

Our Mission: To serve the land, people, and wildlife by conserving California's working rangelands.

PASSING THE REINS

SAYING FAREWELL TO FORMER CEO AND WELCOMING NEW LEADER

After twenty years of incredible service to our great organization, Nita Vail stepped down from her role as the California Rangeland Trust's CEO at the end of April, passing the reins to longtime chief operating officer Michael Delbar.

For many of us, it is hard to picture the Rangeland Trust without Nita. She led the organization from its humble beginnings, born from a group of ranchers seeking ways to hold onto the ranching way of life in California, to one of the most influential agricultural nonprofits in the state.

"There was a great deal of polarization between the environmental and ranching community at the time when Nita first began to lead the Rangeland Trust," said Steve Sinton, founding chairman and current member of the Rangeland Trust Emeritus Council.

"Nita is a bridgebuilder, and right away began to create a common vision between ranchers and others in the California conservation community. She was a game changer, a rainmaker, and her involvement in conservation activities statewide and throughout the West brought us respect."

Nita's visionary leadership helped transform the Rangeland Trust into the largest land trust in California. Nita understood the need to build bridges between environmental and ranching groups. She, along with the board of directors and staff, worked to create a broad base of philanthropic support and connect the organization to state and federal agency partners. She also made it a priority to educate people from all walks of life on the public benefits rangelands provide. Those connections allowed the Trust to raise significant funds for rangeland conservation, making it the strong organization that it is today.

While Nita's decision to step down was not an easy one to make, she believes this to be an important and critical change for the Rangeland Trust to continue to grow and thrive. Nita stated: "The timing is right. The organization is stronger than ever with a dedicated board, talented staff, committed volunteers, and results showing the extraordinary impact we've had in preserving California's



Nita Vail,
Former Rangeland Trust CEO



Michael Delbar,
New Rangeland Trust CEO

rangelands and ranching culture, wildlife and ways of life."

While Nita will certainly be missed, the Rangeland Trust is fortunate to have once again found the perfect person to lead the organization forward. With a degree in agricultural business from California State University, Chico, twelve years of service on the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, a two-year stint as the Lake County Farm Bureau Executive Director and as a graduate of the California Agricultural Leadership Program, Michael is well-poised for his new leadership role.

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CEO Michael Delbar hails from a multigenerational cattle operation in Mendocino and Lake Counties

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LEADERSHIP LETTER

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Dear Friends,

What a difference a couple of months makes. First and foremost, we hope you and your loved ones are staying safe and healthy during these difficult times. Meanwhile, some big changes have recently taken place at the Rangeland Trust. As you read in our cover story, Nita Vail stepped down from her role as CEO at the end of April. Simultaneously, our organization has also been adjusting to the new reality surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of us have experienced some level of uncertainty over the past few months. The ranching community especially has felt the rippling effects from shutdowns of processing facilities and breakdowns in our food supply chain. Fortunately, ranchers are resilient, and so is your team at the Rangeland Trust. If there is one thing that remains certain during these uncertain times, it is that our commitment to conserving the working lands that are essential to producing the food that feeds us and the natural resources that sustain us is unwavering.

It is more important than ever that we continue to offer support to our ranching families as they persevere through these challenging times. We were fortunate enough to forge through and complete four conservation projects during the mandated shelter-in-place orders. Because of you, four ranching families have a little more certainty as they weather this storm.

