



WONDERS

Placer Land Trust Newsletter

Autumn 2020



Laursen Bear River Preserve just got bigger!

185-acre addition protects oak woodlands, water quality, and wildlife

Placer Land Trust has some good news for you to help brighten your 2020! We have permanently protected a **185-acre addition to the Laursen Bear River Preserve** located north of Auburn, making the total preserve 546 acres. That means that with the help of our members, we have protected more than 11,900 acres of natural and agricultural lands in Placer County!

The expanded Laursen Bear River Preserve, along with other adjacent preserves, creates a block of over 8,000 contiguous acres of protected lands in the Bear River and Raccoon Creek watersheds. These expansive oak woodlands support healthy and diverse populations of plants and wildlife. The preserve provides critical habitat for animals such as mule deer, mountain lion, grey fox, hawks, and many others.

"This property was on the market and certainly would have been

developed had the original landowners, Andy and Shana Laursen, not agreed to sell it to Placer Land Trust instead," says Executive Director Jeff Darlington. "We are so grateful to Andy and Shana for working with us to protect their lands along the Bear River."

Andy and Shana were key funders of Placer Land Trust in the early 2000's to help us remain sustainable. In 2005 the couple provided funds for Placer Land Trust to purchase the Shutamul Bear River Preserve, adjacent to their land. Placer Land Trust recognized Andy and Shana for their conservation work with the 2010 Placer Conservator Award.

The funding needed to acquire the extension of the Laursen Bear River Preserve came earlier this year through two Prop 68 grants: one from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), and one from the Wildlife Conservation Board. Emigrant Trails

Greenway Trust provided the funds needed for stewardship of the property for generations to come.

In addition to the diverse wildlife, the property also has a rich human history. Andy feels the land is special because "people have lived on this land for probably thousands of years. There's been Native Americans, there's been Basque sheepherders, there's been gold miners. And we bought all this land to keep it the way it is, to keep it natural."

We plan to share this land with the public through docent-led activities starting in 2021. The property is served only by private roads, so it is not suitable for open public access and recreation at this time. However, a trail easement donated by Andy and Shana will allow future visitors to travel from the Laursen Bear River Preserve to adjacent Shutamul and Harvego Bear River Preserves.

Placer Conservator — it's a wrap!

The 2020 Placer Conservator was a wild night full of love for land conservation, wildlife, and of course, **Sallysue Stein**, the recipient of the 2020 Placer Conservator Award!

Thank you to all who helped make this event a huge success! Placer Land Trust members, both new and longtime supporters, helped raise nearly \$100,000, which will go directly to support our mission of protecting natural and agricultural lands in Placer County. And donations made to our special Fund-a-Need Auction will specifically support the protection of land that provides significant wildlife habitat.

"Although I missed seeing all of our supporters in person at this year's

virtual event, it was so inspiring and reassuring to see that even in these wild times, land protection is still a top priority for our community," says Jeff Darlington, Executive Director. "I can't wait to show you all the land you helped protect when it's safe to gather again!"

If you missed the event, visit placerlandtrust.org/PC2020 to check out the recording. It is full of great info on how Placer Land Trust puts our mission into action, and how our members are making a big impact in Placer County! Please consider sharing it with a friend to help them learn all about Placer Land Trust and our shared goals of protecting land here in our region!

Thanks again to our Placer Conservator sponsors, including these major supporters:

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Justin and Jim getting creative to monitor a preserve on the North Fork American River

Staff Transitions

It's always hard to say goodbye to a great staff member, let alone two at the same time. This is especially true for an organization like Placer Land Trust, where staff feel more like family. Land Managers **Justin Wages** and **Jim McBride** have served our mission exceptionally well for over 12 and 5 years respectively. And although we are sad to see them go, we are forever grateful for the accomplishments they are leaving with us!

Justin and Jim ensured the permanent protection and sound management of thousands of acres of natural and agricultural lands, and advanced Placer Land Trust's habitat restoration strategy utilizing larger-scale, ecology-driven techniques. In the process, they built strong partnerships with local agencies and our community at large. Thank you, Justin and Jim, for your many years of dedication and hard work – don't be strangers!

With Jim and Justin moving on to new adventures, we're excited to welcome our new Land Manager **Elias Grant** and Conservation Specialist **Anna Urias** to the team! Elias brings several years' experience working with our neighbors at Bear Yuba Land Trust, as well as some super cool skills with using drones to monitor properties. Anna previously worked in private environmental consulting in Humboldt County and researching whitebark pine in Bishop, California.



Anna and Elias at Doty Ravine Preserve

Want to leave a legacy? Join the Forever Society at placerlandtrust.org/forever-society

Sneak Peek: New preserve coming soon!

