

THE FOOTHILL ADVOCATE

October 2016

Vol. 19 No. 3



HIGHLIGHTS



WELCOME TO NEW STAFF



BATS ON STOCKTON CREEK

UPDATE ON THE EFFECTS OF THE GOOSE FIRE ON BLACK MOUNTAIN



BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

MAMMALIAN PREDATORS ON THE MCKENZIE

GIVING THANKS FOR 20 YEARS OF LAND CONSERVATION

Like so many of us in our busy lives, we at Sierra Foothill Conservancy have to make ourselves take a moment to pause and reflect on our achievements. In this season of fall transition, as we take a moment to reflect on the year, we find that we have so much to be thankful for.

One of the deeply satisfying things for me personally about SFC's work is to look out across the lands we've conserved and know that our hard work results in permanent land conservation. And it is equally gratifying to know that there is more to do, and we will do it. These lands are precious and inspiring and unique to our sense of home. I am so thankful for this. To be afforded the opportunity to use my life to make the world a better place is a tremendous gift.

We have a very dedicated and inspired staff. I asked our staff members to reflect on what they are thankful for about our work. Their responses were inspiring:

"I'm thankful to be part of such a small yet mighty and profoundly impactful nonprofit."

"I am thankful to work on land so close to home and in a community I love with people that truly care about our mission and each other."

"I'm thankful for the opportunity to work alongside our amazing volunteers & students who help bring life to our programs & meaning to our work."

"I am thankful that my supervisors lead with integrity & thoughtfulness."

"I am thankful for the opportunity to pursue my passion for cattle and rangeland management in beautiful locations."

"I am thankful that the work I do today will be here tomorrow and forever."

"I am thankful that the work I do at SFC is bigger than me."

"I am thankful and honored that we are helping landowners fulfill their legacies."

"I am thankful that I have a great boss!"

"I am thankful I have been given an opportunity to make a difference in the local community with an organization that not only cares about the protecting land for wildlife but also for people."

SFC has grown over the last 20 years to do many great things for the land and people of our central Sierra region. We send our heartfelt thanks to our members and donors who make our success possible. In this edition of the *Foothill Advocate*, we hope that you too find inspiration in the awesome work we are doing together and the many things we have to be thankful for.

With gratitude, Bridget Fithian, Executive Director



MEMBERSHIP

Become a Member Today!

Sierra Foothill Conservancy supporters are the driving force in the work that is accomplished by the organization. Join us in our efforts toward land conservation, preservation and connecting with our communities through education and outreach.

Loyal members are the cornerstone of SFC's ability to do good work. Not only does a large membership provide financial stability, but it also gives the organization the necessary credibility for important decision makers such as local and state governments, granting agencies, other organizations in the land trust arena, and with the community at large.

The membership is an indispensable asset that includes many volunteers who give their time, energy, and expertise. Hikes, classes, field trips, and events are supported by dedicated members. Preserve crews and highway clean-up crews are member driven. Members offer their expertise in the office or with writing and editing documents, articles and other media put out by the organization. In addition, members send photos that appear on the website, in the e-Newsletter, on our photo boards at booth events, and in public presentations.

Members are investing in SFC's future success and each member is greatly appreciated. If you are not yet a member, we invite you to join our incredible team. For those who are members, we encourage you to connect with your friends and colleagues who share similar land conservation values and introduce them to Sierra Foothill Conservancy. Forward them an e-Newsletter, bring them to an event, tell them your story and why this is such an important venture. Together, we can continue to make an incredible difference for local land conservation!

VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are the **lifeblood** of the organization. Our volunteers conduct research, help with land conservation projects, lead hikes, present workshops / classes, organize / manage Open Preserve Days, man informational tables at various events, and guide elementary school field trips. We rely on volunteers for maintenance work and trail building on the preserves and we field clean-up crews on two portions of highway in Madera and Mariposa Counties. As you can imagine, our volunteers are critical to the work we do. It would be great to have you join our Team!

Volunteers make it happen!

All in all, volunteers gave over **3200 hours** of their time this past fiscal year - that is the equivalent of 1.5 employees!

SFC **truly appreciates** each volunteer and would like to express our gratitude to all those who have demonstrated their passion by investing their precious time, generous work, and boundless energy ... **Thank YOU!!**

Give the gift of SFC this season!

