

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

A COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION PROTECTING VERNAL POOL-RICH GRASSLAND ON FLYING M RANCH

A commitment to conservation has been a cornerstone of the Flying M Ranch since 1959 when John and Lucia Myers first purchased the land in eastern Merced County. Today, their two grandsons, Wes and Lou Myers, carry on that legacy on the 14,000-acre ranch. Wes handles most of the ranching operations, and his company, Myers Ranches, LLC, leases the land and runs cattle on the property.

The Flying M Ranch extends over 24 square miles of the Merced Grasslands, one of the largest and most intact vernal pool-grasslands habitat in the world. Earlier this year, 845 acres of the ranch were conserved through a conservation agreement in partnership with the Rangeland Trust. The conserved acreage joins an additional 5,000 acres previously conserved by the Myers family in partnership with The Nature Conservancy.

"This area has the right climate and geology to create these little ecosystems. We put this easement contiguous to other easements on this ranch and other land to continue to conserve this entire portion of the ranch," said Wes. "There are vernal pools all over the property, but the majority of them



The conserved property is part of the Merced Grasslands, one of the largest vernal pool-grasslands habitat in the world

are concentrated on and around this 845-acre parcel. We wanted to add them to the entire conservation acreage."

As part of the state's largest stretch of vernal pool-grasslands, the importance of conserving this portion of the landscape is critical. Many species of flora and fauna depend on the habitat offered by these seasonal wetlands, including vernal pool fairy shrimp, California linderiella, tadpole shrimp, California tiger salamander, western spadefoot toad, and succulent owl's clover.

Flying M works with biologists and botanists to assess the condition of their abundance of vernal pools, ensuring the health of these

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Wes Myers with his wife, Jocelyn, and their two children, Elodie and Beau, on the Flying M Ranch



Flying M Ranch, Merced County

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LEADERSHIP LETTER

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Dear Friends,

2020 has been a turbulent year for so many of us. On top of the uncertainties from the coronavirus pandemic, California is experiencing one of the worst wildfire seasons on record.

We have heard heartbreaking stories from our ranching partners. Some faced devastating losses of homes, land, and livestock. Others carefully stood watch as flames loomed ever closer. Many of you, your family, or your friends may have been affected by these natural disasters, and we want you to know that our hearts are truly with you. As protectors of California's rangelands, it is upsetting to see so much destruction across our state as people fear for their families, livelihoods, and communities.

This year especially has shown us how much we depend on resilient landscapes, not only for our safety but as a source for many of our most essential natural resources. One glimmer of hope in recent months is that new scientific studies are shedding light on how grazing and rangeland conservation can offer solutions to some of our biggest challenges, including wildfires.

The recent *Capital Press* article, "New Study: Cattle Grazing Significantly Reduces Wildfire Spread," highlighted preliminary research by scientists at UC Davis, which looked at tools to guard against wildfires. Researchers praised California's 1.8 million beef cattle for their role in reducing hundreds to thousands of pounds per acre of grasses on landscapes. They suggested that without grazing animals, this year's wildfire season would have been even more devastating, a picture none of us want to envision.

In August, we released a study of our own conducted by scientists at UC Berkeley. This groundbreaking research looked at the value of environmental benefits, like food, water, wildlife habitat, and climate regulation provided by conserved rangeland and identified the return on investment of the Rangeland Trust's conservation efforts. Results found that rangeland conserved by the Rangeland Trust provides \$1 billion in environmental benefits annually and returns nearly \$3.50 for every dollar invested (Read more on Pg. 5).

Studies like these are proving what we have long known—working rangelands are critical to our state's social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being. When you help protect working rangelands, you are making an investment in the future.

Conserving these landscapes continues to be a top priority for the Rangeland Trust. Thank you for making this work possible. Together, we can offer hope for a better future and a more resilient California.



Michael Delbar
Chief Executive Officer

WHAT COMES NEXT FOR YOUR LAND?

Recently we've been hearing from landowners trying to figure out what the future holds for their rangelands. Whether it's the uncertainty of the current world, or a natural cycle of life, it is our goal to help them find the best solution. We therefore want to provide information for those who might be thinking about how the Rangeland Trust can be a partner.

Our foremost priority is to help ranchers keep their land while we partner to conserve it. Sometimes maintaining ownership is not the goal, and we can discuss whether to donate the land to the Rangeland Trust. Though we do not typically hold land, we can work with the donor to make a plan for its future and seek high value outcomes to advance rangeland conservation. Two examples:

★ Deer Valley Ranch was an outright donation to the Rangeland Trust; we conserved the ranch and sold it to a conservation-minded buyer who now uses the land to help military veterans heal from PTSD. Our proceeds from that sale enabled the Rangeland Trust to help other ranchers achieve conservation, as well as make us financially stronger, more effective, and more self-sufficient.

★ Sheila Varian's Ranch is part of a bequest to the Rangeland Trust; we have partnered with Cuesta College to purchase it from us and further that Ranch's legacy as a training center for agricultural professions. When transferred, this ranch will be conserved as designed by Sheila and the Rangeland Trust when she created the bequest. Proceeds will in part be used to further rangeland conservation in the Central Coast region.

