

Conservation Plan for the Alford Family Love Creek Ranch

I. Property Summary

The Love Creek Ranch (the "Property") is owned and managed by the Alford Family. The Property consists of approximately 250 acres, zoned Rural Residential and Agricultural Preserve and enrolled in the Williamson Act. The Property consists of three adjacent, legal parcels. Ownership of the Property is as follows:

APN: 030-001-013

Is owned by David E. Alford.

APN 024-001-015; 030-001-021; 030-001-022 and 030-001-023

Are owned by David E. Alford, Wendy L. Corpening, and Robert J. Walker and Dorothy A. Walker, as Trustees of the Walker 1991 Family Trust, as tenants in common, as to an undivided 27/40 interest.

Dorothy A. Walker, David E. Alford and Wendy L. Corpening, as tenants in common, as to an undivided 3/40 interest.

And, Elissa Alford, Heidi Alford and Jonathon Alford, as tenants in common, each as to an undivided eight and one-third percent (8.333333%) interest.

Location: The Property is in Calaveras County, just outside the historic town of Arnold. It is situated in Central California along the Western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The Property lies within portions of Section 33, Township 5N, Range 15E, and Section 4, Township 4N, Range 15E, Mt Diablo Meridian. The Property is accessed from Love Creek Road. The surrounding land uses include industrial timberlands, residential subdivisions, and the Stanislaus National Forest.

Forest Resources: The forest type on the Property is Sierran Mixed Conifer with ponderosa pine, sugar pine, white fir and incense cedar as the dominant conifer species. In the Timber Element of its General Plan, the County recognizes the property as timber production lands, highly capable of supporting timber growth and harvesting. The property has been harvested since the early 1900's and has easy access to Highway 4 and a number of sawmills in the region. There is a remnant grove of old growth sugar pines still on the property.

Water resources: The Property is within the Love Creek Watershed, and contains nearly 1.5 miles of the main stem of Love Creek. Love Creek flows into the North Fork of the Stanislaus River, a proposed Wild and Scenic River, and then into Hunters Reservoir (Calaveras County Water Supply).

Fish and wildlife resources: The Love Creek Ranch is an interface of multiple habitat types including: Sierran Mixed conifer forest, wet meadow, and riparian. California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHHR) modeling shows that the Love Creek Ranch provides diverse habitat for a wide range of plants and animals, some of which are listed by the United States and the State of California as threatened, potentially threatened, of special concern, or otherwise known to be rare. Special status species known to occur, or potentially occur, on the Property include: California Spotted Owl, Northern goshawk, Pacific Fisher, Marten, Sierra Nevada red fox, California red-legged frog, Western pond turtle, Great grey owl, three bracted onion, Tuolumne Fawn Lily, Stebbin's lomatium, greater western mastiff bat, spotted bat, Townsend's western big-eared bat, mountain yellow-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, and western spade-foot toad.

Improvements: There are currently three residences on the Property, one is used as the permanent residence for David Alford and the other two are used for intermittent residency. There are two barns on the property, including a 129-year-old historic barn, as well as a system of logging roads and walking paths. All of the structures stated above will need maintenance and improvement over time to be of continuing use to the property owners.

II. Historic, Current, and Projected Uses

Historic

Calaveras County was historically home to the Miwok and Washo Native American tribes, and later in the 1800's it became home to a number of Settlers that came to the area when gold was discovered. There is evidence of both Native American and early settler history on the Love Creek Ranch. Archeological surveys have identified Native American dwelling sites and grinding stones along Love Creek. As previously mentioned, the Property contains a 129-year-old barn and cider press from 1869.

