

JCR Ranch Conserved for Next Generation

In late September a 1,409-acre portion of the JCR Ranch in Merced County was forever protected from future development with a conservation easement held by California Rangeland Trust. Funded by the Bureau of Reclamation, the property is part of the Vernal Pool Core Recovery area, as identified by the Fish & Wildlife Service, and is home to multiple special-status species, high quality vernal pool habitat, sweeping vistas of the southern Sierra Nevada range and productive rangeland.

Not only is the ranch home to many plant and animal species of environmental concern such as the California tiger salamander, vernal pool fairy shrimp, and Hartweg's golden sunburst flower, owner Trey Jones and his son, Tyson, will now be able to carry on a generations-old family cattle operation while also ensuring its endurance beyond their lifetimes.



JCR Ranch, Merced County

PHOTO: VOLLMAR NATURAL LANDS CONSULTING

"There is a special history of land stewardship on this property that has enabled the cattle operation and the natural species here to thrive in harmony together," said board member Steve McDonald. "This conservation easement provides for a future where this family, the cattle and the critters may continue as they always have. My compliments to our staff for their hard work and effort to accomplish the funding on this ranch in these times of limited funds for conservation easements."

Ranch History

The JCR ranch is comprised in total of 3,959 acres and has been in cattle grazing for over 100 years. It is part of a rich family history of cattle ranching in Merced, Stanislaus and Tuolumne counties by the Rosasco extended family. Six generations of ranchers have worked the area, four generations on the current property. Trey grew up on the JCR Ranch and has managed it for over 20 years.

"To know my family, my son and the generations after him will be able to continue doing what we have always done here is a tremendous weight lifted," said Trey Jones. "Our ranching operation is protected along with our future and the special natural resources of this land."

Originally known as the Crocker Ranch, the property was purchased in the early 1930s by Ed and Joe Rosasco, Trey's great-uncle and grandfather. Previous to cattle ranching, John Muir used the area for sheep herding during the winter months, before moving on the Sierra Nevada range. He worked then for and Irish shepherd named John Connel, known as "Smoky Jack". The region of the property was also used by the Sierra Miwok people previous to western settlement and is evidenced in the presence of grinding holes on rock outcrops. The family is pursuing a conservation easement on the remaining portion of the ranch.

Continued on page 6

SHAPED BY INTEGRITY, TRUST AND PASSION

BY NITA VAIL, CEO



Nita Vail, California Rangeland Trust CEO

PHOTO: TC REINER

We are all shaped by our life experiences and the people in them. I still recall an evening when I was 10 years old going to sleep in the upstairs “dorm-room” of our 1860’s ranch house with my little sister and the “girl cousins,” telling ghost stories amid timid giggling. The wind was blowing so hard it felt like the house would fall

down. I felt then such a sense of gratitude to be born into a family that ranched on an island thirty miles off the mainland, a family that would teach strong ethics, core values and hard work. I also felt fortunate to have a father who inspired by example and did business with the trust of a handshake. My father taught me courage, to not ask someone to do what I would not, and to treat people with respect and equality.

My early life was unique and complex. I watched my father handle all the island logistics; planes or boats were required for everything. It was also a wide open space, as beautiful as I had ever seen. On the island I learned to cowboy in rough big country, pilot a plane onto a dirt strip with 45 mph crosswinds, and experience such fun and freedom. Later I would also discover that my life would not be without political conflicts and mine would be a future of bridging different points of view.

Twenty five years ago my family and our Vail & Vickers partnership were essentially forced to sell Santa Rosa Island to the federal government. This year marks the end of a 25 year lease that was negotiated in a settlement riddled with frustration. The island deeply shaped me and all of my family, including my work with the California Rangeland Trust. I have come to know many families in the West like ours that have a six-generation connection to a piece of land; ranches with long histories where stories are passed down by former generations.

I cherish the memories from the island ranch where I was raised. Recollections of the dusty red barns, the bunkhouse echoing with laughter, and the kitchen filled with families I grew up with, all come vividly to life when I am on the island. The pier recalls the cattle boats Vaquero I and II and others that transported thousands of cattle across the Santa Barbara Channel. So many places like the South Side, Arlington, and distant China Camp conjure up beauty

and solitude; stories of mythical Rita and sacred Chumash Indian sites. Indeed, everywhere one looks there’s a face or a story or even a practical joke to be remembered.

I will never understand why agricultural production, environmental protection and recreation could not co-exist on Santa Rosa Island. Why was it necessary for the majestic deer and elk herds to go? Why was it so important to remove the cattle, the horses and the entire ranching culture from the island? I truly believe common sense can prevail and conservationists, scientists and ranchers can come together to achieve goals that will benefit all Californians’ open space, clean air, clean water, food production and quality of life; that we can shape our future and preserve our past.

