

Sierra Nevada Conservancy-Progress Report

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2008 (Proposition 84)**

Grantee Name: California Rangeland Trust

**Project Title: California Rangeland Trust Conservation Easement Grant
Request - Goodwin Ranches**

SNC Reference Number: SNC080126

Submittal Date: 2/13/2013

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Check one: 6-Month Progress Report

Final Report

A. Progress Report Summary:

The Goodwin Ranches (SNC North Central Sierra Sub-region) total 7,004 acres, with 6,862 acres earmarked for conservation easements. The Ranches are located in Plumas County on the Middle Fork of the Upper Feather River watershed. The Ranches are broken up into two sections; the “Sierra Valley Ranch” is 2,946 acres of primarily meadow, hayland and rangeland and the “Red Clover Valley Ranch” is 3,904 acres of alpine meadows, riparian areas, sage brush steppe, and east-side pine forests.

In 2008, the Rangeland Trust applied for a Strategic Opportunity Grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to obtain partial funding for the purpose of acquiring a Conservation Easement on the Goodwin Ranches. The SNC Board approved a grant for \$920,000 in December 2009 and the Grant Agreement with the SNC was executed in October 2010.

In the meantime, a request for funding was submitted to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), who approved \$1,993,500 for the Goodwin Red Clover Valley Ranch section. On April 22, 2011, we were successful closing the easement on this portion of the project using the WCB committed funds and \$526,500 of the funds committed by the SNC.

On March 2, 2012, we successfully closed the Goodwin Sierra Valley section with funding in the amount of \$2,204,500 from the WCB and the balance in the amount of \$346,500 from the SNC grant balance.

The Rangeland Trust conducted the first monitoring visit of the Goodwin Red Clover Valley section in June 2012.

B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones Achieved:

The Rangeland Trust was successful in obtaining the desired project deliverable, which was the acquisition of two permanent conservation easements on the Goodwin Ranches. During the process, the opportunity arose to partner with the WCB to secure partial easement acquisition funding and the Sierra Business Council (SBC) who financed the cost of the Appraisal Reports and updates, and a portion of the administrative costs.

C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered:

Our most pressing challenge was the delay created by the State’s General Obligation bond freeze. From the time the grant application was submitted to the SNC, two years passed before the Grant Agreement was executed. We were fortunate that the Landowner’s situation was not impacted by the delay.

D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved:

Working with the SBC as a funding partner strengthened our working arrangement.

E. Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs:

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	Budgeted SNC Dollars	Final SNC Dollars
SNC portion of Conservation Easement Acquisition Funds	\$873,000.00	\$873,000.00
Escrow Fees, Title Insurance, Closing Costs	6,000.00	13,918.00
Rangeland Trust Directly Related Administrative Costs	35,000.00	29,257.00
Rangeland Trust Performance Measures & Reporting	5,000.00	3,825.00
Rangeland Trust Hard Costs	1,000.00	0.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$920,000.00	\$920,000.00

The amount of \$526,500.00 was funded by the SNC for the Goodwin Red Clover Valley section easement acquisition and the amount of \$346,500.00 funded the conservation easement for the Goodwin Sierra Valley section.

The SNC dollars budgeted for administrative costs were originally estimated when the SNC Grant Application was submitted in September 2008. At that time we planned to process the two conservation easements at the same time, but due to funding constraints, there were two separate staggered closings. As a result, the final administrative costs

exceeded the original estimate and were paid by SBC and Landowner in addition to the \$47,000 authorized by the SNC grant. Also, the category estimates are different than the original budget and have been adjusted on the Request for Payment.

F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project?

The Performance Measures that were included in the Grant Agreement are addressed below in Section K “SNC-approved Performance Measures.”

G. Were there any other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables?

There were no other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables.

H. Next Steps:

The Rangeland Trust completed the Conservation Easement acquisitions on April 22, 2011 and March 2, 2012. The easement signs are ready to be installed and annual monitoring will commence for the Goodwin Sierra Valley section in June/July of 2013.

I. Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders:

As a result of this project, the Rangeland Trust worked with two consultants to provide administrative related services; James P. Saake prepared the Summary Appraisal Report and Geocon Consultants, Inc. prepared the Phase I ESA report. There were two public agencies, SNC and WCB, along with the SBC, who provided funding.

J. Description of Project Accomplishments:

1. Most Significant Accomplishment

The placement of the Conservation Easements on the Goodwin Ranches was accomplished as a result of this unique funding opportunity. By placing a conservation easement on their property, the owners of this family ranch are now confident that the wildlife and habitat resources on the ranch today, along with their culture and heritage will remain unchanged for future generations.

2. WOW Factor

Nothing particularly impressive happened during the project; however, as a result of the project, now that the Rangeland Trust has been successful in acquiring a conservation easement on the Goodwin Ranches, the true WOW factor is the sincere devotion of these Ranch Owners to preserving their working landscape and all the conservation values that the Ranch contributes to the general public.

