGACY COUNCIL

Between meetings, ranch tours, and the Messaging Task Force, the Legacy Council is hard at work raising awareness of California Rangeland Trust and funding projects in queue.

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Left: Barney Skelton rides through the Rock Front Ranch.  
Right: A drone catches the attention of bulls on the Spanish Ranch. Jessica Kong Photos

Sunup and sundown on the Rock Front & Spanish Ranches in the Cuyama Valley this April.  
Help conserve these critical properties by making a donation today.





## VARIAN DONORS

NOVEMBER 19, 2016 - APRIL 15, 2017

The campaign to raise funds to place a conservation easement on Varian Arabians Ranch is going strong. These are some photos from recent Rangeland Trust activities on the ranch.



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Jessica Kong Photos

## HOLLENCREST

### SUPPORTING CALIFORNIA RANGELAND TRUST BEHIND THE SCENES

SINCE 2012, HOLLENCREST CAPITAL MANAGEMENT has been providing asset management services for the California Rangeland Trust. This boutique wealth management firm is one of the largest of its kind in Southern California. Hollencrest was founded in 1999 by Greg Pellizzon, Peter Pellizzon and Rob Wolford, who continue to lead the firm today in their effort to provide portfolio management services to foundations, endowments, trusts and wealthy families.

California Rangeland Trust holds permanent endowments that must generate sufficient earnings to provide responsible stewardship of our over 300,000 acres under conservation easements. The Finance Committee and the Board of Directors takes their fiduciary responsibility very seriously, and works closely with Hollencrest to ensure responsible management of our investment portfolio.

Hollencrest provides each of its clients with partner-level service to create customized portfolio management solutions. This personal attention to detail has allowed

Hollencrest and the California Rangeland Trust to work together to formulate a customized strategy that recognizes the unique financial needs of our organization. For nearly five years, Hollencrest has been a valued partner and respected our need for predictable recurring income and capital preservation. With the Rangeland Trust's assets in these capable hands, our staff is free to do what they do best - *conserve working landscapes*.

For more information, please check out the Hollencrest website, <https://www.hollencrest.com>.

# CALIFORNIA RANGELAND *Trust*

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Social media photos provided by Daniel Sinton,  
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