A friend recently sent me an email after sensing how difficult this ending has been: “My hunch is that with how much ‘practice’ you have been putting into having such a big heart, combined with your fierce will, and all the people and acres of land that you’ve helped and saved, that this will all condense into a “portal” moment where you feel like you have walked through into a better and higher relationship with an injustice. You create Grace where ever you go.”

Taking care of the land and all that inhabited it has always been the most important priority in my family. It is the first priority I see from ranchers throughout the West, which is why I love what I do - every day. It is my deep desire to

communicate the “American ranching tradition” to 21st-century generations - its conservation ethic, its belief in family and friendship, its value of hard work and integrity, and the importance of keeping ranchers on the land because

of the incredible stewardship they provide. I feel such gratitude for my island past and I hope to help carry these values forward and keep ranching strong in California. To all of you, thank you for your encouragement and support. To our Rangeland Trust board, staff and community – thank you for your phenomenal ongoing efforts.

I love Willa Cather’s quote:

“We come and go but the land is always here and the people who really love and understand it are the people who really own it - for a little while.”

The island has shaped me just as it did my father and my family. And the values I learned from my father on this treasured place are all grounded in a quiet integrity that still guides me. It is my sincere hope that the work I now do with the Rangeland Trust will shape California’s future and that our “quiet integrity” and actions will influence society.



THE FINAL GATHER - SANTA ROSA ISLAND

Santa Rosa Island has a magic to it. Set like a jewel off the coast of Santa Barbara, its windswept rolling hills and aqua fringed coast line imply a rugged resilience of the species and people that have made their lives there.

On October 3rd, the Vail and Vickers families, who have ranched on the island for the last hundred years, co-hosted the last Cowboy Island event with the California Rangeland Trust. In 1986, the Vail & Vickers (V&V) partners were forced to sell the island to the U.S. government for inclusion into the newly created Channel Islands National Park. Under the terms of the agreement Vail & Vickers was allowed to continue its ranching and hunting operations for an additional 25 years. But environmental groups challenged that agreement in the mid 1990's. The resulting settlement agreement shut down the ranch in 1998 after 97 years of operation. Vail and Vickers could continue its hunting business as well as access to the island until the end of 2011.

In support of the families, and in recognition of the passing of a legacy, this year's Cowboy Island event had nearly two hundred people attend. Guests arrived in the morning by boat or plane, and even those who had been to the island in years prior were awed by the beautiful day – clear blue skies and a warm ocean breeze.

As guests passed through the ranch headquarter's gate they were greeted by Nita Vail or one of her cousins, Tim Vail and Will Woolley, and in proper cowboy style offered a Bloody Mary or a warm cup of coffee. As people mingled, pick-up trucks began taking groups on a tour of the Torrey Pines, a special grove of trees over looking Beechers Bay. This rare species of tree exist in nature in only two places – along the coast at La Jolla, California and thriving on Santa Rosa Island.

Once appetites were worked up, guests returned to the ranch house



Cousins Tim Vail, Will Woolley, and Nita Vail make their final toasts to the crowd on Santa Rosa Island.

PHOTO: DOUG MANGUM

for a delicious tri-tip BBQ lunch and to hear the Vail cousins talk about what it was like to grow up ranching on Santa Rosa Island and how it shaped and influenced them as people.

The wind whistled as Nita Vail stood to address to the crowd after Tim Vail's introduction. She talked about how important the island was to creating strong, independent people who value stewardship of the land.

"It is our hope that our stories about, and our knowledge of, this island we love so dearly will continue on for future generations to enjoy."

She closed saying that, "This island touches people deeply, and somehow when you

leave the island, you leave changed, like you've taken a piece of her with you - but I'll tell you one thing – she's going out with her boots on!" Many in the audience were misty eyed as Will Woolley told guests: "It is our hope that our stories about, and our knowledge of, this island we love so dearly will continue on for future generations to enjoy."

In the past, the event has been an opportunity for friends of the Rangeland Trust to step back into the rich history of this maritime ranch. To feel what it would have been like to ranch on the island in the teens, 20's or 30's; envisioning cattle being off-loaded from the Vaquero I and cowboys in row-boats swimming them to shore. This

year, friends were saying goodbye to a chapter of Western culture and a life-style that will be missed even by those who briefly spent time on the island.

Guests wandered through the old red barn, with rays of afternoon light filtering through the wooden slats to illuminate old saddles from a past era. An eighty year old grabbed hold of the rope swing and with an ageless "whoop!" swung the width of the hay-loft. Clearly this was a special moment in history and the island was being given a grand goodbye.

While the circumstances of the last Cowboy Island event are bittersweet, the Vail and Vickers families have continued to take the high road and inspire those around them with the sheer positive determination to make something better of the situation.

