

Conserving Rangeland Protects Nature's Wildflowers

By Jessica Kong, Communications Director with Nancy Schaefer, Bay Area Program Manager

IN THE SHADOW OF WALKER RIDGE, rising gently above the Bear Valley floor, a dusty, rugged road cuts north through the narrow valley. Every spring, as flocks of birds begin to fly north, another group of pilgrims make their trek north on this dusty road in search of "the land of fire". They are not searching for a new land to conquer. They are searching for a remnant of the grandeur of the landscape of bygone days – the vision of California's intercoastal valleys and ranges that seduced 18th century Spanish sailors and early California explorers alike. Their Mecca is Bear Valley, just north of Highway 20 in the foothills of the coast range, where wildflowers carpet the verdant land in swaths of orange, magenta, yellow, pink, purple, and white every spring.

Native plant enthusiasts, botanists, and range conservationists flock to the valley to witness the unparalleled diversity of rare and endangered plants in their springtime splendor. "[Bear Valley is] a wonder...It's a hugely well-known area for wildflowers and grasses," said Mary Fahey with the Colusa County Resource Conservation District. The wildflowers wrapping below ridgelines and around multi-colored serpentine rock outcrops, are what make this valley and surrounding hills the most impressive grasslands of California.

"Managed grazing is essential to the incredible wildflower

display on these ranches," said California Rangeland Trust CEO Nita Vail. With the imminent closing of two conservation easements, a total of 20,184 acres of spectacular California beauty and wildflowers will be conserved forever.

In 2011 and 2012, three members of the Keegan family asked the Rangeland Trust to help them conserve lands that had been in their family since 1880 – the 1,547 acre Epperson Place Ranch and 2,507 acres of the Keegan Ranch. The ranches boast open grassland, blue oak and foothill pine woodland that provide foraging habitat for

resident and wintering raptors, migratory birds, deer, Tule elk and the occasional bear. Bear Creek runs through both ranches and numerous seasonal and perennial streams provide habitat for special status species like the Western pond turtle and foothill yellow-legged frogs.

Immediately south of the Epperson Place Ranch is the Bear Valley Ranch; further south is the Payne Ranch. The 12,983 acre and 3,147 acre conservation easements that California Rangeland Trust holds on the two ranches

respectively, create a wildlife corridor adjoining BLM land to the west. Stay awhile, and you may catch a glimpse of an American badger, greater

roadrunner, mountain lion, bald eagle, golden eagle, black bear, or even the Coopers hawk.

Lying along the eastern side of Bear Valley Road, the Keegan Ranch has been home to horses, cattle, and three generations of Keegans. Jim Keegan owns and manages the ranch. The Keegan family acquired the Epperson Place Ranch, along the western side of Bear Valley Road in 1944, and it is now owned by Jim's sisters and their husbands, Lucy and Pat Penning, and Katie and Vic Townzen, but is managed by Jim. (Continued on page 3)

“Managed grazing is essential to the incredible wildflower display on these ranches.”

Bear Valley wildflowers

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Looking Back to Look Forward

Facing Current Challenges by Revisiting Roots

By Jack Hanson, California Rangeland Trust Board Chairman

LOOKING BACK 18 YEARS TO THE day California Rangeland Trust was born, it seems not much has changed. Ranchers faced economic challenges that made it difficult to make a living grazing livestock. The confiscatory “death tax” befell too many families. Regulations increased. And so, unbridled development converted the great grazing lands of California to housing or intensified agriculture – especially “trees and vines” – at an unprecedented rate.

The rapid extinction of grazing land has become normal; the paradox is that it often takes real change on the part of ranchers to keep the land from changing. Today, I am proud of what we have helped them to change and what we have helped keep the same these past 18 years.

What has changed is that ever encroaching developmental growth will never threaten 287,234 acres of privately owned California grazing land ever again. This land will stay the same. Forever.

This was accomplished by helping rancher's place conservation easements on their ranches. Eighteen years ago, conservation easements were not a viable tool for most ranching families. A conservation easement should have helped a rancher to stay on his land and continue grazing livestock. However, it was a challenge to find a trusted, committed partner to hold and monitor the easement. California Rangeland Trust was created to be that partner.

This is why I believe that the service California Rangeland Trust offers to the California beef cattle industry and my fellow California ranchers is so valuable. It is not just the citizens-of-California who receive positive, enduring benefits through our work.

