



WONDERS

Placer Land Trust Newsletter

Spring 2019

Conservation Chronicles: The Story of Beard Ranch

Every preserve has a story to tell.

Each project comes with its own set of characteristics and challenges – that’s part of what makes each of our lands unique! Placer Land Trust usually waits until a project is finished and finalized to share the details, but for one exciting new venture, we wanted to give you a behind-the-scenes look at the process of protecting a new preserve.

The Beard Ranch story

Beard Ranch is a 137-acre property in North Auburn, and has been in the Beard family since 1955. The ranch was operated as a dairy until 1969, and since then as a beef cattle ranch. The land features a mixture of open pasture, annual grasslands, and blue oak woodlands, supporting a diverse range of plants and wildlife in addition to the cattle. Patti Beard runs the ranch as a cow and calf operation, and she also hosts tours and educational workshops for the local agricultural community.

“Beard Ranch is a perfect example of how working landscapes benefit our rural economy, environment, and quality of life,” says Placer Land Trust



Executive Director Jeff Darlington. “Part of our mission is to work with willing landowners to keep important agricultural lands productive and sustainable for generations to come.”

Beard Ranch is adjacent to Taylor Ranch Preserve, a large property owned and protected by Placer Land Trust (PLT) and leased for decades to the Wurst family for cattle grazing. PLT’s Taylor Ranch Preserve in turn borders the county’s Hidden Falls Regional Park and additional

rangelands to the north protected by PLT. Permanently protecting Beard Ranch would extend this large block of connected protected land to almost 5,000 acres in the Raccoon Creek and Bear River watersheds.

But the future of Beard’s land and cattle operation is still far from certain.

Preventing the Last Crop

Beard Ranch is located in the unincorporated area north of Auburn,

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Calendar of Events

Friday, April 19 - Moonlight hike

Friday, April 26 - Members-only hike at Oest Ranch Lake Clementine Preserve

Thursday, May 2 - Big Day of Giving

Saturday, May 11 - Mother’s Day hike

Saturday, June 1 - National Trails Day hike

Sunday, June 2 - Kids’ hike

More info and registration at www.placerlandtrust.org/calendar

Meet the 2019 Community Council



“As our area continues to grow, it is paramount that we preserve lands for present and future generations. Placer Land Trust is a key player to ensuring open spaces are preserved for all to thrive, and I am motivated to be a team player to help foster stewardship, education, preservation and exploration of the lands PLT is entrusted with.”

– Elke Reimer,
2019 Community Council Member

Placer Land Trust created a volunteer Community Council to keep conservation at the forefront in Placer County. This dedicated group of volunteers is helping to build strong, long-term public understanding and support of our work. By leveraging their community connections, expertise, and passion for protecting land for future generations, they help promote awareness and support for PLT’s mission and conservation within the region.

While Council members have a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, expertise, and reasons to

support conservation, they are united in one goal: the permanent protection of land that provides our food and clean water, habitat for wildlife and plant species, and places to play, learn, and benefit from nature – for this generation and countless others.

Community Council members serve for one year, with applications and renewals being accepted each fall. To learn more about how to become a Community Council member, please visit our website at www.placerlandtrust.org, and click on “About Us” and “Our Team”.

2019 PLT Staff Retreat

Placer Land Trust’s staff escaped from the office and headed uphill this past February. We spent two days in Serene Lakes brainstorming, planning, and bonding. We talked a lot about the “why” of PLT—why does PLT exist, and why does each one of us choose to do the work we do? We used our answers to set some pretty aggressive goals. Our goals will drive us to protect more land and take great care of it, find more and new ways to get our community engaged on the land, raise the funds needed to put our mission into action, and strengthen our operations and governance to ensure we’re here and successful for a LOONNG time to come!

Despite all of our hard work (and a little bit of play), we all came back inspired and energized for a great (and BUSY) year ahead. We’re so grateful to PLT members, Tim & Linda Fraguglia, for sharing their cozy cabin with us and making this retreat possible!



Beard Ranch *(continued from page 1)*

which has seen rapid growth of subdivision and development over the past few decades. As a solo female rancher without heirs, Patti was concerned about who would inherit the property and what would happen to it, as no one in her family wishes to take up ranching or farming.

When agricultural land no longer has a farmer or rancher to take care of it, unless its protected by an organization like Placer Land Trust the farm or ranch eventually yields its “last crop” — houses.

Patti was familiar with PLT through the local ranching community and her many years of watching agricultural land being subdivided and developed throughout California — and some of that land protected along the way.

