

**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:** Eastern Sierra Land Trust  
**Project title:** Cinnamon Ranch Agriculture and Resource Protection Project  
**SNC Reference Number:** SNC #387 **Submittal Date:** 12/16/2011  
**Report Preparer:** Aaron Johnson **Phone #:** (760) 873-4554

**Check one:**

**6-Month Progress Report**  
 **Final Report**

**6-Month Progress Reports** should reflect the previous six months. **Final Reports** should reflect the entire grant period.

**A. Progress Report Summary:** (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.)

Work completed during this reporting period included the completion of two conservation easements on a 602 acre organic alfalfa farm owned by Richard and Barbara Moss, known as Cinnamon Ranch. Each of the deliverables identified in the grant project schedule were completed including creating the baseline conditions report, drafting and negotiating easement terms, legal review, and easement completion and recording.

**B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones Achieved:** (Include specific information, such as public meetings held, agency participation, partnerships developed, or acres mapped, treated or restored.)

All of the deliverables for this project were completed during this Reporting Period including the primary objective of permanently preserving a 602 acre farm using conservation easements. Copies of the recorded conservation easements and the Baseline Conditions Report, which was completed for this project, are included. The Baseline Report includes maps, photographs, and a detailed written description of the property. These documents are included with this progress report in digital PDF form on the accompanying compact disk.

**C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered:** (Please describe what has worked and what hasn't; include any solutions you initiated to resolve problems. If your project is not on schedule, please explain why here.)

This project has been completed ahead of schedule. The largest challenge was the unexpected need to conduct a Phase 1 Site Environmental Assessment due to uncertainty about an old electrical transformer on the site. The completion of this report by a contractor increased costs as well as delaying the project slightly; however after laboratory testing it was determined that the transformer did not contain harmful PCB chemicals.

**D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved:** (Please describe any additional successes beyond completing scheduled tasks or meeting scheduled milestones.)

At the request of the other primary funding partner, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, this project was completed significantly faster than was initially planned. From project went from grant approval to easement recording in less than 6 months thanks to good communication and collaboration between the project partners and ESLT. After closing, we were informed that this easement project was the first project to close out of all of the projects awarded NRCS funding in the same round of grants.

**E. Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs:** (Please refer to your grant agreement to list your deliverables/budget categories and budgeted costs compared to actual costs incurred during this reporting period in the table below.)

<b>PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>Budgeted SNC Dollars</b>	<b>Actual Dollars</b>
Easement Acquisition	\$715,000.00	\$715,000.00
Staff Expenses	\$6,720.00	\$9,113.72
Mileage	\$200.00	\$126.54
Contractors/Consultants	\$6,000.00	\$7947.00
Fees	\$5,000.00	\$4528.03
Performance Measure Reporting	\$480.00	\$480.00
Administrative Fees	\$1,600.00	\$2316.98
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$735,000.00</b>	<b>\$739,512.27</b>

**Explanation:** (if needed)

The actual dollars spent on contractors/consultants exceeded the budgeted amount due to the fact that we had not planned on having a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment prepared. Two other categories exceeded the budgeted amount, Staff Expenses and Admin. The Staff Expenses category exceeded the budgeted amount due to the fact that more staff time was needed on the project due to the Phase 1 and related work. The Admin expenses were expected to exceed the budgeted amount due to the fact that ESLT agreed to cover a portion of the admin fees as part of the

applicant matching funds. The dollars exceeding the budgeted amounts in each category have been covered by ESLT and considered part of the matching funds.

**F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project?** (If so, please list the Performance Measures below and describe your progress.)

The Performance Measures for this project will be fully discussed below in the final reporting section.

**G. Were there any other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables? If so, please attach copies.** (Include digital photos, maps, media coverage of project, or other work products.)

Yes, copies of the media coverage of this project are attached. A folder of digital photographs titled "Photos" is also included at the included compact disk.

**H. Next Steps:** (Work anticipated in the next 6 months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.)

This is the final invoice/ report, no further work on this land conservation project is expected. Annual monitoring of the easements will begin in early summer 2012.

## **Please Complete this Section for FINAL Report ONLY**

### **Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders:**

(What partnerships did you initiate or strengthen as a result of this project? How did they affect the project outcome? If applicable, how did this grant increase your organization's capacity? What is your plan to sustain this increase?)