Present a family member, friend or colleague with a Sierra Foothill Conservancy Gift Membership.

Benefits to Membership

- Free Hikes
- Discounted Classes
- Membership Only Events
- Quarterly *Foothill Advocate*
- 10% off orders for Sierra Lands Beef

Please send names, addresses and your donation to:

A gift of an SFC Membership makes a lasting positive impact on local natural areas.

Gift Memberships start at \$50

Benefits to the Giver

- We will send a Certificate and Welcome Packet to your designated New Member for you!
- Satisfaction of sharing your value for conserving the Sierra Foothills in perpetuity

SFC, PO Box 691, Mariposa CA 95338

DONATE

Contribute now to immediate needs! Every additional contribution beyond your membership dues helps continue essential programs and is an investment in the preservation of additional acreage that support the community legacies and their way of life. The Sierra Foothills have a unique place in the history of the West and Sierra Foothill Conservancy is part of that lasting legacy.

Contribute NOW and expand your investment in SFC and your local conservation community.

Send a check:

Sierra Foothill Conservancy
PO Box 691
Mariposa CA 95338

Donate ONLINE at www.sierrafoothill.org

Sign up for **Monthly ACH Withdrawals**—just **\$20 a month is an additional \$240** towards savings natural lands, now and forever!

Donating directly from your Investment Funds

You can send stocks from your invested portfolio directly to SFC – it's quick and easy! Just contact SFC for details and we will give you the necessary information to streamline your request.

Giving from your IRA or Retirement Plan

You can save on otherwise taxable distributions from your IRA or Retirement Plan if you are 70 ½ or over and the distribution is paid directly to Sierra Foothill Conservancy. Consult your investment or tax advisor to see if you can take advantage of this unique way to donate directly to SFC.

LEGACY GIFTS—SIERRA HERITAGE CIRCLE

Because so much of our land conservation work is about ensuring that the places we save today will be protected forever, legacy gifts (also known as “planned gifts”) are indispensable to Sierra Foothill Conservancy. There is no better way to continue to make a difference for land conservation many years from now.

Your will or living trust is an important way to provide for family and friends, plan the management and disposition of your estate, and ensure a lasting legacy for the causes that have special meaning for you.

Gifts made through wills and living trusts are easy to arrange and can be changed at any time you choose, giving you maximum flexibility in your planning. You will also enjoy peace of mind knowing that your property will be put to good use when you no longer need it, but your cash flow will not be affected today.

You may choose to specify that SFC receives a specific dollar amount or asset, a percentage of your estate, a contingent bequest in case you outlive other heirs or a portion of the residue (remainder) of your estate after provisions for friends and family are paid. A residual gift is only made if there is anything that remains in your estate.

Creating or updating your estate plans calls for careful planning with the help of an estate-planning attorney. Bequest language can vary from state to state, and county to county. Thus, it is always best to use an attorney that understands local estate laws. Joining the Sierra Heritage Circle is an excellent way to Leave a Legacy. Contact us today about these opportunities at sfc@sierrafoothill.org.

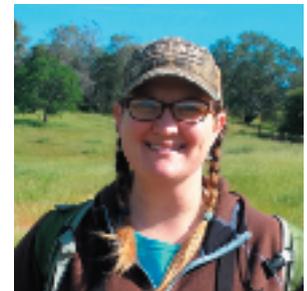
Sierra Foothill Conservancy...savings natural lands, now and forever.

**NANCY FLUHARTY, MEMBERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR**

Nancy is brand new to the SFC team. She was born and raised in Mariposa, and recently moved back after spending the last fifteen years in education. She is thrilled to call the foothills home once again and feels honored to be part of such a dynamic, meaningful organization. With the help of the SFC team, she has put together a strong development work plan for the upcoming year. The immediate focus is directed toward lapsed membership and learning our amazing new database system while working to develop specific goals for campaigning in our three main regions of interest, Mariposa, Prather/Fresno, and Madera County. Be sure to stop by the Mariposa Farmers Market, Auberry Harvest Arts Festival and other events!