The pandemic has brought a great “slowing down” to so many aspects of our lives – but at Placer Land Trust, we’re grateful that our land protection efforts are moving along as steadily as ever, and we are on track to complete yet another exciting project by the close of this year!

Located in the Moody Ridge area of the North Fork American River watershed, this soon-to-be preserve features mature conifer and oak forest as well as spectacular views of the river canyon. The 40-acre property is adjacent to another active Placer Land Trust project site and in the vicinity of other protected lands, including USFS land, the public Green Valley Trail, and our Bailey North Fork Preserve.

This is a vital opportunity to protect a contiguous stretch of scenic ridge top land and watershed, as Moody Ridge is already under pressure of development into residential property. Our goal is that this preserve will become a nucleus for more ridgetop protection in this area!



Above: Situated on Moody Ridge, the property offers breathtaking canyon views.

Below: Mature oak forest provides abundant wildlife habitat.



Join our Community Council

Applications are open now!



If you're passionate about land conservation and turning awareness into action, Placer Land Trust's Community Council may be a great fit for you! This volunteer-led action group leverages their connections and expertise to raise awareness and build support for protecting our natural and agricultural lands.

We seek members who believe in Placer Land Trust's mission, are community leaders, and will help us to ensure all people living, working, and playing within our region have access to and enjoy protected land. Make your voice heard as an integral part of PLT! We are accepting applications for the 2021 Council through November. Members serve a minimum one-year term. Please apply if this is for you – or pass the word to someone else! To learn more, visit www.placerlandtrust.org/join-community-council.

Share your #TrailMoments!

We want to hear about what "hitting the trail" means to you! Placer Land Trust is joining Trail Moments, a collaborative project from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy that elevates new and tried-and-true trail voices across the country, and showcases how trails have benefitted us all during COVID-19. The stories and experiences gathered from trail users will be featured as part of a national outreach campaign in partnership with iHeart Radio, the Girl Scouts, and trail users nationwide.

Keep an eye out for Trail Moments signs at Canyon View Preserve and some of our other public trails, and use the #TrailMoments hashtag to share your trail adventures on social media! (And of course, don't forget to tag us @placerlandtrust!)

To learn more, and for inspiring trail stories, visit TrailMoments.org.



Recent Grants

Placer Land Trust is able to do the work we do largely thanks to the generous support of our members, and from large public and private grants that help acquire new preserves. However we also benefit from numerous smaller community-based grants we receive each year. This quarter, we were lucky to receive grants from **Target Circle, Clif Bar Family Foundation, Placer Community Foundation's Community Needs Fund, Bauer Family Foundation, and Placer County's Placer Shares** program.

These grants all helped support our general operations, allowing us to pay for the time and resources needed to protect and manage the lands in our care, and share these conservation stories with our community. Whether during a pandemic, or in more "normal" times, we are so grateful for funders like these who make our mission and vision a reality.

Southern Cross Preserve finds its “forever home” with US Forest Service

We're happy to announce that Southern Cross Preserve has been transferred to US Forest Service (USFS) ownership, where it will join the rest of the Tahoe National Forest! This beautiful preserve is located on the North Fork American River. The public Euchre Bar Trail runs through the property and provides excellent views of the river.

If you look at a map of the Tahoe National Forest, you'll notice that it looks like a “checkerboard” of public and private property. This unusual pattern has its roots in 19th-century federal land policy and the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad north of Lake Tahoe. In short, the US government surveyed and divided these forest lands into square parcels. Some of these were granted to railway companies to construct railroads, and were later bought and sold for private use.