I am truly honored to have been selected by my fellow board members to serve as chairman of the board for the next two years. Representing California Rangeland Trust is a privilege and serving in this way is truly an altruistic calling for me.

Upon returning to the board after a 12 year hiatus, I took note of how the organization grew professionally and financially. Credit for this growth, nothing short of spectacular, falls squarely on the shoulders of the Trust's dedicated, knowledgeable, professional staff and the many California ranchers who have generously given their time and energy to serve as Board members, providing guidance and leadership to the organization.

Staff and the Board should justly be proud of the Trust's progress and accomplishments over the years.

But, we must now turn our focus to the challenges we face. Current demand is so high that ranchers, owning a combined half million acres are waiting to partner with the Trust and the list is growing. While the Trust's commitment to helping these ranchers is as strong as it ever was, traditional public funding sources continue to diminish.

In facing challenges, the Trust can learn much from its ranching partners. These ranchers use conservation easements to change the status of their land so that it will remain the same, forever. The California Rangeland Trust is following their lead, changing strategy, tactics, and messaging so that the mission – to conserve California's working ranches that provide stewardship, open space and natural habitat for future generations – will remain the same, forever. Be assured that the Trust's staff

and Board will continue to positively adapt to a changing environment to ensure California's working ranches will continue to be conserved for generations to come.

One shift in our approach is to invite significant private philanthropy to help us meet the substantial need. We conducted and evaluated a study with the help of consultants. Through in depth interviews, this study revealed that California Rangeland Trust had earned a strong, positive reputation and the trust of the agricultural community. Moreover, this trust factor was growing exponentially.

We discovered that California Rangeland Trust had accrued a strong base of supporters, willing to invest philanthropically in our work. If they were asked. Following this study and its review, the staff and Board recognized the need to expand the Trust's private funding base to allow more ranches sitting on our waitlist to be conserved – in time. The consensus is that looking toward

“ *The paradox is that it often takes real change on the part of ranchers to keep the land from changing.* ”



Willow Creek Ranch, Susanville, CA

our 20th year, we must launch our philanthropic profile.

In anticipation of this, the governing board demonstrated that each member is contributing philanthropically. The board also appointed an advisory board, the Legacy Council, to help find support for the ranches on our wait list. While special events such as *A Western Affair* continue to connect us with the ranching community, California Rangeland Trust will soon be inviting even more significant gifts.

Our work is important. The need is great. And our team is committed to change so that California ranchland can stay the same.

Jack Hanson was among a group of ranchers who created



California Rangeland Trust in 1998 and served on the founding Board of Directors. He owns and operates Willow Creek Ranch, a traditional family cow/calf operation in Northeastern California with his wife, Darcy, and sons, Wyatt and Brad. Jack returned to the California Rangeland Trust Board of Directors following a 12 year absence

in 2013 where he serves as Board Chair. He is also past Chair and current board member of the National Livestock Producers Association, Chairman of the Tri State Livestock Credit Corp. Board of Directors, Chairman of the Advisory Board at the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System, Board Member of Directors of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, and past member of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors.

Another Bear Valley Success continued....

(Continued from page 1) At one time, Jim Keegan, hosted mule-drawn wagon wildflower tours on the ranch that were featured on Home and Garden Television, Bay Area Backroads, and Sunset magazine. Although the tours are no longer offered, wildflower viewers are still welcomed. A wildflower access gate allows the public in without letting cattle out. "It's hard for city people to shut a gate," Jim says.

But you don't need to step onto the ranch to appreciate the technicolor glory of blue royal lupine, golden California poppies, yellow tidytips, and red paintbrush. The Mother Lode chapter of the Sierra Club sponsors photography car tours to the area. Purple owl's clover, light pink cat's ears, blue dicks, foothill penstemon, cream sacs, and the rare pink adobe lily all add to the profusion of color visible from the road. The Keegan, Townzen, and Penning families wanted to keep this beautiful valley as it should be – filled with millions of flowers – for all to enjoy. The closing of these conservation easements, through the help of the the Natural Resources Conservation Service and California Wildlife Conservation Board, ensures this thousand year old annual display will continue forever.