3. Design and Implementation

The lesson learned is that long term planning and timing is critical to utilizing funding from a public agency. Grantees need to be aggressive in finding the few sources of funding that are available and coordinate with all funding parties. Also, the length of time it will take to receive the funding as well as when the transaction is expected to close must all be taken into consideration.

4. Indirect Impact

Now that the Rangeland Trust has been successful in conserving the Goodwin Ranches, the local community and general public will benefit for all of the following reasons: protect water quality, conserve wildlife habitat, preserve open space preserve rangeland and timberland, maintain character of rural communities, buffer public lands, maintain landscapes for tourism, and require less in public services. Because the land remains in private ownership, with the remainder of the rights intact, an easement property continues to provide economic benefits for the area in the form of jobs, economic activity and property taxes.

5. Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

Although the SNC's funding process was greatly delayed by the State's General Obligation bond freeze, there were no major conflicts for the conservation easement project.

6. Capacity-Building

The Rangeland Trust currently holds conservation easements on nearly 275,000 acres throughout California. Of that, almost 55,000 acres are located within the Sierra Nevada region that was achieved by collaborating with organizations such as the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, the Nature Conservancy, Northern Sierra Partnership and Sierra Business Council.

The financial funding provided by the SNC has allowed the Rangeland Trust to successfully acquire the two Goodwin Ranches conservation easements as well as the funding of the Maddalena Ranch project, which has also closed. In addition, the funding provided by the SNC for the Resources Assessment Project enabled the Rangeland Trust to identify potential projects that strongly supported the SNC's program goals.

The Rangeland Trust is in a position of positive growth and sustainability with nine staff employees and two contract employees. The organization was awarded accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, signifying its ability to meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The fifteen Board members are actively involved in many aspects of the organization's purposes and activities.

7. Challenges

Although the project faced a long delay as a result of the State's General Obligation bond freeze, there were no major challenges for this project.

8. Photographs

Pictures of the Ranch that was conserved are included on pages 7 - 10.

9. Post Grant Plans

Our post grant plans are described above in Section H "Next Steps".

10. Post Grant Contact

Either Nita Vail, Chief Executive Officer or Marshall Cook, Transaction Director can be contacted at 916-444-2096.

K. SNC-approved Performance Measures:

1. Number and Diversity of People Reached

The general public, Sierra Nevada residents, recreational users/tourists, conservation groups, and landowner individuals will all be positively affected to some degree by the preservation of the Ranch although this performance would be difficult to measure. The Rangeland Trust and the California Cattlemen's Association have published articles on their websites and in their newsletters announcing the conservation project and giving credit to the SNC and the other funding sources.

2. Dollar Value of Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada

The Rangeland Trust was successful securing project funds from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board to acquire a conservation easement on the Goodwin Ranches. The Sierra Business Council paid for the Appraisal Reports and updates, and a portion of the administrative costs. Matching funds sources, descriptions, and dollar amounts are as follows:

Other Funding Sources	Purpose	Amount
Wildlife Conservation Board	Conservation Easement Funds	\$4,198,000
Sierra Business Council	Appraisal Report & Update Cost	\$12,000
Sierra Business Council	Administrative Costs	\$8,000

Additionally, the cost of acquiring a conservation easement is generally less than 50% of the cost of acquiring fee title to the property and there are no on-going publicly-funded management costs. Conservation easements by their nature leverage dollars.

3. Number and Type of Jobs Created

The placement of the conservation easement will help preserve the working cattle ranch and the associated work forces, although this performance is difficult to measure.

4. Number & Value of New, Improved or Preserved Economic Activities

As a working landscape, placing a conservation easement on the Goodwin Ranches has preserved the use of the land for the grazing of livestock. As a measure of performance, the Rangeland Trust will monitor the livestock rate in conjunction with its annual monitoring by asking the landowner if there have been any significant changes to the stocking rate or grazing management since the last monitoring visit. The Rangeland Trust does not inquire as to the number of head of livestock or their value as this is considered confidential economic information.

5. Acres of Land Conserved

The goal of this grant was to partially fund a conservation easement to be held by the Rangeland Trust over 6,850 acres of the Goodwin Ranches. The conservation purpose has been to preserve the working cattle ranch landscape, natural resources including wetlands, water courses, downstream water supply, numerous significant and other wildlife species as well as the historical and cultural values of the Ranch. This performance measure was implemented upon the recordation of the Conservation Easement Deeds and will be measured as part of the Rangeland Trust annual monitoring program.

6. Linear Feet of Stream Bank Protected

As a result of acquiring the two Goodwin Ranches easements, approximately 3 miles of stream bank have been protected along the Red Clover Creek and approximately 2.5 miles of stream bank have been protected along the Little Last Chance Creek (Middle Fork Feather River).

**Goodwin Ranches
Red Clover Valley and Sierra Valley, Plumas County**



Red Clover Valley Ranch



Red Clover Valley Ranch



Red Clover Valley Ranch



Red Clover Valley Ranch



Sierra Valley Ranch



Sierra Valley Ranch



Sierra Valley Ranch



Sierra Valley Ranch