The resulting patchwork

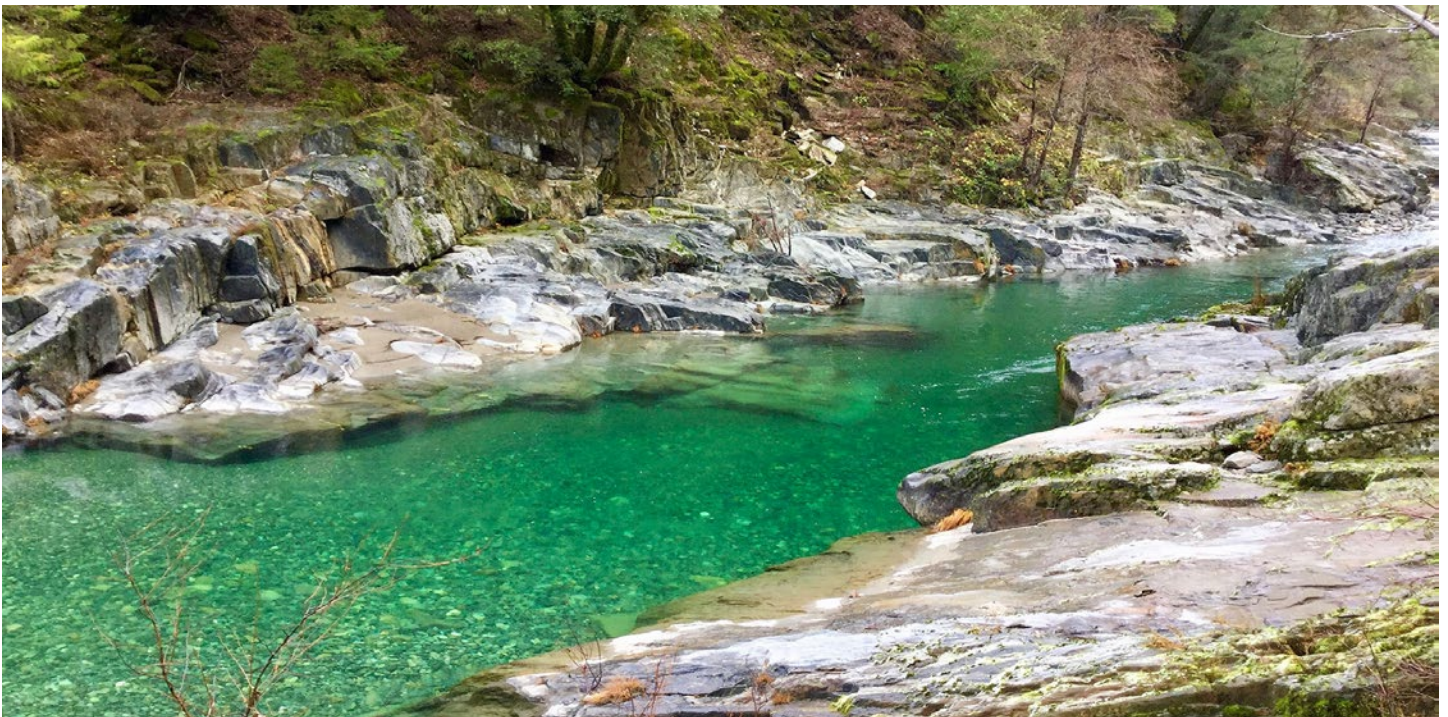
quilt of public and private lands can create challenges for land management and public recreation. By purchasing private lands within the “checkerboard” and transferring them to the USFS, we can help expand the Tahoe National Forest and fill in the gaps.

“This project was especially cool because it's a great model – we work with the landowner to secure a complex land deal, then transfer it to public ownership,” says Placer Land Trust Conservation Director Lynnette Batt. “It adds more land to the Tahoe National Forest, which is a popular and important landscape in the Sierra. And importantly, selling land to the USFS allows us to cover our costs and to ‘pay it forward’ to our future land protection projects. We are grateful to the USFS for being great partners.”

USFS purchased the property from Placer Land Trust at fair market value; proceeds from the sale will

go toward long-term stewardship for Placer Land Trust-owned properties on the North Fork, and to help protect more land on this scenic section of the American River. Placer Land Trust members helped fund the original purchase of the Southern Cross property through the 2017 Placer Conservator “Fund-a-Need” auction, together with a grant from a private foundation, the Emigrant Trails Greenway Trust, and a 50% bargain sale/ partial donation from the landowner. These generous donations will now be “paid forward,” helping us protect and steward even more land!

Now the Southern Cross property, with its historic gold mine and the Euchre Bar Trail, will officially be public land and protected as part of the Tahoe National Forest – forever. We hope to do more transfer projects to help fill in the “checkerboard” in future!



River views from the Euchre Bar Trail at Southern Cross Preserve



Laursen Bear River Preserve,
newly expanded to 546 acres!



Natural Wonders Forever

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Virtual Workshop:

Agricultural Conservation Easements for Landowners

Wednesday, December 9, 6:00pm

Are you a farmer or rancher?

Curious about how you could permanently protect your land? Interested in how a conservation easement could benefit you? Join us for this FREE virtual workshop – stay tuned for details!

- 30- to 45-minute presentation with time for questions afterward
- Targeted for agricultural landowners, but open to all Placer County landowners interested in learning more about conservation easements, how they work, the benefits, etc.
- More info and registration coming soon!

Docent-led hikes resuming soon!

We are looking forward to welcoming you back to Big Hill Preserves for **Covid-safe docent-led hikes** as soon as it is determined safe to do so! We are currently training our docents with our new safety requirements and will be limiting hikes to small groups. In the meantime, we encourage people to recreate in the area where you live, and request that people do not travel from out of the area to hike on our trails at this time. Visit www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar for details on our new Covid policies, and stay tuned for the return of docent-led hikes... they might be just down the trail!

