

Rancher's Childhood Dreams Come True

BY ANNA-LISA GIANNINI, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Ernest Bufford gazes out across his Kern County ranch and utters these profound words: "It's in perpetuity and that's the main thing." He continues, "Even if my decedents don't want it, it can't be subdivided." Bufford is referencing the conservation easement that the Rangeland Trust helped him place on his beloved land in 2013. Bufford's ranch is the result of a childhood dream that became a reality.

As a child raised in Los Angeles, according to Bufford, his outdoor experience merely included camping, hunting with a BB gun and visits to his uncle's Mohave desert ranch. By his 12th birthday Bufford recalls thinking that he wanted to buy a ranch of his own someday.

While many children grow up with dreams of becoming a cowboy, very few follow through with that dream. After a successful career with the California Highway Patrol, Bufford was working in his "retirement" consulting for the U.S. Marshals Service. His friends knew of his love for the Western lifestyle witnessed by the countless hours he volunteered at Tejon Ranch. Bufford recalls sitting in a judge's chambers when the judge looked up from the local newspaper and said "Bufford, I found you a ranch." The judge had found an ad for the weekend ranch of a Beverly Hills socialite. More than 2,000 acres total, the ranch was for sale in one piece or in 20 acre lots.

Bufford mulled it over for a spell and then decided that he had better find a way to buy the ranch, after all it was a gorgeous property and had natural hot springs. "Who wouldn't want hot springs," he said. Bufford attempted to convince his brother and a friend to go in partnership with him on the ranch, but wasn't quick enough. Another friend bought the section of the ranch with the hot springs. Bufford followed his instinct and bought 11 parcels totalling 575 acres of the ranch that held the remaining natural water sources. A young boy's dream was quickly becoming a reality.

Bufford bought some cattle and began doing improvements to the ranch. He worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on many projects improving his natural water resources, wildlife habitat and preserving the ranch's deep history.

The ranch is not only a great place to raise cattle because of the rich feed and ample water. "The cattle situation is easy," Bufford says. "It's just managing the grass so I don't overgraze it." It is also home to abundant wildlife. Six varied ecosystems coexist on the ranch. Bufford enjoys the



Ernest Bufford on his Kern County ranch. PHOTO CREDIT: NRCS

"It is in perpetuity and that's the main thing. Even if my decedents don't want it, it can't be subdivided."

wildlife on his ranch, whether admiring them or hunting for them. "There's great hunting on my ranch," he says.

The Bufford Ranch is home to lots of historical artifacts too. "Everywhere you go, you step into the past," Bufford says. "Gold, mining, American Indian artifacts, there's always something."

Bufford hosts archeologist classes from U.C. Berkeley from time to time and they have found

some incredible artifacts. Bufford even stumbled onto an American Indian burial ground once. Being respectful of other cultures, Bufford contacted the chief of the Indian tribe in his area and he recalls the reburial ceremony they had for the deceased. "There were four of us there," he explained. "One representing fire, one water, earth and sky."

Bufford came to the Rangeland Trust nearly 10 years ago looking to put a conservation easement on his prized ranch. Thanks to our conservation funding partner, the California Wildlife Conservation Board, that dream became a reality for Bufford and he couldn't be happier. "It's a lovely place to live and I'm glad I got involved with CRT," he says. "They've been so much help."