MELISSA ODELL, CONSERVATION PROJECT MANAGER/BIOLOGIST

Melissa grew up in the Madera County foothills and has relocated to Mariposa. Since 2005, she has been working in the field of wildlife biology and management, ranging from private lands conservation to environmental documentation and consultation. The majority of her research and professional experience has taken place in Central Valley wetlands, grasslands and agricultural areas, as well as the Central Sierra foothills and mountain meadows. Melissa's specialties include avian and amphibian surveys, ecology, and impact analysis, rangeland and wetland management, and ArcGIS analysis and mapping. She holds a Master of Science degree in Avian Science from the University of California, Davis, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management and Conservation from Humboldt State University. In past positions, Melissa has successfully coordinated surveys and reports while maintaining positive, productive relationships with private landowners, Federal, State, and local agencies.



Melissa joined the SFC team as a Conservation Project Manager/Biologist in 2016. She is passionate about conservation of open spaces and working lands and is excited to help SFC and her local community work towards shared goals and maintain the strong local connection to the land. When not working, Melissa enjoys spending time with family, friends and her dogs, and is often found taking advantage of the local rivers and lakes, kayaking, camping and horseback riding.

**SAMI SEGALE, PROGRAM ASSISTANT**

Sami earned a master's degree from eclectic San Francisco State University. She was a college instructor for over 20 years and an avid volunteer in 4-H, local shelters, and animal rescue. As a 4-H leader for both pet and livestock projects, she discovered how a personal connection to nature can ground each of us and teach us profound lessons about a life worth living.

She is the mother of an incredible daughter who works for the East Bay Regional Park District. She and her husband have hiked most of the 65 East Bay Regional trails and are enjoying their hiking journeys through the breathtaking Sierra Foothills. Sami is excited to bring her community, educational, and administrative skills to the conservancy to further its goal of "saving natural lands now and forever" so that the vital and unique land she enjoys today may be experienced by her daughter, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and generations to come. Having moved to Mariposa in October of 2015, Sami lives on a ranch with her husband raising livestock and gardening and loving every minute of it.



CHRIS VELEZ, LAND STEWARD

Chris Velez moved to the Prather foothills with his wife Jamie Carr in 2000. They were working at a small Sonoma County specialty nursery and were introduced to organic farming at Santa Rosa Jr. College. Chris put his goal of farming on hold while working at Intermountain Nursery and discovered his love for the foothills and native plants.

In 2003, Chris started Stella Luna Farm, where he provided the foothill community with mixed vegetables through a CSA. After 13 years of growing in the hills, he left the farm with the goal of working on a much larger scale and found that opportunity with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy as a Land Steward.

2016 COMMUNITY HERO AWARD

Rosanna Ruiz, Education Program Manager, has been awarded a Fresno State University **2016 Community Hero Award**. This annual award honors dedicated individuals who work to create positive and meaningful change for others in their respective communities.



The award ceremony will be in November 2016, and I know all of our members want to join SFC's Board of Directors and Staff in congratulating Rosanna on this well-deserved award.

It's an honor and a privilege to have such high quality individuals on our staff!

SO MANY WAYS TO CONNECT WITH US IN PERSON!

Live in Mariposa or Madera County? We are still asking for Blue Oak Acorns. You can bring them to the Mariposa Office on Mondays between 8 AM and 5 PM. Details on collection and storage were sent to member households via email and in the mail. More questions? Contact Lauren at the Mariposa Office.

See our Hikes & Classes Program Guide included in this newsletter. There are so many ways to connect with the natural world and each other. Join like-minded supporters on our Preserves and Conservation Easements to learn about the natural history, the native flora and fauna, birds, mammals and other critters out on the land!

Site Tours of the Bean Creek Meadow Restoration, Clark's Valley Fuels Reduction Program, and the Black Mountain Recovery Process are being planned. Connect with Nancy Fluharty (nancy@iserrafoothill.org) for a chance to go on a site tour.

Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in. (Unknown)

Article by Rachel V. Blakey & Paul Heady

You might have heard great things about Stockton Creek Preserve. You might have heard about the gorgeous reservoir, or the vistas from the woodland-covered hills, or the great bird watching. However, one thing you probably haven't heard is that Stockton Creek Preserve also supports a bounty of amazing bat species!

I visited the preserve in mid-July this year as part of a larger research project I am doing with Blair McLaughlin at University of Idaho, collaborating with Winifred Frick (Bat Conservation International) and Paul Heady (Central Coast Bat Research Group). We are interested in how bats use water: how important is this resource for bats and does it become more important in dryer, warmer areas? We're interested in these questions because in California, the climate is likely to get warmer and dryer, with water becoming more scarce, as climate change progresses.