We know there is no one-size-fits-all solution and advise that you review your intentions with legal and/or financial advisors, as well as any family members who may be affected. The donation of land is a big decision with significant financial benefits.

Please contact us to discuss your goals and desired outcomes. We can review the unique needs of your ranch, look at the conditions for conservation, and ensure the best outcomes for your land, your family, your legacy, and for the future of the Rangeland Trust and our ability to help others.



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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BLOOM RANCH NEEDS YOUR HELP!

As the pandemic continues to impact each of us every day, the future has never felt so unpredictable. For ranching families across the state, this is a time filled with disheartening uncertainty about the future of their ranches and the natural resources they steward for all of us. We've been sharing how the pandemic has affected these ranchers, but challenges continue to arise for them in 2020 and we have yet to understand the full impacts of the wildfires and pervasive smoke.

But it isn't all bad news, and you can help make possible another inspiring story of resilience by restoring stability for important members of this community! Right now, the Bloom Ranch is at risk of being lost forever. **Not only are there over 500 residential developments closing in on it, but as COVID-19 significantly impacts their ability to operate, the pressure to sell grows even stronger.** By helping to conserve the Bloom Ranch, we can push back on the forces threatening its future and keep it serving its best purpose.



You know that ranching provides significant environmental benefits that heal our planet and benefit humans and wildlife alike, and Bloom Ranch is no different – from the Stanislaus River watershed that supplies many Northern California communities with water, to the vernal pools and grasslands that sustain life for over 200 species of migratory birds. This ranch is also home to Jailhouse Rock, the world-famous climbing attraction that brings visitors from all over the world and supports the local rural economy.

When like-minded individuals come together, they can create a movement beyond the imaginable. You witnessed this power in action in 2018 when community members rallied together and successfully raised \$500,000 to conserve the Rock Front Ranch. We know we can rely on visionary supporters like you again to raise the final \$185,000 needed to conserve the Bloom Ranch.

Will you help to conserve the Bloom Ranch?

Use the enclosed envelope to send your gift, or visit www.rangelandtrust.org to easily make a contribution online to this effort.*

Thank you for taking an active role in conserving California's working landscapes and open spaces, and for helping to bring some peace of mind to ranching families in California. Your resilience makes this work possible, even in 2020.

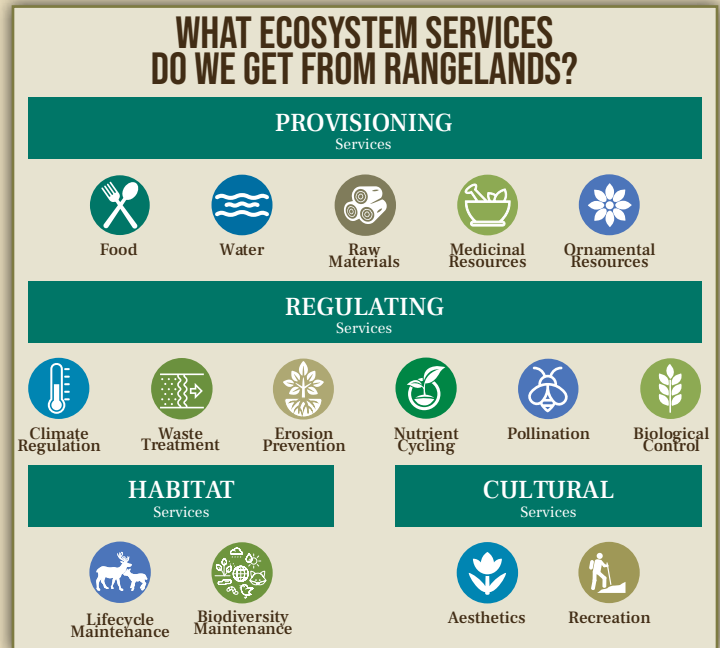
**Gifts received beyond our goal will be allocated to a similar conservation project.*

GROUNDBREAKING NEW STUDY

The California Rangeland Trust is thrilled to announce the release of a **new study showing the long-term benefits of land conservation**. This groundbreaking research could transform the way Californians look at working landscapes in the Golden State.

California's ranchlands contain intact plant and wildlife communities that provide valuable ecosystem services – such as habitat, carbon sequestration, food, open space, views, watersheds and more – to communities across the state. But before now, these benefits of the rangeland you've helped conserve had not been quantified.

We partnered with UC Berkeley scientists to understand the environmental, economic, and social benefits of the rangeland in our conservation portfolio. They looked at 56 ranches, totaling just over 306,000 acres.



The Findings:

- 56 ranches conserved through the Rangeland Trust provide **more than \$1 billion in ecosystem services annually**.
- The Rangeland Trust's conservation easements **return between \$3.47 per dollar invested** in environmental benefits under current zoning restrictions.

