



WONDERS

PLACER LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2024



Lincoln 1079 Ranch: 581 Acres in Western Placer County Protected as Farmland Forever

We are so pleased to announce that Placer Land Trust and our partners have permanently protected Lincoln 1079 Ranch! This 581-acre working organic almond orchard and rice ranch is now protected as farmland forever.

Placer Land Trust purchased and recorded an Agricultural Conservation Easement from the landowners, AKT Investments Inc. The conservation easement permanently protects the land from subdivision and development while allowing the landowners to continue their agricultural operations.

"As farmers in the Sacramento Valley, we are pleased to partner with Placer Land Trust and the State of California to ensure this property is farmed into the future," said Angelo Tsakopoulos, President and CEO of AKT Investments, Inc.

The landowners farm several thousand acres in Placer County, including rice, almonds, walnuts, and cattle. Lincoln 1079 Ranch is leased by farmers who grow organic almonds and rice on the property.

"We are excited to work with Placer Land Trust in placing the Lincoln 1079 Ranch into an agricultural

conservation easement," said representatives from Gold Leaf Farming, which manages the organic almond orchard on the property. "We believe in looking after our people and the planet to ensure that our farmland investments perform over the long term."

Placer County remains one of the fastest-growing counties in California, and the growth in and around the City of Lincoln has been particularly explosive, with hundreds of acres of farmland being converted to development every year. An agricultural conservation easement allows the landowners to realize some of the value that would have come from selling for development, while keeping their land in agricultural production.

"Our agricultural lands are very attractive from a development standpoint, but the real value of these lands is food production by local farmers and ranchers," said Placer Land Trust Executive Director Jeff Darlington. "It's great when we can provide conservation funding to local landowners who are willing to permanently protect their productive agricultural lands."

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Lincoln 1079 Ranch also includes important wildlife habitat. The easement area is adjacent to land that is already protected for the Swainson's Hawk, listed as a threatened species. The Auburn Ravine flows along one edge of the ranch, and migratory birds use the seasonally flooded rice fields along with nearby wetlands as critical feeding and breeding areas.

The majority of the funds for the Lincoln 1079 Ranch project were made available through the State of California Strategic Growth Council's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in collaboration with the Department of Conservation. SALC is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The State funds were supplemented by funding from Placer County's Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program. Placer Land Trust and the Placer Legacy program have a long history of successfully partnering to conserve thousands of acres of open space and agricultural lands to the benefit of current and future generations. The landowners also generously discounted the sales price and contributed a significant donation to Placer Land Trust to complete the project and ensure the permanent protection of the property.

The agricultural conservation easement has been recorded on title in the official records of Placer County. The conservation easement is permanent and runs with title to the land, meaning that any future landowners will be prohibited from subdividing and developing the



Above: The organic almond harvest at Lincoln 1079 Ranch; photo courtesy Gold Leaf Farming. Below: Egrets are among the many kinds of waterfowl found in the wetlands.

property, with limited exceptions supporting agricultural use. The protection of the ranch provides benefits not only to the land itself, but also to the neighbors who should enjoy seeing less sprawl and greater property values, to our community that benefits from our continued agricultural economy, and to everyone who values the beauty, bounty, and quality of life of rural Placer County.



Staff Transitions

The seasons are changing from summer to fall, and Placer Land Trust is seeing a few transitions for our team. Join us in welcoming some fresh faces and saying fond farewells to a couple of friends as they move on to new things.

In June, Laura Baker, our Assistant Director, stepped down to take an exciting new position as Director of the Executive Fellows Program at California State University, Sacramento. During her time at Placer Land Trust, Laura helped support and supervise many aspects of our work including administration, financial management, fund development, and recreation.