This project represents the 11<sup>th</sup> conservation easement project completed by Eastern Sierra Land Trust, and importantly it is also the 4<sup>th</sup> project to be completed in the "Working Farms and Ranches" Program Area. Due to land ownership patterns in the Eastern Sierra region with the majority of the land in public ownership, many of the remaining large parcels of private land are working agricultural lands. Agriculture is also an important part of the regional economy and identity. Therefore, working lands easements represent a one of the larger conservation opportunities in the service area of our organization. By completing important land conservation projects with well respected members of the agricultural community such as Richard and Barbara Moss, we increase awareness of the opportunities that exist for landowners who may be interested in an easement on their own lands in the future. In the ten years since ESLT was formed we have seen increasing interest in easements amongst the agricultural community, largely as a result of completing and publicizing projects such as Cinnamon Ranch.

### **Description of Project Accomplishments:**

#### **1. Most Significant Accomplishment**

Describe in one concise, well-written paragraph, the most significant accomplishment that resulted from this grant.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust's latest conservation easement project is a beautiful farm tucked under the towering White Mountains, north of Bishop. Richard Moss and his wife Barbara have preserved their organic alfalfa farm, known as Cinnamon Ranch, in the Hammil Valley. The Moss' purchased the ranch in 1970, making alfalfa hay the primary agricultural product from the ranch. These long-time landowners retain title and management of their property, while designating how their land may be used now and in the future. "Preserving a ranch like this is what a local land trust is created to do. This family contributes so much to our community, including producing food and crops with sustainable practices that benefit all of us. ESLT is excited to assist them and to help ensure that their land stays beautiful and productive forever," commented Karen Ferrell-Ingram, executive director of ESLT.

#### **2. WOW Factor**

If applicable, please describe anything that happened as a result of the project or during the project that is particularly impressive.

Not applicable. This project was completed as expected.

### **3. Design and Implementation**

When considering the design and implementation of this project, what lessons did you learn that might help other grantees implement similar work?

Due to the timeline required by NRCS, it became necessary to fast-track this project a little bit more than expected. Since we were coordinating with the landowners, their family who help operate the farm, and two separate funders it was very necessary to plan out each step of the process and hold regular meeting and check-ins with all of the partners involved. We mapped out the process from the required closing date backwards to make sure that each important step of the process was accounted for and then worked hard to stick to that schedule.

### **4. Indirect Impact**

Please describe any indirect benefits of the project such as information that has been developed as a result of the project is being used by several other organizations to improve decision-making, or a conservation easement funded by this grant that encouraged other landowners in the area to have conservation easements on their property.

Due to the fact that the conservation easement project was completed so recently, we have not yet observed many significant indirect impacts such as new landowners coming forward with interest in easements. Through the process of working on this easement with the other funding partner NRCS we have developed a closer relationship with staff at that agency and hope to develop future projects utilizing that funding source.

### **5. Collaboration and Conflict Resolution**

If you worked in collaboration or cooperation with other organizations or institutions, describe those arrangements and their importance to the project. Also, describe if you encountered conflict in the project and how you dealt with it, or if there was conflict avoided as a result of the project.

Through the process of seeking letters of support for this project we were in contact with several groups that we are not regularly in communication with such as the County Agricultural Commissioner, and the local Farm Bureau – both of which expressed support for this project and the work of ESLT.

### **6. Capacity-Building**

SNC is interested in both the capacity of your organization, as well as local and regional capacity. Please describe the overall health of your organization including areas in need of assistance. SNC is interested in the strength and involvement of your board, significant changes to your staff, size and involvement of membership. In addition, describe how your project improved capabilities of partners, or the larger community.

As is the case with most nonprofits, ESLT continues to work hard to secure funding for its work during these soft economic times and reductions in funding sources. General membership has remained healthy with good renewals levels and an active volunteer program. Board leadership is strong but focused on recruiting new blood at both the board and committee level. We have reduced some staff hours within our organization in response to the economy and are extremely careful in monitoring all operational expenses. Our service area has a population base of only 30,000 people. ESLT continues to reach out and seek new members beyond its immediate service area.

Staffing is very stable with most staff members having been with ESLT for several years. The organization is led by a strong Executive Director who has been with the organization since its inception 10 ½ years ago.

The media publicity related to this project helped increase the public's awareness of ESLT and our work towards agricultural preservation. This project will improve the capabilities of the landowners because it has provided capital that they can invest back into their innovative operation of the farm operation. When combined with the Montgomery Creek Ranch (the two properties managed by the same family) these landowners represent one of the larger alfalfa farms in the Tri-Valley region. As local landowners and participants in the local economy, these funds benefit larger community.

## **7. Challenges**

Did the project face internal or external challenges? How were they addressed? Describe each challenge and any actions that you took to address it. Was there something that SNC did or could have done to assist you? Did you have to change any of your key objectives in response to conditions "on the ground"?

