



The Landscape

Fall 2008

The newsletter of the Mother Lode Land Trust

Garibaldi Ranch

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Become a member of the Mother Lode Land Trust!

Nestled in the hills west of Hwy. 49, between Sutter Creek and Amador City, the Garibaldi Ranch exemplifies the Mother Lode landscape. Rolling hills, blue oak woodlands, and seasonal streams define the 1,600 acre property. Homesteaded in the mid-1800s the ranch has been used almost exclusively for agriculture.

Amador Creek flows across the entire northern portion of the property and from its highest points Mt. Diablo, the Sutter Buttes, and Pyramid Peak can be seen. The ranch is currently being used for cattle grazing as is most of the land in adjacent ranches.

Listed for sale over a year ago, the land trust contacted the landowners earlier this year to explore purchasing the property for conservation.



The land trust is currently working with the landowners to identify conservation financing for the property that would ensure the long term conservation of the property and the continuation of agricultural operations.

If you're interested in seeing this property remain as open space and in agricultural use, please join the land trust today and let the trust know how you'd like to help!



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(formerly the
Amador Land Trust)
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MLLT was established in 1991 by a coalition of ranchers, conservationists, and other concerned citizens to preserve the foothill landscape of Amador and Calaveras counties. As a 501(c)3, non-profit organization, MLLT accepts conservation easements on lands, provides technical assistance and alternatives, and promotes public awareness of the importance of preserving our foothill lands.

PG&E Lands

In 2004, the California Public Utilities Commission required PG&E to perpetually conserve 140,000 of its watershed lands throughout California. The Stewardship Council was established to oversee the conservation of these watershed lands.

Locally, PG&E land within the Stanislaus River Watershed, and the Upper Mokelumne River watershed are in need of long-term conservation. The land trust has been working with the County of Tuolumne, the Tuolumne Resource Conservation District, and other stakeholders to identify the best fee title and conservation easement holders for the Kennedy Meadows property in the Stanislaus River Watershed. Once completed, the land trust will begin to work with stakeholders in the Upper Mokelumne River watershed to identify conservation options for those lands.

Land Trust News

Tax Incentive Extended

Congress recently extended—through 2009—a Federal tax incentive for conservation easement donations that has helped thousands of landowners conserve their land. The incentive raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from 30 percent of his or her income in any year to 50 percent; allows qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100 percent of their income; and extends the carry-forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for a voluntary conservation agreement from 5 to 15 years.

Proceed to Page 3 to see how Tom and Lacy Patten benefited from this program.

Grant from Sierra Nevada Conservancy

In late 2007, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy awarded the Mother Lode Land Trust a \$48,000 grant to map conservation priorities in Amador, Calaveras, and Tuolumne counties. The land trust will be working with organizations and individuals to identify the conservation values to be mapped. Potential values may include open space, agriculture, recreation, and connectivity to currently protected lands. The land trust will use the resulting maps to prioritize conservation efforts. The land trust will also share the maps with fire safe councils, recreation agencies, water districts, and others to assist in other planning efforts.

Grant from ValleyVision

Thanks to the Sacramento Valley Conservancy (SVC), the Mother Lode Land Trust recently received a \$2,500 grant from ValleyVision. Based in Sacramento, ValleyVision is a nonprofit association of people and organizations working to secure the social, environmental, and economic health of the Sacramento Region. SVC Executive Director Aimee Rutledge was recently awarded ValleyVision's Legacy of Leadership Award which included a \$5,000 donation to organization(s) of Aimee's choice. Aimee chose to split the award between the Yolo Land Trust and the Mother Lode Land Trust. Thanks Aimee!

New Conservation Easements

WinterPort Farm—Lone

Winterport Farm will remain in agricultural use forever under a recently completed deal between the landowners and the Sacramento Valley Conservancy. The Department of Conservation (DOC), through the California Farmland Conservancy Program, funded the Conservancy's purchase of an agricultural conservation easement on the property. Owned by Dan and Susan Port, the family will continue to own the property and control the agricultural operations, but the land's development potential is permanently extinguished.

Winterport Farm is located just south of highway 104, within half a mile of Lone's Sphere of Influence. It is currently being used for grazing and hay production, but has been intensively farmed in the past—producing melons, vegetables, pumpkins and Christmas trees—and is likely to be again. The landowners have encouraged educational and other tours of the property over the years.

The Winter family—Susan's ancestor's—started farming in the area in 1867. George Winter bought a 180-acre parcel in 1906. The Ranch is called Winterport Farm—a combination of Dan and Susan's names.

"We applaud the Port family for their outstanding stewardship of the land and for taking steps to keep it in agriculture," said Aimee Rutledge, executive director of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy. "Our organization was founded in 1990 on two basic principles—that our quality of life depends in part on open lands and that we must care for the land today so future generations may enjoy it tomorrow—so the completion of this project is very gratifying. We hope other landowners in the community will follow the Ports' example."

Dan Port currently serves as MLLT's President. The MLLT board chose not to hold this conservation easement due to the Port's close ties to the organization.

Patten Ranch—Volcano

In December 2007, the Mother Lode Land Trust—in partnership with landowners Tom and Lacy Patten—ensured the long term protection of 360 acres just north of the town of Volcano via a conservation easement. The Pattens approached the land trust in early 2006 due to their interest in protecting the natural values on their property. The property is home to many species of wildlife, contains several historic mining sites, and is transected by the Upper Dry Creek Watershed.

This conservation easement allows the Pattens to live and work on their land while at the same time preserving the conservation values through the implementation of sustainable management practices such as forestry improvement projects and proper grazing methods. "The land trust believes that land should be properly managed to restore and maintain healthy ecosystems while at the same time ensuring optimum production. We are glad that this conservation easement can ensure the land is managed responsibly in perpetuity," said Dan Port, the land trust's President.

The Patten Ranch easement is the fifth of its kind held by the land trust in the Volcano area.



New Funding and Conservation Opportunities for Landowners

A new funding opportunity exists for landowners in western Amador County interested in selling a conservation easement on their land. In cooperation with the Sacramento Valley Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, and the Foothill Conservancy, the Mother Lode Land Trust recently succeeded in getting the Western Amador Conceptual Area Protection Plan approved by the California Department of Fish and Game. The plan identifies land in Amador County west of Highway 49 with high conservation values and makes it easier for landowners who's land is included to receive funding for selling a conservation easement. The plan does not, however, affect landowners uninterested in selling a conservation easement. Please contact the land trust to see if you and your land could benefit.



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The Mother Lode Land Trust's mission is to help protect agricultural and rangelands, historic and scenic sites, and natural habitats.

I recognize the importance of preserving foothill lands through the Mother Lode Land Trust!

Become a member today!

Please join the Mother Lode Land Trust today in protecting the open spaces, forests, and farmlands of Amador, Calaveras, and Alpine counties. Your annual contribution of \$25 or more makes you a member of the Mother Lode Land Trust and helps to ensure that our region will be a wonderful place to live, work, visit, and recreate for all time.

_____ \$25

_____ \$50

_____ \$100

_____ \$250

_____ \$500

All donations are tax-deductible.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____