Why would bats be affected by climate change? Well, you may not realize it, but water is a very important resource for bats. Bats like to roost (a roost is where a bat rests during the day) near water and most bats drink regularly. Lactating bats need a lot of water to produce milk for their young and will drink 13 times more often than non-breeding bats. As well as drinking, water provides many foraging opportunities for bats to eat insects. We've all been mobbed by mosquitos and midges at dusk near standing water, and these areas present a veritable feast for bats—thanks bats!

Bats use echolocation to orient themselves and capture prey, and different bat species have evolved different types of calls for different prey and habitats. This means we can use their calls to identify different species. However, because most bats call at very high frequencies, out of the range of human hearing, we need special equipment (bat detectors) to record them. During my brief visit to the Preserve in July, I used my two bat detectors and insect light traps (pictured) to collect data about which bats were using the preserve and what insects were available to them over three nights. I sampled two sites in the Preserve, one near the reservoir and the other in blue oak woodland to the north. While we can't be 100% certain of bat species identification without capturing them, we're fairly confident that we recorded 9 bat species at the preserve and a total of > 800 bat calls! As expected, the reservoir was a hub of activity with the vast majority of calls recorded there.

A couple of the stars of the show were the Spotted bat (pictured left) and the Western mastiff bat (pictured right). The Spotted bat is striking to look at: they have giant pink ears and black and white spotty fur. The Spotted bat's favorite food is moths. These insects are a top menu item for many bats, so over time they have evolved ears specifically to listen for bat calls and avoid capture. However, the Spotted bat is one step ahead, and their low frequency calls are almost inaudible to moths who will likely only hear the Spotted bats when it is too late. Unlike most bats, which are highly social, Spotted bats usually forage alone and are considered fairly rare, which makes this record exciting!

With a wingspan over 20 inches and weighing 2 ounces or more, the Western mastiff bat is the largest bat in the US. This bat spends most of its time flying high above us, foraging on a range of insects; however, because of its very loud call at a low frequency, humans can hear it even when it's flying 1000 feet above the ground. Next time you're out and about at night, have a listen for a repetitive high pitched clicking sound. If you're lucky, you might hear a "feeding buzz," which is the sound of the rapidly increasing number of calls as the bat attacks and captures an insect. While the Western mastiff bat spends most of its time high in the sky, it does need to come down to drink, and because of its large size, it requires sizable (> 100 ft) waterbodies to drink from. This might be why we were lucky enough to record these beautiful bats at the Stockton Creek Reservoir.

The reservoir is also being used by much smaller bats, like the Yuma myotis, weighing in at around 0.1 ounces. This little bat specializes in foraging over water and spends the majority of its time flying close to the water's surface. Next time you visit a pond at night, point your flashlight across the water, and you may see them dipping in the water and dive-bombing insects. So next time you're near water in the Sierra Foothills, remember that even though it might seem peaceful, there's a barrage of bats attacking their insect prey all around you!

Species of bats recorded by call at Stockton Creek Preserve, July, 2016.

Common name	Scientific name
Yuma Myotis	Myotis yumanensis
California Myotis	Myotis californicus
Western small-footed bat	Myotis ciliolabrum
Silver-haired bat	Lasionycteris noctivagans
Big brown bat	Eptesicus fuscus
Hoary bat	Lasiurus cinereus
Spotted bat	Euderma maculatum
Mexican free-tailed bat	Tadarida brasiliensis
Western mastiff bat	Eumops perotis



Credit: Faith Walker

Credit: Dave Johnston



Credit: Joe Szwczak

Credit: Amanda Ehrenkrantz



Flowing creek at Stockton Creek Preserve



Insect light trap



Black Oak woodland



Bat detector over riprap

Turtles, bats, birds, Spadefoot Toads, and many other creatures are being counted, studied and analyzed on Sierra Foothill Conservancy's Preserves and Conservation Easements. Collaborations with UC Merced, Fresno State, Local, State and Government Agencies, Cal Naturalist Programs and interested individuals are finding that our conservation lands are a unique opportunity to expand our knowledge of the natural world. SFC would like to thank the numerous contributors to the information about our Preserves and hope you enjoy the articles and pictures they provide.