A NOTE FROM NITA

BY NITA VAIL, RANGELAND TRUST CEO



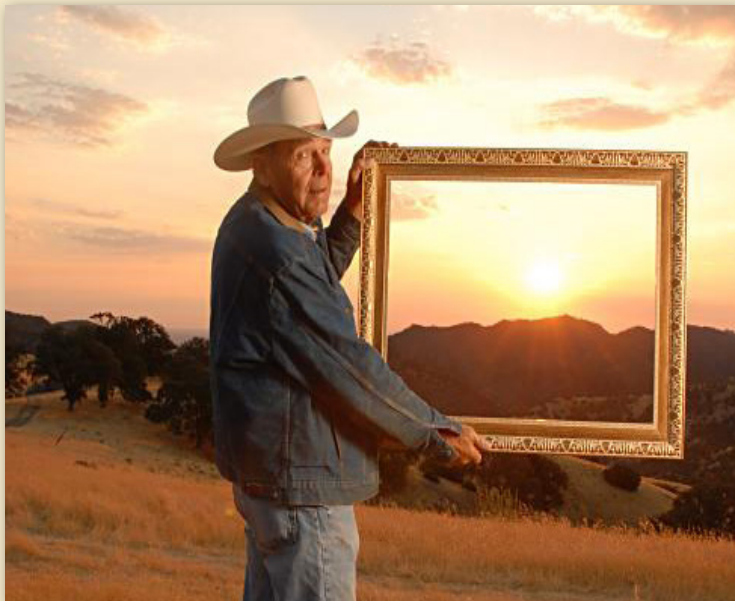
California is changing. Our population is growing and becoming more diverse in culture, ethnicity, geography and age. With this realization, we are looking at how California Rangeland Trust is changing to adapt to this new reality as well. As people are becoming more urbanized and suburban, the Rangeland Trust is looking to connect with the broader community and show them why taking care

of rangeland is so critical to the quality of life of all Californians. The amazing thing is, our outreach is working.

In the past year, we participated in more community activities than ever to share the mission of the Rangeland Trust, including Whole Foods 5% day with Panorama Organic Grass-Fed Meats, the Warrior Dash, Legacy Council gatherings, Farm to Fork Festival in Sacramento, Cow Palace, Early Californios Roping and events and tours at Sweet Ranch, the O'Connell's and the Kline's and more. Ranchers in our community are also reaching out. The Stone Family has brought in busloads of urban children to their ranch to teach them about ranching. Jack Varian is offering cattle drives at his ranch and Tim Koopman is doing environmental tours for educators at his ranch. It's only the beginning. At the Rangeland Trust, we are looking at new ways of engaging people with the outdoors and connecting them to our incredible community of ranchers. A new event that is all about connecting is Gather at the Ranch, an event series that invites guests to get together at ranches around California. Read on for more details.

Gather at the Ranch on May 31

Join us at Gather at the Ranch, launching on May 31 at the home of Ned and Emily Taylor in Lone. The idea of these events is to have regular get togethers to engage and educate about land conservation



Jack Varian admires the landscape on his Parkfield ranch.

for future generations. (And you never know what happens when you bring people together). You can read about other events on page 5.

How ranchers are helping the environment

Ranchers are not only stewards of Western values, but also of the land and livestock. There are great examples of ranchers who go the extra mile to ensure that their land is sustainably managed and that their cattle have every advantage. Read their stories on page 3.

Wildflowers keep on growing, even during the drought

Grazing the land responsibly during drought is imperative, on page 6 read about how ranchers Ira and Kim Brackett are ensuring that the wildflowers on their ranch in Bear Valley will stick around for generations to enjoy.

There's no straight line In Ernie Bufford's life

Ernest Bufford is quite possibly one of the most enthusiastic and charismatic ranchers we have worked with yet. His passion for our industry is only surpassed by his love for caring for the land and its history. His path to ranching success wasn't exactly a straight line. Find his story on page 1.

We are grateful for the continued support of the ranching community and will continue to conserve California's ranching industry for future generations. Do you have ideas of how we can reach out? We welcome your thoughts. Thank you for everything you do on your ranches and in your communities. We hope to see you at a Rangeland Trust event soon!

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How Ranches Safeguard California's Natural Environments

Tim Koopmann is every bit as protective of the endangered California tiger salamander that live on his 850-acre ranch in Sunol as he is of the cattle. Scott Stone is a loyal steward of thousands of acres of native grasslands and riparian habitats he helped restore on his beef ranch in Yolo County. Jack Varian is a fierce guardian of the water that runs over his V6 Ranch in Parkfield, which feeds headwaters of the Salinas River and Monterey Bay. These ranches and the ranchers who protect them are safeguarding the last, best remaining habitats in California.