The Property has been managed for timber since the late 1800s. During that time, a majority of the timberlands in the Love Creek Watershed were high graded, feeding an upstream mill with the larger ponderosa pine and sugar pine specimens

Current

The Alford Family acquired the property over 70 years ago. Since that time, they have managed the property for recreation, vacation and residential purposes with the underlying goal of enhancing and restoring the historic/cultural resources (e.g.- barns, fences, lakes, orchards) and the environmental resources (e.g.- water quality and wildlife habitat). A California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) plan was written for the property in 1981. Over the past few years, the Alford Family has worked with the adjacent Stanislaus National Forest on a biomass project to reduce the fuel loads and fire risks on the property. The Alford Family has also been actively involved with the Arnold Rim trail project, which would enhance access and hiking opportunities between public recreation areas and landmarks and might incorporate a portion of the Love Creek Ranch.

Future/Desired Retained Rights

The owners plan to retain the rights to live on the property, to continue harvesting timber, to improve and expand the existing 3 residences, and to build an additional new residence. They also intend to retain the rights to graze livestock, engage in commercial cottage industries (e.g.- agrotourism, vegetable market, etc...), to build new structures as needed for old or new uses consistent with the Property's conservation values, and to improve the Property's recreational amenities.

III. Landowner Conservation Objectives

The Alford Family's primary objective is to preserve ecologically and economically sustainable resource-based uses of their forest and ranchland property. Within that framework, they wish to protect and enhance the following conservation values of the property:

- Natural diversity of ecosystems and wildlife habitats
- Healthy, productive forests
- Riparian areas and water resources
- Open space, recreational and scenic attributes

Specific conservation objectives include:

- Sustaining the meadow and its capacity to support indigenous wildlife and domestic livestock.
- Sustaining and restoring the native Sierran Mixed Conifer forestlands on the property for timber production, wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration.

- Maintaining a system of special management zones to protect and enhance the riparian areas, meadows and forest ecosystems

IV. Recommended Major Land Use Restrictions

The Conservation Easement (CE) for the Love Creek Ranch will include a set of restrictions on land use drafted to accomplish the owners' conservation objectives. Broadly, for purposes of the easement, PFT would suggest that the Ranch be "zoned" into four basic areas: "Development Zones" where existing and/or future residential structures are located; the "Agricultural/Meadow Zone," the "Forest Zone," and "Riparian/Special Habitat Management Zones." Location of the Development Zone(s) should give consideration to ease of access, buildability and impacts on the conservation values. Zones will be described and mapped in the easement documents.

Based on our current understanding, PFT proposes the following basic set of restrictions for review and refinement:

- A. Subdivision - Subdivision of the property and its constituent legal parcels will be prohibited.
- B. Residential Development - New residential development, in addition to the 3 existing houses, would be located in a "Development Zone" and limited to 1 new residential unit, and associated outbuildings and utilities, for a total of 4 residential units.
- C. Commercial/Industrial Uses - Commercial development and industrial uses will be limited to the following, subject to the easement terms:
 - Forest management
 - Animal husbandry and related production
 - Home-based occupations ("cottage industries") or hospitality services such as running a B&B, agrotourism services, hosting weddings, or a vegetable market, as long as these uses are confined to the Development Zone(s)
 - Use of a light industrial sawmill on the Property.
- D. Road Building - Construction of new roads and maintenance of existing road system will be allowed in conjunction with other permitted uses and fire management. Roads should be constructed and maintained so as to minimize erosion and sedimentation and

ensure proper drainage, utilizing Best Management Practices as recommended by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

- E. Protection of Watercourses - Draining, damming, filling, dredging, or otherwise altering or manipulating watercourses, springs, and wetlands for purposes other than habitat enhancement will be generally prohibited. Exceptions include maintenance or expansion of domestic and irrigation water systems; maintenance of existing ponds; maintenance or construction of existing and permitted bridges, roads and trails (subject to government permits when required and otherwise consistent with the easement).
- F. Special Habitat Management Zones (SHMZ) - Certain areas of the property will be designated SHMZs with the goal of maintaining and enhancing sensitive habitats. Likely candidates include the meadow, riparian areas, and the old growth sugar pine stand. The SHMZ's will be defined and mapped before the easement is signed.
- G. Water Rights - Water use will be dedicated for on-property purposes, including but not limited to, domestic water supply, road maintenance, animal husbandry, natural alluvial function of the creek and wildlife uses. Water rights will not be leased, sold or otherwise separated from the property.
- H. Mining - Surface or sub-surface mining will be prohibited.
- I. Dumps - The creation or use of sites for the dumping or permanent storage of waste is prohibited; provided, however, that equipment for permitted uses may be stored on the property and recycling, composting and animal waste storage are not considered dumps.
- J. Outdoor Advertising- Signs and billboards on the Property are restricted to those that are necessary to accomplish the permitted uses in the easement. They should be constructed and placed in a manner that is consistent with the conservation values in the easement and should not exceed 9 square feet in size.
- K. Recreational trails - The construction and maintenance of recreational trails (skiing, hiking, horseback riding, and biking) is permitted provided that they are built to minimize erosion and sedimentation of the Property's watercourses and to complement other conservation goals.