2016

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Meet Our New Directors and Staff

Ceci Dale-Cesmat

Board Member



Ceci Dale-Cesmat is a licensed Certified Rangeland Manager with the State of California, and a Certified Professional in Rangeland Management with the Society for Range Management. Recently retired from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as the State Rangeland Management Specialist, she is currently doing private range consulting throughout the state. Having consulted on a part time basis for the past 15 years, she primarily assists land trusts with conservation easements and monitoring. Past positions include range specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Lassen, Plumas and Sierra counties as well as the District Conservationist for NRCS in Lassen County. She also spent 14 years as a range specialist with the US Forest Service.

An active member of the Society for Range Management, Ceci has held the position of California – Pacific Section President for two separate terms. She has served on the board of directors and the national Accreditation Committee as well as on several state committees.

Ceci also obtained a real estate license in 2000 and specializes in ranch and farm sales for California Outdoor Properties. She graduated from UC Davis with a degree in Range Science and from the University of Nevada, Reno with a degree in Rangeland Hydrology. She has two adult children and splits her time between Yolo and Lassen counties.

Doug McDonald

Board Member



Doug McDonald is a third generation rancher with cattle and timber ranching operations in Central California. A Managing Director at Armory Securities he provides investment banking services for real estate, food and agricultural companies. With over 15 years of merger and

acquisitions, restructuring, and financing experience he has completed 50 transactions totaling \$20 billion in value. In 2014, he was recognized as a Top 40 Under 40 Dealmaker by M&A Advisor. Prior to Armory, Doug was an investment banker at Oppenheimer and Lehman Brothers. Earlier in his career he was a financial analyst for The Walt Disney Company. He currently resides in Southern California with his wife and three children. Doug is active in western civic organizations and is a 2010 Maverick Class of Rancheros Visitadores. Mr. McDonald earned an M.B.A. from The Anderson School at UCLA and a B.A. in Economics from Stanford University.

Valencia Burch

Board Member



Valencia Burch lives on a family farm in Sanger, California with her husband Jeff and daughter Jestine where they farm and raise all natural grass fed beef. A Senior Business Banking Relationship Manager with a banking career spanning nearly 20 years, she oversees

a diverse team that manages the portfolios of Wells Fargo's business banking clients.

Co-Chair of the 2014 Go Red for Women event in Fresno, educating people on where their food comes from is in her blood. Over 50 years ago, Valencia's mother hosted school field trips on the family farms so that children could see where their eggs, meat, and milk came from. In her early years, Valencia showed in 4-H and FFA and went on to major in Ag Business at Chico State. She is also vested in the retention, preservation and maintenance of open spaces in California, having served 10 years on The San Joaquin River Parkway Trust Board of Directors.



Cecilia Tonsing FAHP, CFRE

Chief Development Officer

Cecilia Tonsing is a fourth generation descendent of a pioneer California ranching family and is a career professional in the field of nonprofit management, specializing in philanthropy. Her experience includes Fund Development leadership for Operation Homefront, Executive Director of the California State Parks Foundation, Chair of the Chief Development Officers Council for the Sister of Providence Healthcare System's 20 hospitals on the West Coast, and more than a decade as President and CEO of St. Luke's Hospital Foundation in San Francisco.

Leadership California recognized Cecilia as one of the top 100 California women in business, government, and academia. Three different Governors appointed her to a bipartisan commission addressing the need to preserve California's heritage. During fifteen years as a

State Commissioner, she served as Chair for eleven years where she worked with California's Secretary of State to create and fund a state Archives and Museum in Sacramento. Cecilia also served on the editorial advisory board for Advancing Philanthropy, the Association of Fundraising Professional's professional journal and as well as an instructor for their Advanced Courses.

In addition, Cecilia has lectured at the University of San Francisco, the California State Universities at San Francisco and East Bay, Stanford University, Saybrook University, and Golden Gate University, on topics related to philanthropy, organizational development, and business management. She completed the Stanford University Graduate School of Business's Executive Program in Palo Alto, CA. Married to attorney Michael J. Tonsing, Sr., Cecilia has two adult children and three grandchildren.

**FAHP (Fellow in the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy),
CFRE (Certified Fund Raising Executive)*

Jessica Kong



Communications Director

After traveling with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show with his young family, Jessica Kong's great great grandfather settled in Sacramento. The stories she heard growing up led to an interest in the Western lifestyle and she spent 14 years working as a seasonal ranch hand, starting colts, assisting farriers,

wrangling dude strings, and loping horses on the National Cutting Horse Association circuit.

