

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy-Final 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:** The Nature Conservancy

**Project title:** Rudnick Ranch Acquisition

**SNC Reference Number:** SNC 434 **Submittal Date:** February 29, 2011

**Report Preparer:** E.J. Remson \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone #:** 626-403-9755 \_\_\_\_\_

**Check one:**

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

<p><b>6-Month Progress Reports</b> should reflect the previous six months. <b>Final Reports</b> should reflect the entire grant period.</p>
---

- A. Progress Report Summary:** The acquisition of the 14,945 acre Rudnick Ranch was completed on September 26, 2011 per the terms of the grant agreement.
- B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones Achieved:** In addition to acquisition of Rudnick Ranch a public hearing on the acquisition was held by the Wildlife Conservation Board in Sacramento. At the conclusion of the hearing the Board approved \$5,000,000 for the acquisition. In addition to SNC and WCB other funders include Caltrans, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and a loan from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.
- C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered:** The project was completed on time and generally worked well. There were some issues with funding in time to close. Two grants did not arrive in time for the closing but the funds were covered by the Packard loan.
- D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved:** The project was the last piece of a 50 mile linkage connecting the Sierra Nevada and Sierra Madre mountain ranges. The project went smoothly but no significant unanticipated results were achieved.
- 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>
Acquisition Fees	\$500,000	\$500,000
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

**Explanation:** (if needed) NA

**F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project?** We achieved all of the planned goals in implementing this project. They include permanent conservation of over 23 square miles of watershed, protection of more than six miles of Walker Basin Creek, protection 4.3 miles of Caliente Creek, conservation of a 50 mile wildlife linkage between the Sierra Nevada and Sierra Madre mountains, preservation of 15,000 acres of grazing land and maintaining it as a “working landscape” for commercial cattle ranching. These achievements will also prevent suburban development of the property thus preventing the eastward sprawl of the City of Bakersfield therefore also reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with sprawl. Since the land has several thousand feet of elevation change it will also permit the vertical movement of plants and animals that may be necessary for their survival as climate change progresses.

**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.** We are currently working on media coverage for this project. SNC is a participant in that activity. No other relevant materials were produced.

**H. Next Steps:** We will begin marketing the property, encumbered with a conservation easement, to a “conservation buyer”. We expect the buyer to continue the ranching operation per the terms of the conservation easement. If resources permit we may work to protect additional lands to make the protected portion of the linkage more robust.

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

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

The project provided an opportunity to meet and engage several public and private groups and people. Most importantly we were able to greatly leverage SNC's grant more than 22 times its investment thanks to the partners listed in "B" above. We have also engaged other conservation organizations such as the Tejon Ranch Conservancy as part of this work. The ranch is immediately adjacent to the TRC's property. Another group, Ranchers for Responsible Conservation, has also engaged TNC in conservation issues that impact the future of ranching in the area such as wind energy development.

## **Description of Project Accomplishments:**

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

The most significant accomplishment achieved by this project was the conservation of a 50 mile wildlife linkage connecting the Sierra Nevada Mountains with the South and Central Coastal regions of California. This linkage has been described as having “continental significance” and is the only viable linkage remaining between these regions.

### **2. WOW Factor**

In addition to #1 above nearly 24 square miles of open space what permanently conserved by this single project. That much land is more than half the size of the city of San Francisco.

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

We learned two key things from this project. First, protecting wildlife linkages is different from protecting large areas of habitat. Protection of a linkage requires careful planning and implementation because every “link” in the linkage is critical. With just one gap the linkage could be rendered useless thus negating the work and resources use to protect the other “links” in the chain.

The second lesson was to plan for multiple benefits when designing the linkage. In this case we planned to protect linkage properties that had variations in elevation and habitat types. This may be important as climate change impacts occur and species migrate up or down slope. We also considered refugia that may also help mitigate climate change impacts on certain species.

### **4. Indirect Impact**

The indirect impacts of this project remain to be seen. One of the most promising will be its impact on the local ranching economy. This acquisition is part of 32,000 acres of land conserved by TNC in the area over the last four years. When combined with the recent acquisition of 62,000 acres of easements over Tejon Ranch it represents 94,000 acres of land that is will remain as working ranching landscape.

