

CALIFORNIA RANGELAND *Trust*

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF SAVING RANGELAND

It is men like Attilio Genasci and the next generation of ranchers and conservationists that make protecting ranching and the rangelands it depends upon increasingly important. Attilio worked with the Rangeland Trust to put a conservation easement on his property in 2005. He passed away in January of this year at the age of 98. He was a man of great passion and a champion for conservation. A Sierra Valley rancher his whole life, he saw the land and his stewardship of it as a gift to be treasured and passed onto the next generation. Attilio's love for his family and the land was so pervasive you could almost reach out and touch it. The Rangeland Trust was moved by this man's spirit and his dedication to conservation and we will always remember his message on page 2 of this report.

The Rangeland Trust celebrated our ten-year anniversary in 2008 and the strides made this year we dedicate to the cowboy conservationists, like Attilio and supporters of our organization that have made our success possible.

The Rangeland Trust is the only rancher-governed, statewide land trust in California and you have helped us grow to be the largest holder of rangeland easements in the State. The Rangeland Trust was created by cattlemen for cattlemen to provide, promote and safeguard the long-term viability and stewardship of rangeland agriculture and California's natural lands. To date, we have protected an amazing 184,317 acres under conservation easement, from rolling coastal hills and oak woodlands to mountain meadows and rushing streams.

Since our creation in 1998, we have worked successfully to create new models and partnerships for the voluntary conservation of California's private working landscapes. Those partnerships, including agricultural organizations, donors, foundations, government agencies and environmental groups, demonstrate the extent to which California ranches provide vital resources to almost everyone who lives here.

RANGELAND CONSERVATION

Included in our total rangeland acres conserved of 184,317, there are 30 family ranches which spread across 19 counties. This tremendous success culminated in 2008 with three projects closing in the counties of San Joaquin, Madera and Merced. These family-owned and operated ranches total 3,408 acres, portions of which contain critical habitat for endangered species as well as some of California's most scenic viewsheds.

Rangeland conservation takes collaboration and partnerships to succeed and the Rangeland Trust has been honored to work with the following partners and funders on our 2008 conservation easement agreements:

- California ranching families
- Rangeland Trust donors
- Wildlife Conservation Board
- Department of Conservation
- USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program through the Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- California Department of Fish and Game
- Vollmar Consulting
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

PARTNERSHIPS

The Rangeland Trust was an active participant to see the new Farm Bill pass which includes significant conservation tax incentives for conservation easements. The California Rangeland Trust worked with the California Cattlemen's Association,

the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition, the Land Trust Alliance, the American Farmland Trust and with hundreds of local, state and federal groups to extend those tax incentives.

The Rangeland Trust has participated in collaborative efforts with the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition throughout 2008 and has focused its participation strategically on the Outreach, Projects, Legislative and Steering Committees with this unprecedented group. The Rangeland Coalition is an extremely diverse group that recognizes the great importance of rangeland agriculture in the protection of our history and natural resources in the Central Valley, Sierra foothills and Coastal Range. One of the Coalition partners key missions is to work together to encourage the preservation of our ranches through conservation easements.

Board and staff engaged in legislative meetings with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, California Cattlemen's Association and the California Rangeland Coalition in Washington, D.C., in additions to meetings at the state level. These meetings are critical to assuring legislative understanding of the vital role ranches play in the economy and quality of life in the state and nation.

Board and staff participated in strategic meetings during administrative and agency visits with Lt. Governor **John Garamendi**, Secretary for Resources **Mike Chrisman**, Executive Director of the Wildlife Conservation Board **John Donnelly**, Executive Director of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy **Jim Branham**, and Director of Calif. Dept. of Conservation **Bridgett Luther**. These governmental leaders continue to support us, have been invaluable to our past successes and will continue to play pivotal roles in our future.

ACHIEVEMENTS & PROGRESS

The Rangeland Trust announced its inaugural recipient of our Conservationist of the Year Award, the highest award given by the organization, to **Lt. Governor John Garamendi** at their 2008 "A Western Affair" event. John completed our very first conservation easement and remains a great friend to the Rangeland Trust.

Scott Stone, Rangeland Trust board director, and his family were winners of the National Environmental Stewardship Award Program. **Henry and Suzanne Stone**, owners of Yolo Land and Cattle Co., along with their sons—**Scott and Casey** and their wives, **Karen and Angela Stone**—were recognized for their numerous innovative ranching practices enabling environmental and economic sustainability in Yolo County.

The Rangeland Trust was awarded a \$49,500 grant as part of a larger \$2.8 million dollar granting program through the Sierra Nevada Conservancy in December 2007. The Rangeland Trust used the grant funds to conduct a rangeland assessment on several ranches in the Sierra Nevada. The owners of these ranches are interested in conserving their land by way of a conservation easement to be held by the Rangeland Trust. The ranches represent nearly 50,000 acres in 13 counties. This grant award was the first of its kind for the Rangeland Trust and will create more funding opportunities in the region.

New Staff: The Rangeland Trust welcomed two new staff members this year. **Meredith Kuperferman** is our new Conservation Land Specialist and concentrates on processing conservation easement applications through public and private funding sources. Already Meredith has applied for over \$4.6 million in grant funding to go directly towards ranch projects. **Leigh Geren** is our new Executive Assistant with 20 years of experiencing in administrative and customer service. She is focusing her efforts on providing all staff and the Board of Directors administrative support with project management and assistance with annual fundraising efforts and donor recognition and communication.