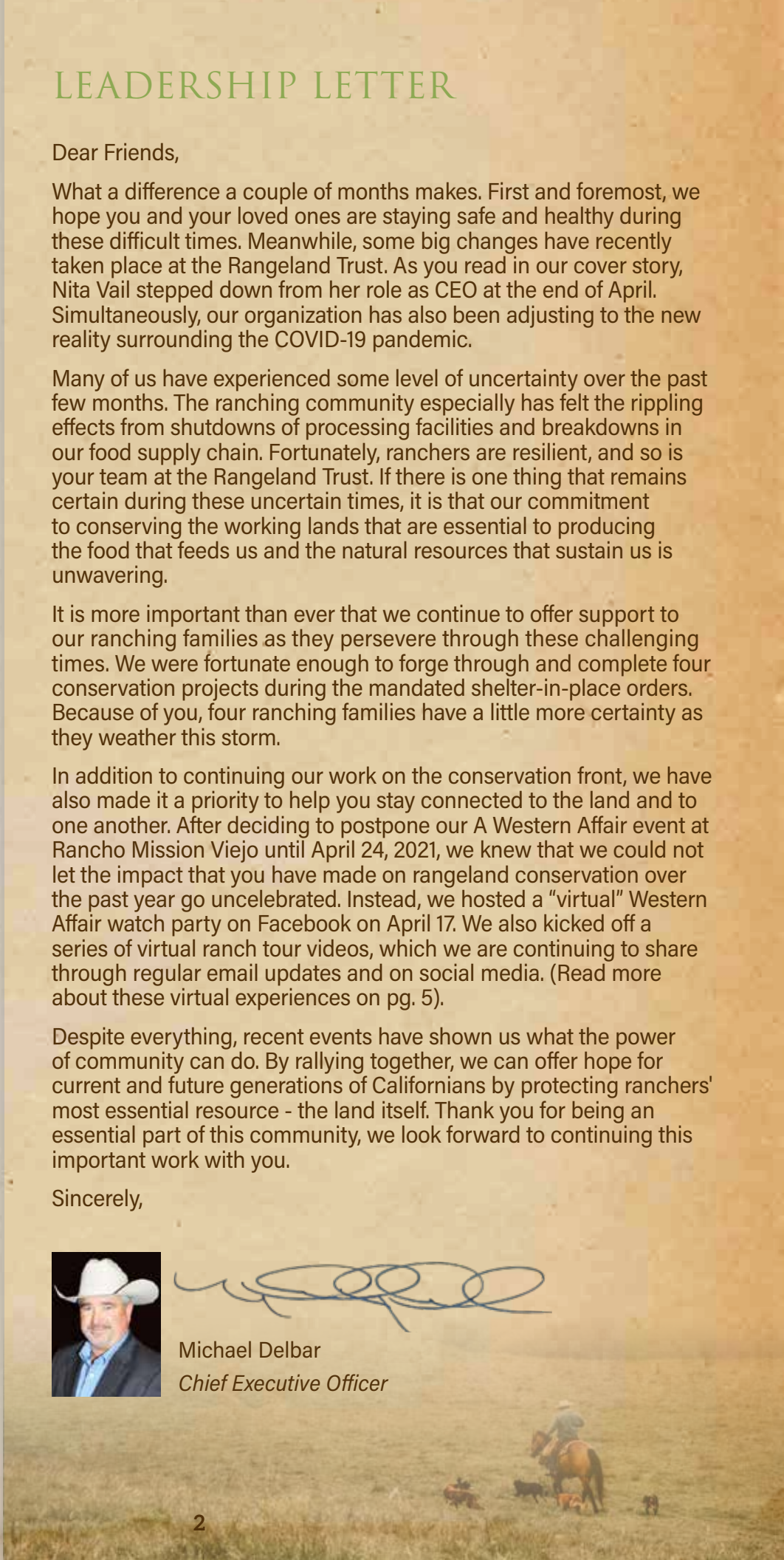
In addition to continuing our work on the conservation front, we have also made it a priority to help you stay connected to the land and to one another. After deciding to postpone our A Western Affair event at Rancho Mission Viejo until April 24, 2021, we knew that we could not let the impact that you have made on rangeland conservation over the past year go uncelebrated. Instead, we hosted a "virtual" Western Affair watch party on Facebook on April 17. We also kicked off a series of virtual ranch tour videos, which we are continuing to share through regular email updates and on social media. (Read more about these virtual experiences on pg. 5).

Despite everything, recent events have shown us what the power of community can do. By rallying together, we can offer hope for current and future generations of Californians by protecting ranchers' most essential resource - the land itself. Thank you for being an essential part of this community, we look forward to continuing this important work with you.

