

# CALIFORNIA RANGELAND *Trust*

## 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

### INVESTING IN THE WEST

It is estimated that less than half of California's original grassland and rangeland areas remain. A growing body of research shows that these remaining rangelands support more natural resources and more wildlife species of concern than any other category of land in California. Given that the conversion of these rangelands to urban/suburban or intensified agricultural use continues, one can make a solid argument that working ranches are the most crucial conservation priority in the state. These landscapes – and the Western legacy they uphold – face historic and unprecedented challenges.

The California Rangeland Trust's driving goal is to forever protect these working landscapes. Our organization – founded and managed by ranchers – is safeguarding valuable and sustainable agricultural lands, preserving a Western way of life, and protecting private property rights. As landowners decide to conserve their properties in perpetuity, they are ensuring the natural resources provided by these lands will always be available for both urban and rural populations to appreciate.

To date, the California Rangeland Trust has conserved 32 ranches totaling 193,857 acres in 19 counties, and with further support could protect over 451,000 additional acres. Ranching families – more than 100 of them – have asked for our help to permanently protect their rangelands from the pressures of development.

### OUR FOCUS

2009 has been a year of targeted focus, seeking to maximize on-the-ground successes given very real constraints on conservation funding. The organization identified key regions of the state including the Bay Area, Central Coast, Sierra Valley and Central Valley. Ranches within these regions face especially pressing threats of conversion to intensified agriculture and non-agricultural uses, and contain high concentrations of pending projects. In addition, a number of public agencies and other conservation organizations have identified these regions as urgent priorities, giving our organization partnership and funding opportunities which will help keep these open, working landscapes intact.

### OUR FUNDING

To date, the California Rangeland Trust has relied heavily on state funding for the completion of funded easement transactions. The Wildlife Conservation Board and Department of Conservation, largely funded with voter-approved state bonds, have financed, in whole or in part, 20 of our 32 projects. The remaining projects have been either donated, received federal or private funding or were mitigation easements. One of our preeminent goals is to continue diversify funding streams through major donor cultivation, private foundation support and mitigation efforts.

We are pleased for the first time to provide you with a visual representation of our fiscal year 2008-2009 audited financials. For details, refer to the narrative associated with the financial charts on the facing page.

Despite economic constraints in the last calendar year the California Rangeland Trust has accomplished a number of significant successes.

### PROJECTS

- Completion of the 2,912-acre Ichord Ranch easement in Merced County. This property, owned by Paul Ichord, sits within the Merced Grasslands, one of the largest and most intact vernal pool grassland habitats in the world. Funding from the California Wildlife Conservation Board facilitated the purchase of this conservation easement.
- Donation by a landowner (who wishes to remain anonymous) of an easement on a roughly 6,500-acre ranch in Fresno and San Benito Counties in late 2009.

Preparation and submission of 11 grant applications to state and federal agencies, including the California Department of Conservation, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Fish & Wildlife Service, and United States Bureau of Reclamation.

- Awarding of \$8,107,000 in state and federal agency grants to support the purchase of rangeland easements in California.
- Ongoing assessment and prioritization of the over 100 existing and pending project applications and maintenance of a comprehensive project tracking log, which provides a step-by-step determination of status on each project.
- Approval in October 2009 by the California Department of Fish and Game to hold mitigation easements and endowments on conservation lands funded by the agency. As one of only a few land trusts to receive such certification, this will greatly expand the California Rangeland Trust's ability to safeguard working ranches throughout California.

### PROGRAMS

- Launch of a new Annual Membership Program for the organization to fulfill programmatic and operational needs.
- Launch of a new Planned Giving Program replete with a dynamic planned giving website <http://rangelandtrust.giftlegacy.com> and tailored newsletter options.
- Hiring of a grant-funded Bay Area Program Manager - Tina Batt - who is currently working to close a number of conservation and mitigation easements in the eight Bay Area Counties.
- Working actively towards Land Trust Alliance accreditation in early 2010.
- Partnerships with conservation-minded companies to establish long-term sustainable funding strategies to meet the ever-increasing demand for rangeland conservation in California. A major step towards diversifying funding streams is the organization's newest partnership with Panorama Meats, Inc., Vina. Beginning in early July, a portion of the proceeds from the sale of all Panorama Organic Grass-Fed Beef sold in California began to be contributed to the Rangeland Trust.
- Board member Darrell Wood, Vina, and his family were the regional winners of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association 2009 Environmental Stewardship Award.
- Welcomed two new Board members Julie Kirby, Los Olivos, and Jim Chance, Ballico, as well as new staff members Ben Higgins, chief operating officer, and Nancy Loogman, conservation associate.
- Purchase of the office building adjoining the California Cattlemen's Association's offices in early 2009. Having dedicated office space for staff and a conference room to support our board meetings has given us much-needed capacity to meet the demands of landowners throughout the state.