The Black Mountain Preserve, 1,450 acres in Fresno County was affected by the July 2016 “Goose Fire”

We know your deep connection to this land continues and wanted to update you on the current status of the Preserve after the fire, which broke out on July 30, 2016, and impacted 865 acres of the Black Mountain Preserve.

We found that the land burned in a characteristic mosaic: some areas are burned severely and pose erosion and other issues: others burned at a natural understory and thinning level, which should result in a healthy rejuvenation of the plant communities and an excellent wildflower year. SFC will use this opportunity to survey and monitor post-fire succession for the listed *Carpenteria* plant, which is known to be located on the Black Mountain Preserve, as well as other species. What a great potential for citizen science learning opportunities! Offers for collaborations with California Native Plant Society and graduate students from Merced and Fresno are coming in, and we hope to consolidate all these efforts into gathering important information on the effects of fire on our Preserve community.

The fire also caused widespread damage, and as a result, extensive repairs to infrastructure with significant additional staff time is needed in the coming months for restoration efforts in erosion control, vegetation rehabilitation and recovery from the impact of fire management. We estimate the recovery costs will exceed \$200,000, and although we plan to pursue funding from NRCS and other agencies involved in fire recovery, there are many unexpected consequences to the fire on our Black Mountain Preserve.

We are asking for your help in the recovery process and would like you to please consider donating to the Black Mountain Recovery Fund. Your previous support for the important conservation work that Sierra Foothill Conservancy is doing in this region made a great impact – and we know with the support of the community, we will see amazing recovery in the coming months on the Preserve we all care for so dearly.

UPDATE BY CHRIS VELEZ, SFC LAND STEWARD

It has now been two months since the Goose Fire on Black Mountain, and I have had the pleasure of seeing how quickly the land can start to recuperate from what looked to be such a devastating event on our beloved mountain.

We have actively been assessing the potential problems and solutions to what the fire has caused. Investigating erosion concerns and repairing all the burned fencing seems daunting, but with every problem, there is an opportunity. We worked together with our neighbors to help repair the fencing and discovered our ability to manage the ground with a new perspective. This unique experience gave us the potential to help reclaim and guide the land into a healthy state while eradicating problem areas. For example, we can now manage the invasive Tree of Heaven near the Kneeland Homestead; it pulls like a weed out in the garden now that it has been severely burned.

Most of all, I have been impressed with the tenacity of life as it continues to thrive. The redbuds and oaks have already begun to show their recovery. The beautiful foliage of milkweed is almost as tall as it was when the fire hit, even supporting new life in the amazing Monarch butterfly caterpillar. The foothill pines are still towering over the landscape providing coverage and protection.

As fall sets in and we look towards the following spring, I can only image the many new species of plants and wildlife that now have an opportunity to carve out a place for themselves since the fire came and opened so much new ground.