Driven to connect urbanites and suburbanites with ranching and agriculture, she started a boutique creative agency, Stampede Innovations, in 2010. She developed, launched, and tested strategic communications campaigns designed to influence human behavior with minimal investment. Prior to this, she worked for the 52nd District Agricultural Association, the Western Fairs Association, and the California State Fair.

Jessica graduated from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo with a degree in Agricultural Business. She is also an award winning artist and photographer, with Best of Shows at juried Western art shows and artwork featured on Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association and National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association posters.

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The Permanency of the Conservation Tax Incentive

By Jessica Kong, Communications Director

“HAD I KNOWN IT WOULD TAKE 16 years I probably wouldn’t have done it,” said Rock Ringling of Montana Land Reliance and President of the Partnership of Rangeland Trusts (PORT). But conservation-minded ranchers across the country are glad he did. It’s what Land Trust Alliance President Rand Wentworth called “[...] the single greatest legislative action in decades to support land conservation.” It’s the permanent extension of Rock Ringling and fellow Montanan Bill Long’s brainchild, the Enhanced Easement Incentive Act.

The Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act passed on Dec. 18, 2015, making the Enhanced Easement Incentive Act a permanent part of the tax code. Prior to the passing of the Enhanced Easement Incentive Act in 2006, land-rich, cash-poor ranchers could never make enough deductions to realize the full value of their donation. That’s where Ringling and Long came in. The tax incentives they proposed would help qualified ranchers to recover their donation value so that placing an easement on their ranches, if it worked for their family, would make business sense as well as heart sense.

“Ranchers and ranch land trusts scored a major victory in working together to secure permanency for this tax incentive,” said Bethany Erb, Western Advocacy and Outreach Manager at Land Trust Alliance. “We no longer have to worry about Congress renewing it every one or two years. Landowners now have the assurance they need to make their long-term estate plans. State cattlemen’s associations and NCBA have long helped us make an effective case to Congress. And this year, that case was won.”

The Act allows ranchers to deduct up to 100 percent of their adjusted gross income for up to 16 years, or until the full value of their donation is recouped, whichever occurred first. While those with significant positive cash flow have always been able to regain the lost value of a donated conservation easement, it only became a viable option for ranchers in 2006. Other landowners benefit from this legislation as well. For donations of land not in agriculture production, allowed

deductions are up to 50 percent over 15 years. Bargain sales are included as well so that landowners can deduct the difference between the appraised value of the conservation easement and sale price should they choose to sell at a “bargain.”

As a result of the original Act in 2006, donations of conservation easements immediately increased 33 percent. Over two million acres across the country were conserved because of this legislation. But the Incentive has been in a constant state of flux, continually expiring and being renewed. Because donating an easement can take the better part of a year or more, the process was filled with uncertainty. Now that the Incentive is permanent, ranchers have a clear-cut decision making mechanism in place.

The recent passage and permanence of the tax incentive was largely due to the tireless lobbying efforts of the Land Trust Alliance which represents more than 1,100 member land trusts and five million members. Individual land trusts, conservation groups, sportsmen’s

“ *Landowners now have the assurance they need to make their long-term estate plans.*

The conservation easement on the San Lucas Ranch, donated to California Rangeland Trust, preserves over 1,500 acres of scenic vistas and wildlife habitat in the beautiful Santa Ynez Valley
Photo Credit: Phil Hall

associations, historical preservation societies and cattlemen's associations joined forces to put pressure on their elected representatives as well.

In addition, PORT, whose members hold more than 1,283 conservation easements on nearly 2.2 million acres, was heavily involved. PORT is composed of seven cattlemen's land trusts, including the California Rangeland Trust, that are affiliated with their state's livestock associations. The unique agricultural perspective of PORT member land trusts assures ranchers that their goals are not only understood, but are shared by the land trust with whom they partner.

According to Nita Vail, chief executive officer of the California Rangeland Trust and PORT Vice President, 61,395 acres of rangeland under conservation easements have been donated to the California Rangeland Trust as a direct result of the Enhanced Easement Incentive Act since 2006.

When President Obama signed PATH into law Dec. 18, 2015, conservation tax incentives became permanent as well as retroactive to Jan. 1, 2015.