- L. Forest Management: Permitted in the Forest Zone when conducted under a long-term plan, meant to achieve and sustain a certain forest structure over time, described as the “Performance Goal” and within specific restrictions designed to help achieve that goal. There will be no restriction on tree cutting or timber harvest in the Development Zone(s).

The following proposal is presented to lay the framework for a more detailed discussion to refine these potential restrictions.

1. Performance Goal: The Performance Goal is a broad description of desired forest structure to achieve through long-term management, with the understanding that conditions will vary over time and across the forest. In general, the goal of forest management is to enhance, restore and maintain through time the healthy native forest of the Property, which is currently Sierran Mixed Conifer, composed primarily of ponderosa pine, sugar pine, white fir and incense cedar.
2. Specific Restrictions on Timber Harvest:
 - a. Opening Size - The use of group selection silvicultural techniques shall be permitted limiting harvest opening size to 2.5 acres.
 - b. Maximum Harvest Levels - While it is difficult to make a proposal for this without discussing the Performance Goal in more detail, to support achieving a forest with greater representation of the large, older pines that existed in pre-settlement conditions, we would recommend consideration of a harvest limit of 30-35% of board-foot inventory, averaged over a decade. Higher levels of harvest would be permitted to address catastrophes, fuels management or stand rehabilitation in the event of significant forest health issues.
 - c. Catastrophe - In the event of catastrophic wildfire, windstorm, insect infestation, or other natural catastrophe, the landowner may exceed these harvest levels or opening size restrictions, with the prior approval of PFT, provided that such proposed harvest is shown to be consistent with the Performance Goal. After a timber harvest predicated on a catastrophic event, the landowner shall reforest with native species as necessary unless natural regeneration is considered adequate to meet forest

management objectives. Natural regeneration shall be the preferred reforestation practice. The forest inventory and the forest management plan shall be update accordingly.

3. Forest management plan: PFT will require such a plan to be prepared and reviewed by PFT for consistency with the easement prior to conducting forest management activities. The plan is meant to demonstrate that the activities it describes are consistent with the terms of the easement and advance the achievement of the Performance Goal. In addition, specific timber harvest plans or other similar permits will be reviewed likewise by PFT prior to submission to government agencies.
 4. Firewood - Trees of all species can be removed on a personal basis for on-property firewood use, consistent with the Performance Goal and protection of designated habitats. These removals would not count toward the harvest limits.
- M. Grazing - Generally limit grazing to Agricultural zone, but permit elsewhere consistent with SHMZ or forest management plans. To maintain healthy meadow conditions, we suggest putting into the easement a maximum number of grazing animals and perhaps a limit on when cattle can be grazed on the Property.

V. Monitoring of Conserved Land

PFT will prepare a site-specific monitoring plan for the Ranch once the easement terms are agreed upon. In general, PFT will meet with the landowners annually to discuss activities of previous year and plans for the coming year that are relevant to the terms of the conservation easement. PFT will perform at least one site visit annually to physically monitor easement terms and may also inspect the Ranch during significant management situations relating to the property to ensure compliance with the easement. PFT may use aerial photography and other sources to monitor compliance with easement terms. PFT will give reasonable notice before entering the Ranch.