### OUTREACH

- Despite significantly reduced levels of giving by many private foundations, the Rangeland Trust was awarded over \$200,000 in private foundation grants in 2009, of which a portion is designated for continued outreach to attract more diverse funding streams.
- Continued efforts to build relationships with key agency decision makers to enhance communication and better coordinate program applications and agency project funding priorities.
- Landowner outreach via direct mail regarding opportunities and tax incentives for donated easements.

*Vernal pool in spring on the Ichord Ranch  
near Waterford in Merced County.*

*Photo by Vollmar Consulting.*



- Supporters can go online to <https://www.rangelandtrust.org/cart/> to become a member of the California Rangeland Trust at one of many levels.
- Private grant funding applied for to conduct outreach in the Central Valley to elected officials, city planners and leaders as well as landowners about the benefits of voluntary conservation easements on private rangelands.
- Significant increase in e-communications via our e-mail newsletter, Facebook and regular e-communications to more cost-effectively reach members and supporters.
- California Rangeland Trust leaders traveled to Washington, D.C., in March and September to meet with members of California's Congressional delegation and promote initiatives important to the future of rangeland conservation and the viability of working ranches. Most prominently, organization representatives voiced support for H.R. 1831, which would make permanent the current tax incentive for donated easements, and H.R. 3524, which would exempt working family-owned farms and ranches from the estate tax.
- The annual 'A Western Affair' held at Rancho Santa Barbara on June 6 was a sell-out success with nearly 500 guests. Hosts Lee and Julia Carr graciously hosted an evening of auctions, music, good food and wine at their expansive and historic property.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conservationist of the Year Award was presented to Jim and Norma Sinton, Shandon, for their outstanding dedication to the ranching industry and their steadfast support of the Rangeland Trust.
- Sign dedication and official celebration of the Ecker Ranch conservation easement in Madera County held on April 25, with over 150 community members, policymakers and supporters of the project present to enjoy a one-of-a-kind party on the ranch.

## CALIFORNIA RANGELAND TRUST

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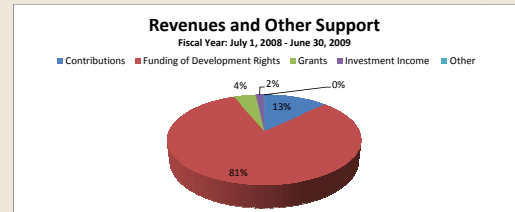
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 Leigh Geren, Executive Assistant

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## AUDITED FINANCIALS

Despite the general economic downturn, The California Rangeland Trust has persevered and remains a primary conservator of California's rangelands. The organization successfully completed three ranch conservation easements during the 2008-2009 fiscal year, one of which was a mitigation easement, and an additional donated easement closed at the conclusion of 2009. This success was realized despite a number of challenges, perhaps most prominently the freeze on state bond funds enacted in late 2008 and in place through 2009.

The Rangeland Trust's fiscal year extends from July 1 through June 30.



Contributions	Funding of Development Rights	Grants	Investment Income	Rental Income	Total
\$1,206,715	\$7,684,413	\$419,638	\$152,789	\$5,888	\$9,469,443



Administrative	Purchase of Development Rights	Other Program Expense	Fundraising	Total
\$508,752	\$7,680,000	\$320,424	\$361,738	\$8,870,914

The financial charts above reflect the audited financials for the fiscal year of July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. During this fiscal year the Rangeland Trust is pleased to report that there has been an addition in net asset value of \$598,529, due in large to prudent investment management. This brings increases of total net assets and liabilities to \$8,404,480 from \$7,095,230 for the prior year. This net asset value includes unrestricted, temporarily restricted and permanently restricted endowments for monitoring of easements and funds designated for specific project-related purposes.

It is important to note the pass through dollars for easements transactions shown above, funds that pass through the Rangeland Trust and are immediately transferred to the landowner for the purchase of development rights. This figure is depicted on both the operating revenue and the operating expense charts as 'funding of development rights' and 'purchase of development rights' respectively.

It is only through the support of donors, agencies, partners and friends that the Rangeland Trust continues to protect our state's most precious resources. If you would like more information regarding our financial statements, contact California Rangeland Trust Chief Operating Officer Ben Higgins at (916) 444-2096 or e-mail [bhiggins@rangelandtrust.org](mailto:bhiggins@rangelandtrust.org).