Justin Oldfield, vice president of government affairs for the California Cattlemen's Association said, "The strong bipartisan support given by the majority of California's congressional delegation to the tax relief package that was part of the recent Omnibus legislation is a testament to the lobbying efforts of CCA and Rangeland Trust in both chambers of Congress. The tax relief package included multiple provisions that benefit ranchers, including the conservation tax incentive and permanently extending Section 179 deductions. Section 179 allows farmers and ranchers to take a full deduction on certain equipment and property purchases in a given year without depreciating the equipment or property over a long period of time."

The Gift of a Lifetime

MAKING A PLANNED GIFT TO THE California Rangeland Trust is a simple and flexible way to combine philanthropy with sound financial planning. Where to begin and figuring out how to make a gift that will provide the greatest benefit to you and the Rangeland Trust is both the starting point and often times, the part that seems overwhelming.

Part of the answer to reducing the stress of estate planning is for you and your family to carefully plan and organize now. The best plans are created first by deciding what your goals are and second, determining how to accomplish them. It is up to you and your attorney, accountant, or other succession planning adviser to determine the best fit for you.

As you prepare your future goals:

Prepare a will or trust. A majority of people die without one. You lose control over the disposition of your possessions without a document.

Benefit from **Professional Expertise** (An IRA or pension plan to qualified charity will not be subject to income tax or estate tax; loved ones could end up with 30% of the face value).

Remember the **California Rangeland Trust** in your future plans, just as you do with present gifts.

Bequests are the transfers of wealth that occur upon a donor's death. Using a will or trust, bequests can take several forms.

Specific bequest

a certain amount of cash, securities, or property.

General bequest

property that is similar to all other items distributed, usually cash.

Percentage bequest

a stated percentage of the donor's estate.

Residual bequest

all or a portion of what remains of the estate after specific and general bequests are distributed.

Besides an outright bequest, donors can also set up a trust that will benefit charitable organizations during or after their lifetime. Donors can also name one or more nonprofits as beneficiaries of an insurance policy or as the recipient of an IRA or another qualified retirement fund.

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Catherine Vail
 Dan and Anne Rudolph in memory of
Jack E. Russell
 Jack and Laurie Sinton in memory of
Norma Sinton

Varian Arabians Ranch Donors

Sheila Varian reached out to California Rangeland Trust to form a land conservation agreement for Varian Arabians Ranch that would not only protect the ranch for the people, the horses, and the wildlife in the near future, but would also ensure that her land, and eventually other working ranches, would be protected forever. Our goal is to raise the \$2.5 million needed to purchase the Varian Arabians Ranch development rights. Thanks to all our donors we are making Sheila's last dream come true.

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*These donors made gifts to the Rangeland Trust from September 15, 2015 - April 15, 2016.
 Contact our office at (916) 444-2096 if you have any questions about giving.



Sheila Varian

August 8, 1937 - March 6, 2016

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&
CALIFORNIA
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a very special evening of

Dinner, Dancing, and Music



Featuring local talent Chad Bushnell,
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Saturday, April 30, 2016

8:00 A.M. Cattle Sorting Events
11:00 A.M. Trail & Wagon Ride
4:30 P.M. Cocktails, Social Hour,
& Silent Auction
5:30 P.M. Dinner, Live Auction,
& Dancing

**Join us early
for ranch horse
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Wood Ranch ★ Orland, CA

TICKETS 916.444.2096  www.rangelandtrust.org

NET PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE CALIFORNIA RANGELAND TRUST, A 501(C)3 NONPROFIT DEDICATED TO CONSERVING WORKING RANCHES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS WHOSE SUPPORT IS GRATEFULLY APPRECIATED



Photo Credit: Kenny Calhoun

“For most of us, there are very few things that we do that last beyond our current lives, other than our children. One notable exception is to make a lasting contribution to a cause that will make a permanent difference in the world. The Rangeland Trusts’ mission of saving the wonderful ranches that provide for families and wildlife and which sustain our healthy water, air, and food is something that really resonates with me. If we don’t save these wonderful places now, they may not be here even for our grandchildren. That’s why I intend to leave a bequest to the Rangeland Trust, so that it can continue to preserve and protect these things that matter to me and my family.” – Steve Sinton

*For more information on planned giving, see page 7.