More than ever, ranches are where the Golden State's most cherished open spaces live. To protect their land from development, Koopmann, Stone and Varian have all placed conservation easements on their properties through the California Rangeland Trust. A conservation easement ensures their working ranchlands can never be subdivided or lost to development. More than 277,000 acres of private lands have been protected through the California Rangeland Trust since 1998.

"Many people don't realize how critical ranches are to California's environment," said Nita Vail, Chief Executive Officer, California Rangeland Trust. "By protecting private ranchlands through conservation easements, we ensure that California's most important resources are protected as well. That includes the water we drink, food we eat, air we breathe and wildlife we treasure."

Ranches are critical to watersheds

Just how important are private ranches to California's environment? Consider that more than 90 percent of California's drinking water runs over ranches like Varian's V6 Ranch. Even through our current drought, Varian is taking every step to manage the water on his land that feeds critical watersheds. He also is enacting conservation methods, such as managed grazing, to protect natural habitats too.

"For me, taking caring of the land and the watersheds is a moral responsibility that includes all the critters like raccoons, deer, trees and flowers and microscopic organisms that dwell below the soil surface," Varian said.

Ranches provide habitat for endangered and threatened species

Like Varian, Koopmann guards the water on his land as well as



Scott and Karen Stone with their two sons on their Yolo County Ranch.
PHOTO CREDIT: Kenny Callhoun

"Even through our current drought, Varian is taking every step to manage the water on his land that feeds critical watersheds. He also is enacting conservation methods, such as managed grazing, to protect natural habitats too."

some important endangered species. Surprisingly, 95 percent of federally threatened or endangered species spend at least part of their lives on private ranches like the Koopmann Ranch. Koopmann has spent years not only studying wildlife on his ranch,

but restoring habitat as well, working with biologists, government entities and universities to help endangered species, like the California red-legged frog and Callippe Silverspot Butterfly, thrive. He easily recounts draining a pond filled with invasive bass and bullfrogs and restoring it to its original state, only to see a proliferation of red-legged frogs the next year.

"The ranching community has a natural resource ethic as stewards of the land," said Koopmann. "We have a real respect for wildlife and its resources. It's our job to perpetuate habitats for them."

Ranches are much of California's open space

At the Stones' Yolo Land and Cattle Company in Yolo County, sustainably managing their ranch has become a primary mission, in addition to a cattle business. For them, maintaining their ranch involves restoring native habitats, installing solar pumps, practicing managed grazing, and establishing a watershed protection system.

"We are caretakers of a working, functioning landscape that is a habitat for wildlife, watersheds, and livestock. It's our passion," said Stone. "The conservation easement has given us a long-term sense of protection, knowing it will remain as it is for our family and

Continued on Pg 4.

WHAT'S HAPPENING



How Ranches Safeguard California's Natural Environments Cont'd.

for future generations. We live for this land."

More than 105,000 acres of grazing lands were lost to urbanization between 1990 and 2004 and 750,000 more are in danger of being lost by 2040*.

While the California Rangeland Trust has been able to help conserve more needed 100,000

"750,000 acres are in danger of being lost to urbanization by 2040."

many families their ranches, funding is to help nearly families and acres awaiting protection on

the organization's waiting list.

"These ranches are the last frontier for California's environment," said Vail. "Through conservation easements, we are taking care of our

environment, our agricultural economy and generations of families that have managed these cherished open spaces."



The Koopmann family moving cattle on their ranch in Sunol, California

Celebrating Earth Day

BY RANDY GUSTAVUS, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

This Spring, California Rangeland Trust joined the Whole Foods Market stores in both Roseville and Folsom to participate in their Earth Day Celebrations. At the Roseville store, we had a booth at the Celebrate the Earth Festival at Mahany Park in Roseville. An annual event, there were approximately 5,000 people in attendance on Saturday, April 26. The festival included events for children and adults. A crowd favorite was the amazing display of wildlife including a kangaroo, pythons, falcons and even an alligator. We continued our theme "Kiss my Grass" for this event and gave away more than 500 stickers and buttons reflecting the theme to event attendees.