California Rangeland Trust is actively assisting ranch families who want to keep their property in ranching forever so that situations like Santa Rosa Island have better endings. We ask you to continue your support of our mission-driven work and help us protect California's open space, natural habitat and the stewardship of ranchers. Visit our facebook page to see how you can support us and to view more pictures from *A Day on Cowboy Island*.





California Rangeland Trust Welcomes Sahara Saude, Director of Development



Sahara Saude, California Rangeland Trust's Director of Development

DADS, DAUGHTERS AND DONORS by Sahara Saude

The air in the Sierra is cold and crisp the morning my Dad and I ride out to check the cattle on the ranch I grew up on. He listens to me talk about why I am inspired about the work I get to do with California Rangeland Trust. As we talk, I can tell that he's proud of me for working with an organization determined to make sure ranching stays part of our heritage – as it has been a part of my family's for four generations.

From the top of a ridge looking out over the ranch, the new work seems fitting. The role of Director of Development allows me to combine my background in fundraising, conservation management, and environmental policy, but most importantly it allows me to find ways to prevent ranches from being sold and divided as development pressure in the state increases. It allows me to work with donors that believe in the mission of Rangeland Trust. The benefits connected to maintaining intact biological systems enable Californians to continue enjoying reliable sources of sustainable food, clean water and fresh air.

Rangeland Trust's mission is powerful because in addition to preserving land, I also believe that the culture of ranch-

ing embraces strong values: integrity; hard work; and respect for both land and people. I would like to see these qualities passed down to next generations.

There is a reason why the ranching community, federal agencies, and a growing group of urban community members respect California Rangeland Trust. This group has done an impressive amount of work in conserving California. The organization has permanently protected two hundred and fifty thousand acres in the state - with one of the smallest staff and leanest budgets in order to keep ranching alive during hard economic times.

The work speaks for itself:

- **250,000 acres protected as rangeland forever**
- **120 ranch families on a waiting list for conservation easements**
- **500,000 acres of ranches in need of funding for conservation**

One of the things I value most about this work is that it allows me to ask you to join us in our mission to support the conservation of one million acres of rangeland in California by 2020. Helping conserve western culture and continue cutting-edge ranching practices is vital. Maybe this is why my Dad doesn't flinch when as we're putting tack away after our ride I ask him to support our mission by becoming a member of California Rangeland Trust.

I hope that you will also support California Rangeland Trust this holiday season. Become a member and or give the gift of membership to friends and family. Let's build upon Rangeland Trust's diversified group of ranchers, environmentalists, policy advocates, and community members who believe strongly in creating a legacy of conservation in the state.

Help us preserve the benefits of open space and the culture of ranching that make California unique for our generation - so that dads can continue riding with their daughters and the places we love remain part of our heritage.



Board Service and Succession

The Board of Directors for the California Rangeland Trust are the heart and soul of the organization and provide leadership and guidance to the staff and landowners who are interested in conservation easements.

Long-time supporter and board member Kendra Wilber of Clements stepped down this year from her role on the Board and from her positions as fundraising and event committee chair. Her tremendous effort to ensure the successful fund development work of the Rangeland Trust and her leadership in executing our annual *A Western Affair* will be truly missed.

Steve McDonald of Sanger steps down as Board Chairman to welcome new Chairman Scott Stone of Woodland. Steve continues to play an integral role on the Board of Directors, meeting with landowners, serving as finance committee chair, and working with staff to complete the complex transaction details on many of the organization's easement projects.

Scott Stone began his chairmanship in November of 2011 and brings expert real estate and transaction experience to the position. His family ranch, Yolo Land and Cattle Co., completed a conservation easement over their property in 2005, a testament to his commitment to rangeland conservation.

WAYS TO GIVE

Give the Gift of Ranchland Conservation



The California Rangeland Trust is offering you the opportunity to be part of shaping the future of open landscapes in our state. Honor someone of your choosing with a donation made in their name. Make a gift to Rangeland Trust in the name of family members, friends, or an organization that you would like to honor. For your donation we will send them a card featuring the beautiful David Stoecklein photo, shown here, informing them of your gift supporting conservation of California's rangeland. For every tax deductible donation of \$50, we will send one special greeting card acknowledging that you have given the gift in their name of helping working ranches continue into perpetuity in California.

Please contact our office to order by phone 916-444-2096, or visit our website for more information, www.rangelandtrust.org.

New Membership Benefits!

If you became a Rangeland Trust member or renewed your membership at \$100 or more by January 3, 2012 you were automatically enrolled for a drawing to win two Gold Ski Passes. We will announce the winner on our Facebook page and our website, www.rangelandtrust.org, so check to see if you won!

As the ski passes value is over \$4000, this is a great gift for anyone who would appreciate open access to 26 ski resorts in California and Nevada. California Rangeland Trust would like to extend a generous thank you to Bob Roberts & California Ski Industry Association for recognizing that cowboys and cowgirls like to ski too!