Two factors that contributed to the complexity of this project were the short timeframe and Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment; both at the request of the other funding partner NRCS. The short timeframe was required in order to avoid the need and additional expense of having the property re-appraised due to the NRCS requirement that appraisals be utilized within 12 months of completion. The Phase 1 was required after the NRCS visited the property due to concerns about equipment stored on the property related to the transmission of electricity, and items in the workshop area. We were able to work with a contractor whom we were familiar with and was available on quick notice. Further investigation determined that hazardous materials were not present on the site in the electrical transformer, and the landowner cleaned up the other items that were identified in the report such as used motor oil and batteries which were being stored for disposal.

## **8. Photographs**

Grantees are strongly encouraged to submit photos, slides or digital images whenever possible. These images will be used for SNC publications such as annual reports or on the website. Please make sure you clearly identify location, activity, and your project with each submitted image. Images will be credited to the submitting organization, unless specified otherwise.

Digital photographs are included in a folder titled "Photos" on the CD accompanying this report. The photographs were taken on the Cinnamon Ranch property. Photo 1: Wheel line irrigating organic alfalfa, volcanic tablelands visible behind. Photo 2: Cinnamon Ranch property below the towering peaks of the White Mountains, organic alfalfa irrigated by a center pivot. Photo 3: View of farm from dry upland portion of the property. Photo 4: Old wagons located on the property. Photo 5: Stormy day on the farm with wheel line on organic alfalfa field. Photo 6: Alfalfa flower on property. Photo 7: Old wooden barn located on property.

## 9. Post Grant Plans

What are the post-grant plans for the project if it does not conclude with the grant?

The conservation easements have been completed and recorded. ESLT will remain involved with annual monitoring of the easements, corresponding with the landowners, and maintaining our stewardship records and reporting to funding partners.

## 10. Post Grant Contact

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**SNC-approved Performance Measures:** (Please list each Performance Measure for your Project, as identified in your Grant Agreement, and the results/outcomes.)

### 1. Number of People Reached:

- ESLT Blog: At the time that this report was written, 177 people had viewed our blog with the Cinnamon Ranch story featured:  
<http://easternsierralandlines.wordpress.com/2011/12/09/preserving-the-rural-character-and-prime-soils-of-mono-county/>
- ESLT Website: Our website has a page specifically for this project, as well as linking directly to the blog post about the project. Our website steadily averages around 500 visitors per month.  
<http://www.easternsierralandtrust.org/Pages/projectCinnamon.html>

- Electronic Newsletter: ESLT sent the Cinnamon announcement in the November e-news to 1162 people.
- ESLT Print Newsletter: ESLT printed 850 copies of the winter newsletter, the 700 copies go straight to members, and the rest are given away at events and to new members and prospects.
- Two local newspapers ran stories about the project in recent editions. The Sierra Reader which distributes 13,000 copies featured the story with a full front page article with pictures; the Inyo Reader ran the story which began on the first page in a weekday edition which reaches 4,000 subscribers.

**2. Dollar Value of Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada:**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Amount</b>
USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service, FRPP	Easement Acquisition Match Funding	\$300,000
Eastern Sierra Land Trust	Project Costs Match (Appraisal, Staff, Consultants)	\$8,512
Richard & Barbara Moss	Landowner Donation of Value	\$25,000
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$333,512</b>

**3. Number and Type of Jobs Created:**

This project ensures that agricultural employment opportunities that currently exist for the Moss/Doonan family (operators of the farm) are preserved. Working the lands of Cinnamon and Montgomery Creek Ranches provides full time employment for two people and summer employment for two additional family members who are in school the remainder of the year. The combined farm operations support the family financially.

**4. Number of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities:**

Agriculture remains an integral part of Mono County's economy and regional identity, with field crops like alfalfa contributing 40% of Mono County's agricultural income. In 2010, the most recent year that has been reported to date, 71,500 tons of alfalfa were harvested and sold in Mono County, resulting in \$9,652,600 in agricultural income.

**5. Kilowatts of Renewable Energy Production Capacity Maintained or Created:**

The easement property includes a small high-head hydroelectric generation facility originally installed in the 1930s and expanded several times since. It is currently federally licensed as a 175-kilowatt plant, with a Southern California Edison contract for excess power purchase. This generator produces an average of 421,184 kilowatt-

hours annually, which (according to the EPA reported average annual consumption) would power nearly 40 homes. This output will be maintained.

**6. Acres of Land Conserved:**

This project has resulted in the permanent protection of 602.25 acres of farmland, rangeland, and upland habitat. Specifically, this agricultural conservation easement will protect these important resources by limiting future development on the property to within a pre-designated area away from the most productive soils, prohibiting subdivision, identifying and protecting unique historical features, and ensuring that the unique water resources tied to the land remain on the property where they contribute to the agricultural productivity as well as the local flora and fauna and replenish the aquifer below.