



**Easement Preserves 360 Acres in Amador County**  
*Mother Lode Land Trust works with local landowners.*

Volcano - In December, the Mother Lode Land Trust (formerly the Amador 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. Early last year the Pattens approached MLLT 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.

A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust in which the owner places permanent restrictions on the future use of their property in order to protect its agricultural, scenic, historic and/or natural character and use. An easement restricts residential or commercial development as well as other uses which would be destructive to the protected values of the land. Each easement is tailored to the specific wishes of the landowners.

This specific conservation easement allows for 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. "MLLT 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, MLLT's President.

Recent changes to the Conservation Easement tax laws through the Pension Protection Act of 2006 have made easement contributions more attractive to landowners. For example, landowners who donate a conservation easement are eligible for a tax deduction worth 50% of their adjusted gross income. Additionally, farmers and ranchers who receive more than 50% of their income off their land can receive a 100% deduction. In both of these cases, a landowner has a 15 year timeframe to utilize their deduction.

The Patten Ranch easement is the fifth of its kind held by MLLT in the Volcano area, bringing the small communities total to just under 1300 acres protected. MLLT also holds easements in Alpine, Calaveras and El Dorado Counties with about 3000 total acres protected through Conservation Easements. MLLT is currently accepting applications for easements for the 2008 year.