Governor Brown Signs SB 436 – California Rangeland Trust Approved to Hold Mitigation Easements Required Under CA Endangered Species Act

The California Rangeland Trust is pleased to announce that Governor Jerry Brown signed into law SB 436 (Kehoe-D), which allows approved parties, including land trusts like the Rangeland Trust, to hold mitigation conservation easements and associated endowments on projects required under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

The passage of this bill ends the long-standing uncertainty over endowments for such mitigation easements. The California Rangeland Trust has been accredited by the California Department of Fish and Game for meeting stringent financial and operational requirements to hold such easements and endowments under CESA. Read the full story on our web site, www.rangelandtrust.org.



We hold our communication with you in the highest esteem and look forward to hearing from you should you want any changes or would like to be removed from our mailing list.

*Please send us an email via our contact page on our website or give us a call at the office,
www.rangelandtrust.org or
916-444-2096.*

CONSERVATION WRAP UP



JCR cont. from cover.



JCR Ranch, Merced County

PHOTO: STAFF

Cattle and Land Management

Situated at the base of the Sierra Nevada Foothills within the eastern San Joaquin Valley, the ranch is part of both the Merced and Tuolumne River watersheds. High quality vernal pools and productive grasslands define the rolling acreage of the ranch and contribute to its major conservation significance as a large area of preserved, unfragmented open space.

According to John Vollmar, an expert on the region's geology and biology, the eastern San Joaquin Valley encompasses a geologic setting with a remarkable sequence of formations laid down over the past 60 million years including old beach sands, volcanic ash and granitic alluvium washed down from the Sierra Nevada. "Each formation has its own unique set of native plants and wildlife", said Mr. Vollmar. "The JCR ranch is located in an area that captures most of these formations, lending to its biological richness and conservation value."

The ranch remains a working cattle operation and is carefully managed to maintain its viability for year-round cow-calf and seasonal stocker operations. According to Mr. Jones, the current management includes a stocker operation from fall to spring, with start and end dates varying with amount of rain and subsequent forage levels. Stockers are generally ranged on the western most pastures of the ranch following the higher quality feed.

The cow-calf operation is managed in conjunction with the family's other properties. After selling off fall calves, the cows are moved from an outside property to all pastures from spring to fall. These two operations allow for variations in use of different pastures during different times of the year. In order to work within the limitations of forage and water availability across the ranch, the family uses a seasonal pasture rotation system.

Lasting Affects

By recording a conservation easement over the JCR Ranch, all the habitat, species and agricultural resources currently on the ranch will be protected in perpetuity. The public will also benefit from the open space and natural environment provided by the private landowner's stewardship of the ranch. The Jones Family will continue to own and manage their ranch at their sole expense and will continue to pay real estate taxes thereby contributing to the local economy.

Conservation of this property will expand current efforts being undertaken by the Rangeland Trust to conserve ranchland and vernal pool-grassland habitat in the region. A number of the larger ranches in the area are now considering using conservation easements to prevent future ranchette development and/or orchard conversion. The long-term goal in the region is to work with existing ranchers who have demonstrated a commitment to conserving their ranching operations and the resource values associated with their land stewardship which will total a 10,000+acre block of contiguous productive rangeland and vernal pool-grassland habitat in the region.



In Memory of Frank Peter LaMacchia (1936 - 2011)

Frank Peter LaMacchia, 74, of Gonzales, passed away at his ranch Wednesday, November 2, 2011. He died as he lived: patient, kind, accepting of whatever was thrown his way, tough, compassionate and surrounded by the family, friends and animals he loved.

Frank was born Christmas Day 1936, to Pete and Mary LaMacchia in Salinas. He was a graduate of Salinas High School and Hartnell College. He served in the Army Reserve.

In 1964, Frank married Irene Radavero. Frank always felt that Irene was his greatest gift from God. Frank and Irene raised three children on the ranch Frank cherished in the Gabilan Mountains. They were married for 47 years and their relationship was admired by many.

Frank was the ultimate cowboy. He was a member of the National Cattlemen's Association, Monterey County Cattlemen's Association and San Benito County Cattlemen's Association. He was very progressive with his range management, holding multiple control burns and planting clovers from all over the world to improve his grazing lands. In 1987, Frank received the Excellence in Range Management Award from the Society for Range Management. Frank's cattle herd was one of the first in the State of California to be certified organic.

Frank was also a conservationist. Frank was very involved with the American Soil Conservation Service for more than 30 years. He instilled his love of the land, fat cows, green grass, a good rain storm, running creeks and all that nature had to offer to his children and grandchildren.

Donations in Frank's memory can be made to the California Rangeland Trust; St. Theodore's Catholic Church Memorial Fund, P.O. Box B, Gonzales, CA 93926 or a charity of ones choice.



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