On Sunday, April 27, we set up a display in the parking lot of the Whole Foods Market store in Folsom for their local Earth Day celebration. The event was well attended by their local customers who had the chance to see a variety of agriculture and wildlife. There was a working bee hive on site in addition to workshops on gardening, and growing one's own vegetables.

Both events were well attended and we always enjoy supporting Whole Foods Markets as they continue to support our efforts. This year we not only celebrated Earth Day, but the beginning of a great partnership!



TOP: Randy Gustavus, Director of Development mans our booth at Whole Foods Market Folsom's Earth Day Celebration.

BOTTOM: Festival goers mingle at Roseville's Celebrate the Earth Festival.

O'Connell Ranch Gather

BY ANNA-LISA GIANNINI, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

On April 11 members of the cattle and farming community in Colusa County gathered at the home of Dan and Barbara O'Connell for an evening of socializing and an informational dinner about the Rangeland Trust.

As guests arrived that evening, they had the opportunity to spend time socializing with friends and tasting locally produced wines and olive oils. Once all were gathered, the short program commenced under strings of market style lights with a delicious dinner prepared by Market Street Catering.

Dan and two of his grand children took to the podium and expressed to their friends how passionate he is about the Rangeland Trust and why he chooses to donate his time and talents serving on the board. Nita Vail, Rangeland Trust CEO, explained to guests the kind of work the Trust does.

"We aren't just about conservation easements," she explained. "We want to keep ranchers on the land and help steward the sustainability of California's ranching heritage."

Vail thanked the O'Connells for donating and hosting dinner, and then explained to guests how they can support Colusa High School FFA through the purchase of the event's centerpieces.

Colusa FFA Members worked with local nationally renowned floral artist Philip Rice to craft beautiful centerpieces. With advice from Philip the students put suggested donations on the flowers. Guests bought nearly all of the centerpieces garnishing more than \$700 for



Top right: Nita Vail, Dan and Barbara O'Connell and their grandchildren.
Top Left: Karen Sweet with the centerpiece she purchased to support Colusa High School FFA. Bottom: Guests enjoying the short program.

Colusa FFA. FFA students also helped set up, clean up and serve food. It was a great partnership! Thank you Dan and Barbara for your continued support! If you are interested in hosting a local Gather event, please contact Randy Gustavus at (916) 444-2096.

CRT Event Guide

You may have notice an influx of event invitations from California Rangeland Trust landing in your mailbox. Here's the scoop: to celebrate the anniversary of our 15th year in helping ranchers throughout California, we are increasing our outreach efforts and hosting many types of events throughout the year. Here are a few of the events and upcoming dates for your calendar.



Guests sit down for dinner at the 2013 A Western Affair. PHOTO BY: Kathryn Burke

A Western Affair ~ Our annual fundraising gala, *A Western Affair*, includes dinner, live and silent auctions, live music and dancing. Always a blast, *A Western Affair* rotates from a Northern California location to a southern California location annually. This year the event will be held in **Orland, California on October 11**.

Gather at the Ranch ~ Our series of Gather events are new this year and range from ranch tours in the back of a pick up truck to 'farm to table' dinners. These events are hosted by members of our Board of Directors and Legacy Council. Each one is tailored to the vision and desire of the host. You can read about Gather at the O'Connell Ranch in the story above. These dinners are often free of charge to guests. The next Gather event will be on May 31 at the Pope Ranch in Lone.

Cowboy Cocktails ~ What was once our traditional Cowboy Breakfast, has evolved to a fun night celebrating the Rangeland Trust at the California Cattlemen's Association's annual meeting. The cocktail reception has ranged from a small reception with Adrian the Buckagroo Girl to last year's Chad Bushnell after dinner concert.

We are excited about this year's event line-up. Keep an eye on the mail for your "Save the Date" cards and invitations.