Communications via the Internet and email is always advantageous due to its flexibility and low maintenance cost. This year, we successfully sent our first email

"The land does not belong to me. The land belongs to future generations ... It's one of the natural wonders. It's there for humanity. And we dare not destroy it anymore than we'd cap the geysers in Yellowstone or put the Bridal Veil Falls of Yosemite in a pipe. I think we have a natural wonder here that I'll do my best to preserve."

~ the late, great Attilio Genasci, on a public radio interview in 2008 with Saving the Sierras



newsletter to over 1,000 of our friends and supporters featuring our Fall 2008 edition. This new distribution method will be available with all newsletters going forward. Additionally, over 35 new pages were added to our Web site bringing visitors more information on California's rangelands, our partners and ways to get involved.

OUTREACH EVENTS

On March 1, **George and Steve Hearst** hosted a special and unique fundraiser to benefit the Rangeland Trust at the Hearst Ranch Dairy Barn with support from the Rancheros Visitadores leadership, a riding group formed in 1930. Much needed funds were raised for the Rangeland Trust's ranch conservation work.

The Rangeland Trust held their largest fundraiser of the year on June 14, where we joined over 200 friends and supporters to celebrate 10 years of rangeland conservation at their annual fundraiser "A Western Affair" hosted by **Jim and Sue Coleman**, Modesto, of Vintage Angus Ranch and **Tim and Kara Coleman**, Modesto, of Sierra Ranch.

At the California Cattleman's Annual Convention in Reno, the Rangeland Trust hosted our Annual Cowboy Breakfast with keynote speaker Steve Thompson, former Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director for California and Nevada. Steve has been a great advocate for conservation easements and played a key role in the creation of the Rangeland Coalition, bringing together governmental agencies, environmental groups and agricultural groups for the common purpose of saving our ranches and the open space, natural habitat and stewardship provided by California ranches.

THE OUTLOOK

The California Rangeland Trust is looking forward to the next decade of conservation work on behalf of ranchers and residents all over the state. Unprecedented demand by land owners who desire to permanently protect the historic and environmental character of their land for future generations continues to drive our funding priorities.

By partnering with us, you can be part of helping conserve the 450,000 acres of pending projects on our waiting list. Our organization has the ability to conserve more rangeland acreage than any other land trust in the state because of the trust we have built in the land owner community. Our first priority in 2009 is to continue to garner the dearly needed funds to protect these ranches.

Collectively, we must come together: rancher, environmentalist, agency representatives, developers, city folks, suburbanites and our legislative representatives to save the rangelands of California.

Visit our Web site to support rangeland conservation, www.rangelandtrust.org.

CALIFORNIA RANGELAND TRUST

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2008 FEATURED RANCHES

The board of directors and staff of the California Rangeland Trust would like to thank all the landowners who have placed conservation easements on their land, forever protecting it for future generations. These landscapes are the fabric of our rural communities but also the foundation of healthy city resources where clean water flows and where we all can breathe cleaner air because of these open and undeveloped landscapes. Rangeland is the most threatened habitat in California and we are 3,408 acres closer to conserving all the acreage in our pending projects. Below are our featured ranches conserved in 2008 with conservation easements with the Rangeland Trust.

The Cook Ranch, San Joaquin County

The conservation easement on the 2,235 acre Cook Ranch was the first working ranch protected by the Rangeland Trust in San Joaquin County. The voluntary agreement to extinguish their development rights was an opportunity that Bill and Lynn Cook felt would help them to preserve a piece of property that holds their history, has taught them about ecosystems, how to work the land and, more recently, about the value of rangeland in a rapidly developing urban community. The Ranch is currently leased-out for grazing but Bill says, "Twenty years on the ranch created a sense of respect and loyalty to the land. You can see the ecosystems and the interrelating of animals: coyotes, eagles, burrowing owls and the list goes on."

The Ecker Ranch, Madera County

The 1,080 acre ranch is located in the Coarsegold area of the Sierra foothills of Madera County, one of California's fastest growing regions of the great Central Valley. Everything around the ranch is changing and pressure from developers had been intense, but owner J.B. Overstreet had always been intent on finding a way to protect the ranch from conversion. Through J.B.'s efforts, the Rangeland Trust received over 100 letters from the Madera County community in support of the conservation of this historical and resource-rich property. These letters, along with an application by the Rangeland Trust, garnered the needed conservation funding from the California Wildlife Conservation Board's Rangeland, Grazing Land and Grassland Protection Program. J. B. and his wife Camille maintain that one of the greatest things about the Ecker Ranch is the opportunity to share its natural beauty and peaceful setting with others. The family especially enjoys helping young people gain a deeper appreciation for the unique resources in the valley. Each year, the ranch hosts the Covey Kids Program through Quails Unlimited and has also been home to the Tri-Lakes Hunting and Fishing Club for nearly 50 years.

Lazy K, Merced and Madera Counties

This unique project created a solution which blends together a mitigation preserve for species habitat and the creation of critical vanishing vernal pools and wetlands. Mike and Sherry Knapp, along with their son Larry, initiated this project to provide for long term sustainability for their ranching operation and to maintain the threatened habitat and species on their property. The Knapps worked with John Vollmar of Vollmar Consulting, recognized for its expertise in all aspects of vernal pool assessment, construction and monitoring to complete this project. Vollmar Consulting put the mitigation preserve deal together among the Knapps, Rangeland Trust and a developer, along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This 93 acre project ensures the preservation of seasonal wetlands and vernal pools, San Joaquin kit fox habitat and California adult tiger salamander migration and sheltering habitat. Most notably, this mitigation easement is part of a larger ranch where the Knapp family plans to enter into additional mitigation easements.