“I’m so happy that Placer Land Trust took the lead many years ago to preserve land in Placer County,” says Patti. “My family came here in 1955, leaving their previous ranch in Citrus Heights due to pressure of development. My ranch today is a tribute to family’s hard work — there are so many memories here.”

Finding a Win-Win

Patti and PLT had been in touch about future possibilities, so when PLT found a grant opportunity that could suit the Beard Ranch, we approached Patti about permanently protecting her land through an agricultural conservation easement. For a property like Beard Ranch, this easement allows the landowner to continue ranching and living on the land with little or no change to her cattle operation.

While many of our easements are donated, we are sometimes able to find grant funding sources that allow us to purchase them at or below fair market value.

“A project has to be a win-win-win for the landowner, for the land, and for public benefit,” says Lynnette Batt, PLT’s Conservation Director. “In addition, PLT needs to have the resources to commit to holding and protecting the easement forever. If any one of these pieces is missing, we don’t have a project.”

Projects need to hit certain milestones to get to the next step: an interested landowner, a quality project, the preliminary appraisal, financial feasibility, a full appraisal, secured funding, etc.

“Our next step with Beard Ranch is to see if the full appraisal meets expectations for PLT, Patti, and the funders,” says Lynnette. “Typically we can only pay up to the appraised value, not higher, so the appraisal is really important.”

If the appraised value is unexpectedly low, we would talk with the landowner to see if they want to proceed or hold, recognizing that grant funding may be a one-time opportunity. If the appraised value is unexpectedly high, we may revisit negotiations and financing, or put the project on hold. If the appraised value happens to fit with available funding and meets the landowner’s needs, then we can proceed with negotiating a purchase.

“My experience working with Placer Land Trust has been very positive,” says Patti. “I’ve never been pressured to make a decision, and they’ve been very clear with me on the process and expectations.”

Paying it Forward

Patti currently leases another 400 acres in Auburn and Lincoln to help support her herd and to allow for sustainable grazing practices on both irrigated and dry pasture. This approach of both owning and leasing



land for grazing is common for cattle operations in our area, but of course there are drawbacks to relying on land you don’t own. With the proceeds of the sale of the agricultural conservation easement to PLT, Patti hopes to purchase more local grazing land and increase the sustainability of her ranching business.

Permanently protecting Beard Ranch will have broader economic benefits as well, by supporting local farm worker jobs and providing local agricultural revenue. Beard Ranch provides an important source of pasture-raised beef, and Patti plans to offer farm stays and an expanded workshop and event space for the community. As a large block of open space, Beard Ranch also offers “viewsheds” — valuable expanses of scenic area that increase property values and preserve the local character of a place.

“When I’m no longer working the ranch, I would like to see it operated by a young farmer or rancher with values similar to mine,” says Patti, “and an agricultural conservation easement will ensure that can happen.”

Stay tuned for the next chapter in the story...

Ambassadors Needed!

Share your love and passion for land conservation! We have volunteer positions available on our Ambassador team. Ambassadors help bring PLT's message and work to a wider audience in the community. No prior experience is needed; we provide all the training and information you'll need. Visit placerlandtrust.org and click on "Get Involved" to learn more or sign up!



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In Your Words: PLT Member Alaine Callen

Our members share why Placer Land Trust is so important to them...



I was born in Roseville, where my mom and grandma had also grown up. When I was little, we would have Sunday dinner with my grandparents every week. Even at a young age I would often go straight into the guest bedroom and pull out the old family photos from the closet. I would sit on the bed and look at the photos

over and over. That was where I first heard the name of Peter Oest, my three-times great-grandpa. I loved imagining what it was like in the 1800s when he first came to Placer County from Germany.

My grandpa, Phil Leak, would tell us stories and take us for drives around Penryn and Loomis, where he was born, grew up and spent his childhood running freely and exploring the countryside. He took us for hikes in Roseville and Rocklin before it was developed, as it is now. All this fed my love for the area. I've taken my own kids up there and tried to tell them the stories I could remember.

It must have been an article that caught my eye when I first heard of Placer Land Trust. Conservation of the Oest property had recently

taken place. **I love supporting conservation because when land is gone, it's gone for good.** I think it's important to have land set aside to remember what it was like and to enjoy its beauty and remember that we were not the first ones here.

I support Placer Land Trust with just a small amount at a time. I think it's easy to fall into the thinking that "I can't give a lot so I won't give at all." But a small amount given through online bill-pay every paycheck is easy, and if I forget, it still gets done.

Placer Land Trust is thankful for sustaining donors like Alaine! Our recurring donors help provide a steady source of income that we can rely on to make the biggest impact. Call us to learn more or to sign up!

We want to feature your story here! Share it with us at communications@placerlandtrust.org.