Sincerely,



Michael Delbar
Chief Executive Officer



AN AFFORDABLE WAY TO MAKE A BIG IMPACT

If there's one thing we can count on in life, it's change. We're all experiencing a big disruption right now that could significantly change what the future looks like for you, your family, and for the causes you care about. Such constant and unpredictable changes can make it difficult to know how to balance caring for each of these important pieces in your life. Fortunately, there's a solution.

If you want to remember hard-working rangelands and celebrate Western heritage, you can support their preservation with a planned gift to the California Rangeland Trust. And instead of allocating a fixed amount to our organization, consider naming us a beneficiary of a percentage of your **retirement plan assets, life insurance or donor advised fund** – it's as easy as filling out and returning a piece of paper.

1. Request a copy of the change-of-beneficiary form from your provider (or download a copy from their website).
2. Fill out the form, naming the California Rangeland Trust, along with the percentage or amount you'd like us to receive.
3. Sign and return the form to your plan administrator, insurance company or sponsoring organization. Be sure to keep a copy for your records as well.
4. Notify us of your gift so we can thank you for your support and welcome you to join with other supporters in our Planned Giving Society.

Percentage giving also works either as a portion of your estate or living trust, or of your residual estate (the portion of your estate that remains after all claims are settled).

EVERY GIFT MATTERS

Gifts of all sizes, from 1 to 100 percent, make a difference for the lands, people and wildlife we serve. **Please contact Shannon Foucault at (916) 444-2096 or sfoucault@rangelandtrust.org to get started.**



LEGACY COUNCIL

Between meetings, ranch tours, and and raising awareness of California Rangeland Trust, the Legacy Council is hard at work.

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THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

During these unprecedented times, the mission of the Rangeland Trust has grown even more rooted in our commitment to conservation and support for our ranching families. Many of us have witnessed a global scale of uncertainty since the pandemic began. *But ranchers have felt a trickling wave of uncertainty as it continues to unfold.*

The power of community begins with you.

Your support of the Rangeland Trust does more than conserve the land. You are helping to connect a community of land stewards to one another, where they often help each other and share ideas for caring for the land while maintaining a strong business. During this difficult period in our history, four projects were added to that community because you gave to enable conservation of their lands before the crisis hit. That's four ranching families that have a little more stability right now, thanks to you.

If there are any valuable lessons that have been learned throughout the pandemic, it is that the people who feed us are essential humans, as well as essential workers. This is the perfect opportunity for our conservation community to rally together and ensure the stewards of our working rangelands can continue to provide care to the land - and in return, the land can continue to provide for our own families.



.....
YOU HAVE THE
POWER TO BUILD
RESILIENCE AND
RESTORE CERTAINTY
FOR THE FUTURE OF
THE LANDS YOU LOVE.
PLEASE USE THE
ENCLOSED ENVELOPE
TO HELP THE NEXT
CONSERVATION
SUCCESS STORY COME
TRUE.
.....

KEEPING CONNECTED

While we may not have been able to break out our dancing boots at A Western Affair or exchange hugs and handshakes at a spring ranch tour, we feel grateful to have been able to stay connected with you during these distant times. We know how much you miss being out on the land, and we have been working hard to bring the beauty of our vast open spaces to you in the safety of your home. Ultimately, our goal has been to share photos, videos, and stories to help brighten your day with a smile, laugh, or a pleasant moment.

A Western Affair Watch Party

On April 17, we joined with friends of the Rangeland Trust in real time for a virtual A Western Affair watch party. Hosted by Nita Vail and Michael Delbar, they showed us how to make our signature cocktail, "The Trail Blazer," and honored Conservationists of the Year **Sally Friend** and **Michael Dennis**, and Conservation Impact awardee **Al Jahns**. If you missed it, make sure to head over to the Rangeland Trust's YouTube channel to check it out! Visit <https://cutt.ly/VirtualAWA2020>



Virtual Ranch Tours

We also launched a fun series of virtual ranch tour experiences on social media. Each video features a rancher from the Rangeland Trust community as they take you on a tour and show you what makes their ranch unique. If you missed them, head over to our YouTube page and reignite your fire and passion for rangeland conservation. Visit [YouTube.com/RangelandTrust](https://www.youtube.com/RangelandTrust)



We look forward to being out on the land with you as soon as we can and celebrating with you in-person at Rancho Mission Viejo on **April 24, 2021, for A Western Affair**. Until then, we look forward to keeping connected, even if it is from a distance.