The data is clear – conserving rangeland is a smart investment as Californians look for ways to protect our environment.

Funded by the Resources Legacy Fund and an anonymous donor, this study has the potential to change the way Californians see their state's working landscapes. Our goal is to use this research to increase future allocations of public and private funding for rangeland conservation, to communicate the value of this work, and to help guide future conservation activity.

Leading-edge research into the value of rangeland, and communicating this message with diverse audiences, is at the heart of our mission. Our work in conservation, research, and education would not be possible without you. When you join us in protecting California rangelands, you are investing in the future. This study allows us to better understand the return on YOUR investment. Thank you for your partnership and support. Because of you, California has a brighter and greener future.

To learn more about these incredible findings visit: www.rangelandtrust.org/ecosystem-service-study



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THANK YOU DONORS

We want to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has sent in donations to support the California Rangeland Trust during this turbulent year. You've helped to keep us steady and moving forward in this important work. Here is a sample of the impact your gift has made during this upside-down year:

- Six ranches have now been conserved, thereby providing a little extra stability to six ranching families.
- Friends around the state stayed connected to the cause through virtual ranch tours, sharing personal stories of success, and engaging one-on-one both virtually and in-person (safely).
- New partnerships are being formed with our peers to elevate rangeland conservation concerns and inform legislative discourse about the need for resources to support working lands.
- Monitoring our conserved projects has been adapted so we can stay on track in keeping our promises to our partner landowners, funders, and to the land itself.

We've seen the generosity flow from both new and longtime donors. Those in a position to give have stepped up to ensure working lands continue to be a priority. You each make so much possible, and you are all in our thoughts. Thank you for giving!



PATRICIA MOFFAT POPE IN MEMORIAM

Patricia Moffat Pope (Patsy) passed away on August 4, 2020. She had been a longtime, generous supporter of the California Rangeland Trust.

Patsy was born on May 12, 1927 to parents William H. Moffat and May Martin Moffat in Reno, Nevada. She grew up a cattleman's daughter, loving the ranches and riding horses. She attended San Domenico School, The Hamlin School and University of Oregon. She married George A. Pope, Jr. in 1959 and together they built a thoroughbred horse racing empire that included 27 stakes winners in the United States and in Europe.

She loved ranching and farming and spent much of her time at the Arroyo Seco Ranch and the El Peco Ranch which she turned into a garden paradise and a productive farm. Her

husband called her "the Rose of the Ranch" so she planted hundreds of rose bushes and often brought big bouquets of flowers to her friends and family.

In 2016, she opened her garden paradise to friends and supporters of the California Rangeland Trust during a "Gather" she, with her daughter Adrianna Pope Sullivan (a member of the Legacy Council), hosted at the El Peco Ranch.

Patsy was preceded in death by her parents, her husband and her brother William H. Moffat, Jr. She is survived by her children Robert Page Coleman and William Tell Coleman from a former marriage, Adrianna Pope Sullivan (Robert Sullivan) and Patricia Moffat Pope, Jr. and her sister Adrienne Moffat Provo. Patsy had four



stepchildren with George A. Pope Jr. and a total of 22 grandchildren.



A COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION *(Continued from page 1)*

crucial bodies of water. These grasslands are a striking resemblance to what they looked like centuries ago, and because of the Myers' conservation efforts, this land will remain protected from development and alteration forever.

Well-managed grazing preserves and improves the quality of habitat and highlights the symbiotic relationship between agriculture and environmental stewardship. For this reason, developers often need to offset the habitat their project will impact by conserving a similar landscape in close proximity. This latest conservation project on the Flying M Ranch is a mitigation easement, whose funding resulted from the expansion of the University of California, Merced campus. When it came time for the Myers family to determine which organization would hold the easement, they were introduced to the Rangeland Trust by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wes admitted, "At the time we were working on this easement, we didn't know the Rangeland Trust existed. Once we did research, we found that the Rangeland Trust was the one that was most livestock and cattle friendly and they understood the grazing business model well. After meeting with everyone we decided it was the right decision."

While the family is proud of their most recent conservation efforts, they say they still have more to do. The Flying M Ranch states that it has "maintained this unique grassland ecosystem through natural grazing practices for three generations. Currently, efforts are underway to further improve cattle management practices and enhance the vitality of both grassland and riverine systems across the ranch."

Merced County's Burns Creek also runs along the ranch, offering a haven for migratory birds and waterfowl. This creek leads into the larger Bear Creek and is an important part of the land's ecosystem. The Myers family is looking into ways to protect and improve the riparian zones surrounding the creeks, further demonstrating their passion for protecting the landscape.

Flying M Ranch wholeheartedly believes in the beneficial relationship between livestock and the ecosystems sustained. Cattle grazing has enabled the growth of herbaceous flowers to flourish around the vernal pools, and the Myers have spent over 30 years working with experts and establishing innovative practices to ensure these fragile ecosystems are not harmed. Their dedication to the environment and ranching legacy is demonstrated in their tireless efforts to continue to preserve the land they love.

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