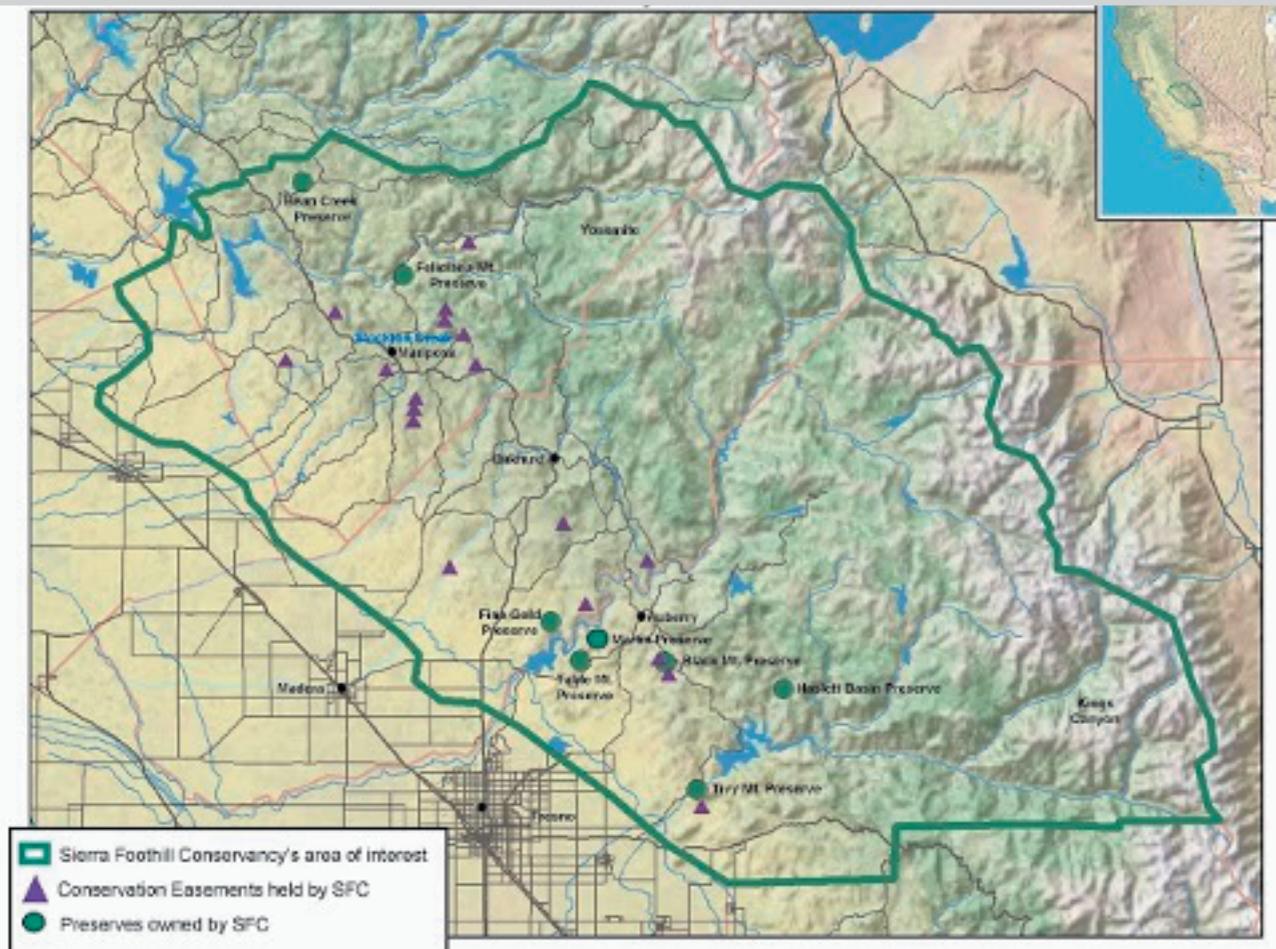
- ◆ McKenzie Table Mountain Preserve (2,960 acres)
- ◆ Mary Elizabeth Miller Preserve at Black Mountain (1,450 acres)
- ◆ Tivy Mountain Preserve (826 acres)
- ◆ Ewell Fine Gold Creek (719 acres)
- ◆ Haslett Basin Preserve (125 acres)
- ◆ Feliciana Mountain (40 acres)
- ◆ Bean Creek (81 acres)
- ◆ Ted K. Martin Wildlife Preserve (280 acres)



WITH 19,342 ACRES IN CONSERVATION EASEMENTS, SFC NOW PROTECTS OVER 28,000 ACRES!

Photo by Lauren Hubert

SIERRA FOOTHILL CONSERVANCY AREA OF INTEREST





GRASS FED

Sierra Lands Beef

Supporting **Sierra Foothill Conservancy**



80%

LESS TOTAL FAT THAN GRAIN FED



30%

LESS CHOLESTEROL THAN GRAIN FED

Grass fed beef also has a higher content of heart healthy omega-3 fatty acids than grain fed beef



Locally raised on the open spaces of the Sierra Foothills and never given hormones or antibiotics.

WHOLE BEEF

- Priced at \$7.00/lb.
- Take home weight approx. 440 lbs.

HALF BEEF

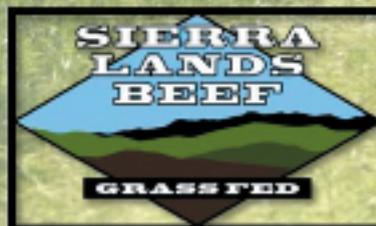
- Priced at \$7.50/lb.
- Take home weight approx. 220 lbs.