EDITORS

ALYSSA ROLEN, SHANNON FOUCAULT, KELLY SWAYZE

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

KATIE DELBAR, ANGELO GENASCI, BRUCE ROMINGER, ALYSSA ROLEN, DANIEL SINTON

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

MICHAEL DELBAR, MARKIE HAGEMAN, SHANNON FOUCAULT, LEXUS SISTRUNK, ALYSSA ROLEN

CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATOR

ALYSSA ROLEN

CONTACT US

1225 H STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

916.444.2096 | [RANGELANDTRUST.ORG](https://www.rangelandtrust.org)
[INFO@RANGELANDTRUST.ORG](mailto:info@rangelandtrust.org)

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PASSING THE REINS *(Continued from page 1)*

"Michael is the right person to lead the organization forward," said Rangeland Trust Board Co-Chair Valerie Gordon. "His proven leadership, strategic thinking and passion for rangeland conservation will help take the Rangeland Trust to new levels."

"Michael knows the ins and outs of this organization, and his commitment to land preservation and to the Rangeland Trust is strong," said Rangeland Trust Board Co-Chair Mark Nelson. "His creative and innovative approach coupled with his knowledge of the agricultural industry will ensure the Trust continues to be a leader in conserving California's heritage and vast working landscapes."

Hailing from a multi-generational ranching family in Mendocino and Lake Counties, Michael and his family raise beef cattle, timber, and hay. His first experience with conservation easements came when a land-use decision was made in his home county which would have detrimental impacts on surrounding agricultural lands. To mitigate against these impacts, proponents advocated for a conservation easement. The problem was that at the time, no organization capable of holding an agreement of this nature existed. Various groups had talked about forming a land trust, but they were not agricultural-friendly organizations. Fearing that these groups may not have the agricultural land stewards' best interests in mind, Michael rallied other local ranchers to work on creating their own land trust.

Simultaneously, Michael put his hat in the ring and ran for a county supervisor seat in 1996. The agricultural community

was underrepresented, and Michael felt the need to serve as a voice for the farmers and ranchers in his community. While the news of him winning the race was exciting, it also meant the time he would be able to devote to forming an agricultural land trust would be limited. Luckily, it was

around this same time that the California Rangeland Trust was created. This offered a solution to the agricultural producers in Mendocino County, so there was no longer a pertinent need for Michael and his team to continue forming their own organization.

Fast forward to after Michael wrapped up his service on the

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors; he heard about an opening for a new chief operating officer at the Rangeland Trust, so he took a chance and called Nita. He joined the Rangeland Trust in 2010, and the rest is history. For Michael, his journey with the Trust has come full circle. It began with a desire to preserve the land and natural resources in his home region. Now, he is doing this on a statewide level as he leads the Rangeland Trust forward.

"The Rangeland Trust has succeeded because of the hard work, dedication, and passion of Nita Vail," said Michael. "Filling her shoes won't be easy, but I am honored to lead the Trust at this juncture, and I look forward to building on Nita's incredible work."

While the Rangeland Trust is forever grateful to Nita for her dedication and longstanding service to the ranchers and working landscapes of California, we are excited for continued success and growth under Michael's new leadership.

By: Alyssa Rolan, Communications Director

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"The Rangeland Trust has succeeded because of the hard work, dedication, and passion of Nita Vail. Filling her shoes won't be easy, but I am honored to lead the Trust at this juncture, and I look forward to building on Nita's incredible work."
.....

Michael Delbar, Rangeland Trust CEO