We also recently said farewell to Stewardship Manager Anna Urias as she moved in to a new position at PG&E as Power Generation License Coordinator. Anna led our partnership development with local Tribes to further our land protection, land management, and IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access to Land) goals. She played a vital role in pursuing stewardship and land management grant opportunities, acquiring funding for fuels reduction and restoration projects, and organizing our stewardship procedure documentation and record-keeping.

And now, we are pleased to announce that Brandy Waters is joining our team as our new Assistant Director! Brandy attended UCSB and UC Davis, where she earned her degree and commissioned as an officer through the Army ROTC program. She served as a Military Police Officer for four years before transitioning into project management while pursuing her law degree. In the wake of 9/11, she felt called to return to public service, becoming a police officer in Virginia. After three years in law enforcement, she completed her law degree at the University of Richmond, School of Law, and practiced at a small law firm.

Driven by her deep connection to Northern California, Brandy returned home to raise her four children. She worked for 7 years at LexisNexis as a Research Attorney and Professional Law Firm Consultant. Her desire to contribute meaningfully to her community led her to Placer Land Trust. We are delighted to welcome her, and look forward to benefitting from her legal expertise, project management experience, and passion for community engagement!

We are also welcoming Lance Spece as our new Land Manager! Lance was born and raised in Sacramento County and graduated from Humboldt State with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Management. He has worked with Mendocino Land Trust and as the Conservation Easement Project Manager for the Northcoast Regional Land Trust in Humboldt County, and most recently, as a Land Manager for Wildlife Heritage Foundation. We anticipate that his skills and experience will make him a valuable part of our staff.

We're looking forward to getting to know our new team members, and to diving in together on the many exciting projects ahead!



AmeriCorps Day in the Field

In early October, we held a work day with the AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) Program. The nearby McClellan base needed a one-day project for their Team Leaders to complete as part of their leadership training process. Placer Land Trust and this local AmeriCorps base have developed a fruitful relationship where we can help provide project opportunities to fill in any “gaps” that might occur in their larger primary programs.

This work day was for Team Leaders to tackle a new type of one-day project as part of their leadership training. These Leaders will then lead their own teams, each of about 11 members, all across the state of California on community and social projects.

This project took place at Kotomyan Preserve, where an area of the property needed some fuels reduction. With the team's help, we began a Shaded Fuel Break project that will be ongoing throughout the fall and winter. We focused on limbing trees up 10 feet from the ground, reducing the understory vegetation – also known as “ladder fuels” – that can raise a fire into the upper tree canopy. We will then chip and broadcast the brush debris this winter, so it can break down into the soil.

Placer Land Trust Recreation Manager Christy Claes has worked with the AmeriCorps crews over the last few years, and led the team's recent day in the field. “I find working with these crews so rewarding,” she said. “We are getting such great work done, and it helps us reach our stewardship goals. But also, these members come from all over the US – some leaving home during hurricanes and tornadoes – and they arrive eager to absorb the places and the people they are serving. They continue to be a joy to work with!”



Autumn colors at Cisco Grove Gould Park Preserve



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Thank you for joining us at Conservation Celebration Week!

Thanks to everyone who joined us for Conservation Celebration Week! We had a fantastic time gathering with our community, honoring the 2024 Placer Conservator Awardee, Steve Frisch, dancing the night away at Laursen Bear River Preserve, and raising a toast to all that we've accomplished together over the past year.

And speaking of accomplishments... thanks to all of YOU, our generous sponsors, auction item donors, auction-bidders, donors, and event-goers, we raised over \$116K to protect more land in our beautiful region! We are so grateful to be part of this generous, visionary, enthusiastic, and all-around amazing community. And we're already looking forward to celebrating with you next year!

Thanks to our Lead Sponsors...



Upcoming Hikes & Events

November 2 – "Fall Free For All"
Open Preserve Day

November 15 – Big Hill Preserve
Full "Beaver Moon" Hike

November 17 – Early Winter Bird
Stroll at Laursen Bear River Preserve

For more upcoming hikes, visit
placerlandtrust.org/calendar