QUARTER BEEF

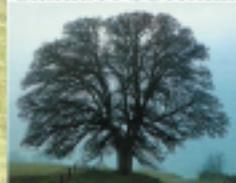
- Priced at 8.00/lb.
- Take home weight approx. 110 lbs.

TO ORDER

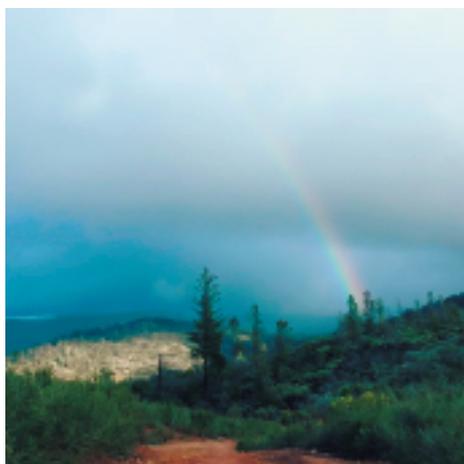
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- Visit us at www.sierralandsbeef.com
- Place your order today!



SIERRA-FOOTHILL



CONSERVANCY



Sierra Foothill Conservancy has conserved over 28,000 acres of land in 20 years. Did you know that almost 70% of those acres were conserved using conservation easements? Of the many tools available to land trusts and landowners, the conservation easement has been by far the most effective and most popular land conservation method utilized by SFC. Throughout our region, we now hold 29 conservation easements.

Landowners typically grant conservation easements because they want to protect their property from unwanted development or land use conversion. Examples of this may be a property that converts from cattle ranching to vineyards, or an open space property transitioning to a housing development. A conservation easement is 100% voluntary for the landowner, and perhaps most importantly, the landowner retains ownership or fee-title to the property.

Many of our partnering landowners have lived and worked on their land their entire lives or for multiple generations, and they are very knowledgeable about the land and how best to work with and protect it. By granting a conservation easement, landowners can assure that the property will be permanently protected, regardless of who owns the land in the future. SFC will monitor the property annually to ensure that the terms of the easement are upheld in perpetuity. SFC will hold the Conservation Easement and Stewardship Fund for each property, which provides funds that enable SFC to uphold our long-term responsibilities.

Every property is unique; therefore, every Conservation Easement is unique. Sierra Foothill Conservancy works with each landowner to create an easement specific to the property and the landowner's goals. Though a few landowners generously allow SFC to host hikes and classes on their property, there is no public access to SFC's conservation easements as they are still privately owned.

Now Permanent: Enhanced Federal Tax Incentive for Conservation Easement Donations

Congress enacted one of the most powerful conservation measures in decades: the enhanced federal tax incentive for conservation easement donations.

The permanent conservation easement tax incentive is a powerful tool that helps Americans conserve their land voluntarily.

For land trusts across the country, the permanent incentive represents vastly increased opportunities to protect the special places in their widely varied communities.

If you own land with important natural, agricultural or historic resources, donating a conservation easement can be a prudent way to both save the land you love forever and to realize significant federal tax savings. The permanent incentive increases the benefits to landowners by:

- Raising the deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement to 50%, from 30%, of his or her annual income;
- Extending the carry-forward period for a donor to take a tax deduction for a conservation agreement to 15 years from 5 years; and
- Allowing qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income, increased from 50%.

Interested in learning more? (209) 742-5556 and ask for:

Lauren Hubert, Conservation Project Manager

lauren@sierrafoothill.org

Melissa Odell, Conservation Project Manager/Biologist

melissa@sierrafoothill.org

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THIS is the land **YOUR** support of **Sierra Foothill Conservancy** protects.
28,000+ acres, with plans to preserve an additional 11,000 acres.
For over 20 years, together we are *Saving Natural Lands, Now and Forever.*

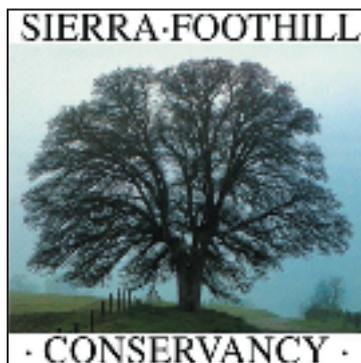
Sierra Foothill Conservancy is a non-profit public benefit corporation under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501(c)(3) and CA Revenue and Taxation Code Section 3701d. Contributions are deductible for federal income tax purposes.

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