Conserving California's Historic Beauty

BY ANNA-LISA GIANNINI, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Tucked away in the foothills of the Northern Sacramento Valley lies a glimpse of what the majority of California's valleys and open lands looked like hundreds of years ago. Dotted in vast varieties of overwhelmingly beautiful wildflowers, Bear Valley is a prime example of what Spanish sailors likely saw when they coined California as the "land of fire" in the late 18th Century. This reference to the populations of poppies and other native wildflowers covering the state remind us of the importance of managing our open lands as sustainably as possible.

There are four ranches that comprise the majority of Bear Valley: the Bear Valley Ranch (owned by the Brackett Family), the Payne Ranch, the Keegan Ranch, and the Epperson Place. The Bear Valley Ranch and Payne Ranch are forever protected by conservation easements held by the California Rangeland Trust. Each year wildflower enthusiasts and rangeland biologists from the West and around the world travel to these ranches to observe the hundreds of rare species of wildflowers that continue to thrive there because the fields are grazed by cattle.

"Grazing can enhance wildflower populations on California's annual grasslands by reducing annual grass cover, thatch and height," says Sheila Barry, University of California Cooperative Extension. She further explains, "Most of the wildflowers in Bear Valley are native annuals [e.x. Tidytops, goldfields, buttercups, Johnny jump-ups, red maids] and most are small and require an open environment in the fall to successfully germinate and reproduce."

Don't worry; the cattle won't eat the flowers! Barry says grazing cattle is effective at reducing grass cover because of their instinct to selectively eat grasses instead of broad-leaf plants like wildflowers. Grazing these fields also helps to control annual grasses that could pose risk to the flowers. Barry explains that exotic annual grasses, some of which are considered invasive species, maintain their dominance in a stand of grass by competing for soil moisture and light, which poses harm to species like flowers. Livestock can be used to help keep these species at bay according to Barry.

"Grazing reduces their height, cover and the accumulation of thatch that could otherwise prevent the wildflowers from germinating and accessing soil moisture and light," she says.

Managing Wildflower Populations in Drought

The wildflowers will still bloom despite the devastating drought California's ranchers have been battling the last few years. However, rancher Jim Keegan



Bear Valley Ranch wildflowers in bloom.

doesn't expect to see the magnificent display of colors and varieties one would see in a good rain year. "I only expect a few measly species," he says.

Barry clarifies why Keegan doesn't anticipate the normal abundance of

"Grazing can enhance wildflower populations on California's annual grasslands by reducing annual grass cover, thatch and height."

flowers. She says that similarly to annual grasses, wildflowers like those found in Bear Valley, grow each year from a seed typically after fall germinating rains. This year, on ranches throughout the state, annual grasses and wildflowers had a delayed start because there wasn't enough moisture in the fall to both germinate the seeds and sustain their growth.

Ranchers in the area are doing their part to give the flowers every advantage they need to survive. While it is still important for the valley to be grazed by cattle even during times of drought, rancher Ira Brackett says he's reduced his stocking rate to about 1/3 the number of cattle that would typically be in his valley fields.

"We've sold some cattle, shipped some cattle to Colorado and reduced our numbers here," Brackett says. "We're also trying to keep the cattle moving between pastures so they all stay grazed but there isn't as much pressure on them."

Barry isn't worried about them dying off because of these back to back drought years. "Wildflowers have a long life seed bank in the soil," she says. "While allowing them to flower and go to seed is desirable, their seed should persist in the seed bank regardless of their abundance and productivity in a single year."

Brackett isn't all too concerned about the drought killing the flowers either. "They've been here a lot longer than we have," he says. "They've probably seen worse."

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*If you have questions please
contact Randy Gustavus at
916-444-2096.*

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HAPPY TRAILS

It is with a heavy heart, we share that long-time Rangeland Trust supporter, Hank Stone passed away on April 24, 2014. Hank, and his sons Scott and Casey worked diligently to place a conservation easement on their ranch in 2005. Well respected and heavily involved in California's cattle community, Hank had a passion for serving his community as well. Yolo Land and Cattle Company, located in Woodland, was a place that many UC Davis animal science students were first exposed to a working cattle ranch. A memorial service for Hank will be held May 30th on the ranch. From all of us at the California Rangeland Trust, Happy Trails cowboy!