Conservation of this ranchland should promote the long term sustainability of the ranching business in the area as it ensures a large demand for ranching services and products. Adjacent ranchers may not need to be concerned about the availability of important ranching support services as there will be sufficient demand to sustain them. This economic security may promote greater investment in ranching and prevent land conversion.

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

We were fortunate not to have encountered conflicts with other organizations. We did however collaborate with several groups as stated previously.

## **6. Capacity-Building**

The Nature Conservancy is a large, effective and experienced conservation organization. We are fortunate to have resources to implement large and successful conservation projects such as the Rudnick Ranch acquisition. The organization has remained healthy despite several years of poor economic conditions in the world.

Notwithstanding the above, TNC works across the globe and has more potential projects than it has resources to address. Therefore, partners like SNC that are willing to assist our conservation work are extremely important in creating success such as the Rudnick Ranch acquisition.

## **7. Challenges**

The project faced two significant challenges. We negotiated this land purchase with the seller for nearly two years before reaching an agreement that met both party's needs. Over this time funding available for conservation became scarce. By the time we had a contract to purchase the property it was clear we would need the participation of several funders to acquire the property. Applying for and coordinating the grant applications and timing of fund availability was a challenge. Ultimately we were fortunate to receive a private loan that allowed us the ability to complete the acquisition without receiving all the approved grant funds. At this time we are awaiting the receipt of \$1,000,000 in grants that will help pay off the loan.

The second challenge was time. The seller insisted on not more than a one year option period. With the need for multiple funders we knew completing the transaction in 12 months would be very difficult. In order to meet the deadline TNC asked our funding partners to complete their grant review and funding processes in much less time than is typical. Fortunately, SNC and two others came through in time so we were able to meet the deadline. We are grateful for the extra effort you made.

## **8. Photographs**

See attached photos.

## **9. Post Grant Plans**

Our post grant plans include completion of the funding of the remaining open grants and the sale of the ranch encumbered with a conservation easement so we can repay our loans. After that our primary responsibility will be to monitor the grant to ensure compliance with the terms of the easement.

## **10. Post Grant Contact**

Please contact E.J. Remson at 626-403-9755 or [eremson@tnc.org](mailto:eremson@tnc.org) at any time regarding this project or other TNC conservation work in the area.

**SNC-approved Performance Measures**

**Resources Leveraged in the Sierra Nevada:**

This project leveraged the Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant by more than 22 times. The table below shows other grant funds and a loan that were (will be) applied to this acquisition. Please note that the Caltrans and NFWF grants were not available at the time of closing on the purchase. Those grants along with proceeds from sale of the property encumbered by a conservation easement to a private party will be used to pay down loans TNC used to complete the funding.

Matching Source Funds	Description	Amount
Wildlife Conservation Board	<b>Land Acquisition Grant</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>
David & Lucile Packard Foundation	<b>Short Term Loan</b>	<b>\$5,234,750</b>
Caltrans	<b>EEMP Grant</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation	<b>Land Acquisition Grant</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$11,234,750</b>

**Acres of Land Conserved:**

This acquisition protected 14,945 acres of land. Initially the protection is in “fee” however the fee interest will eventually be sold encumbered with a conservation easement.

Conservation of the property has protected natural resources including six miles of Walker Basin Creek and 4.3 miles of Caliente Creek and nearly 24 square miles of watershed. It also represents the last key link in the 50 mile wildlife linkage that connects the transverse range with the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Conservation this land will continue its historic use as grazing land thus keeping nearly 15,000 acres as a working landscape. The conservation easement that will encumber the property when the fee interest is sold will allow and promote its use as habitat compatible cattle rangeland.

**Linear Feet of Stream Bank Protected:**

The acquisition has protected about 16 miles (86,400 linear feet) of stream bank on Walker Basin and Caliente Creeks. Nearly all of both banks of Walker Basin Creek are with the property while only the north bank of Caliente Creek was acquired. The south bank of Caliente Creek is already conserved under a conservation easement held by the Tejon Ranch Conservancy.

## Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Project Reporting Guidelines

Progress Reports are required periodically throughout the term of the Grant Agreement (Refer to Exhibit B of the Grant Agreement). These reports will allow you and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to see the degree to which the project is on track and achieving your projected outcomes. Your Progress Reports will further provide the SNC with information that will help us to explain your work to the Board Members and various other audiences. Timing of Progress Reports is specified in the Project Schedule included in Exhibit A of the Grant Agreement, but generally every 6 months until completion of the project.

A Progress Reporting Form is provided to Grantees on the SNC Website. **Six-month Progress Reports** should reflect the previous 6-month period; **Final Reports** should address each question for the entire grant period – looking at the project as a whole.

The form specifies the items you will need to report on. For the Six-Month Interim Report these include, but are not limited to: *A Progress Report Summary of work completed, Deliverables or Outcomes Completed, Challenges or Opportunities Encountered, Unanticipated Successes Achieved, Actual Costs compared to Budgeted Costs, Any Additional Relevant Materials Produced, and Next Steps.*

The Final Report will include additional information, such as: *Resources Leveraged, Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders, a Description of Project Accomplishments, and SNC Approved Performance Measures.*

Please make sure that you submit complete reports by the dates requested in your Grant Agreement.

## Photos of the Rudnick Ranch Project Site



The photo shows the landscape view from the middle of the ranch looking southwest. Blue oaks and grasslands dominate much of the property.

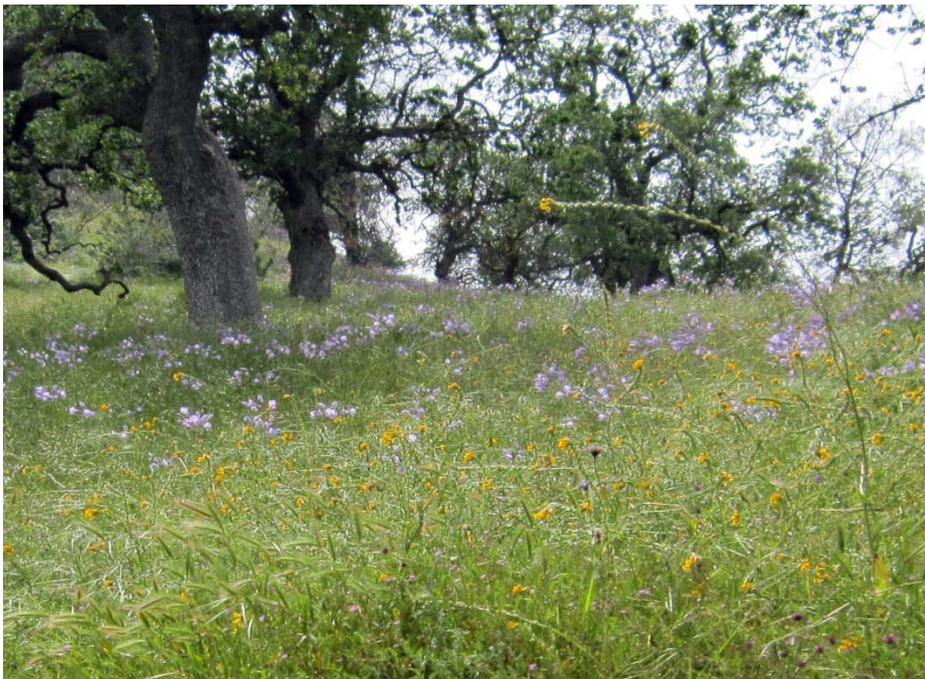


Photo of Rudnick Ranch interior looking north. Grassland, blue oaks, and grey pine are pictured.

## Photos of the Rudnick Ranch Project Site



Typical interior ranch view looking west. Grasslands, oaks, and grey pine dominate. Note the ample grass production on the property.



This photo shows late season wild flowers under blue oaks. Flowers are intermixed with native and non-native grasses.