



# WONDERS

PLACER LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER *Summer 2025*



## Upper Ranch Protected Forever as Agricultural Land and Wildlife Habitat

Placer Land Trust and a local family have permanently protected **Upper Ranch**, a 320-acre working ranch north of the city of Lincoln. This project follows on the successes of the Trust's recent Clover Valley and Vista Ranch land protection projects.

Ancestors of today's **Tahti, Fleming, and Bokisch families** purchased Upper Ranch in the 1800s. The land consists of high-quality grazing land with unfragmented blue oak woodlands and annual grasslands. Nearly a mile of Raccoon Creek runs through the ranch, providing a biodiverse range of wildlife habitat.

Placer Land Trust purchased an Agricultural Conservation Easement from the family at market value, permanently protecting the property while allowing the family to continue their agricultural operations and use of the property. The current family members wanted to protect the ranch from subdivision and development and pass it along intact to future generations of their family. Through the easement, the family sold the rights to build six or more homes on the property.

"Working with Placer Land Trust to preserve our land has allowed us to retain forever the pristine nature of the property, as well as a light seasonal grazing operation," said landowner **Matthew Fleming**. "This process has

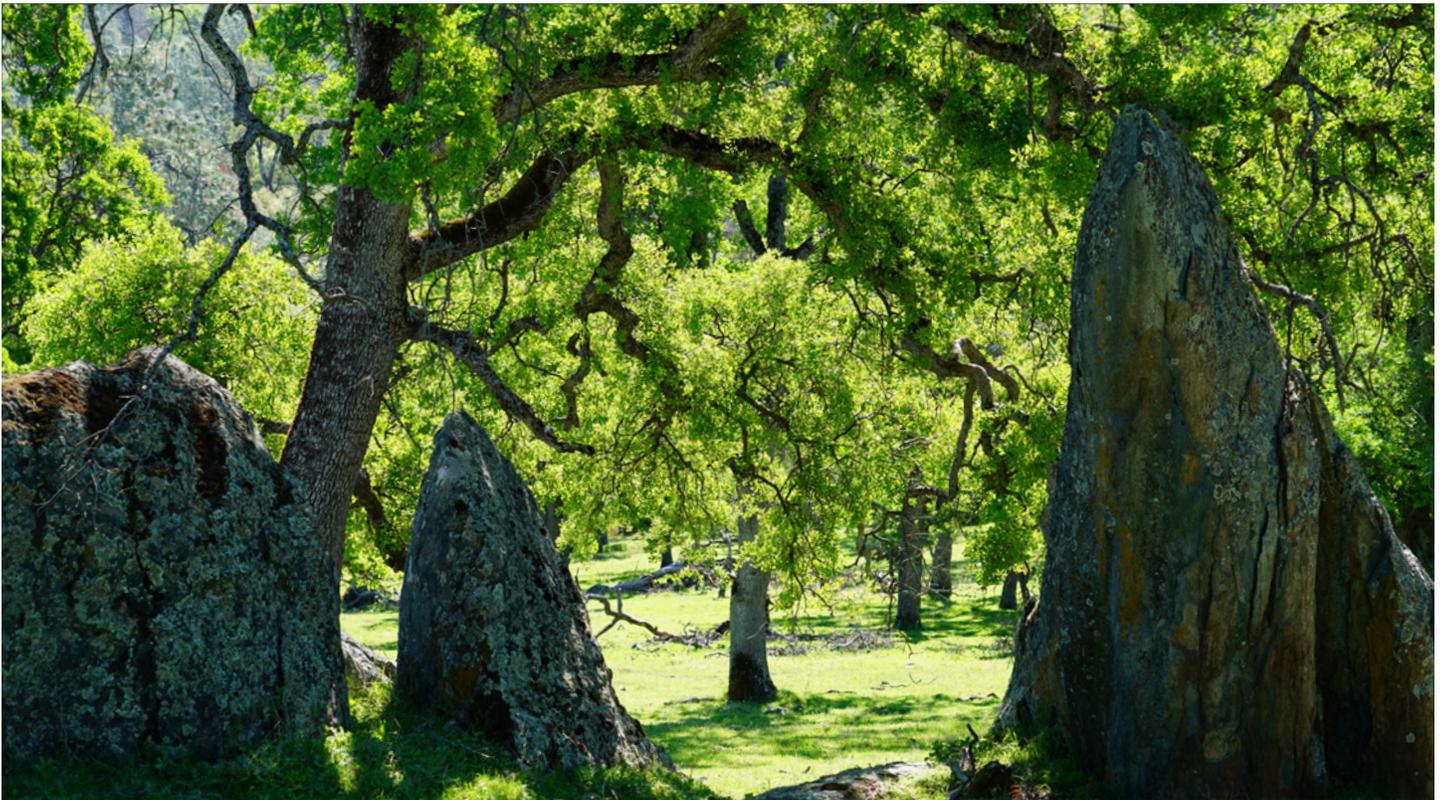
been rewarding and beneficial to all, and we would like to commend Placer Land Trust for their dedication, professionalism, and support."

Upper Ranch is adjacent to the Land Trust-protected Whiskey Run Ranch, expanding the contiguous conservation land between the Bear River and Raccoon Creek. In addition to the benefits to local sustainable agriculture, protecting this land helps preserve the creek corridor, an important wildlife migration route. When possible, Placer Land Trust works to protect large blocks of land that are connected with other protected pieces, as this provides critical habitat for larger animal species and allows wildlife to safely move between different habitat areas.

The property's oak woodlands host an incredible abundance of wildlife. Blue oak woodlands are one of the natural communities with the highest biodiversity in the state of California. Approximately 330 species of wildlife inhabit Placer County's oak woodlands. At Upper Ranch, the riparian corridor along Raccoon Creek and the creek itself provide even more habitat for aquatic and migratory wildlife.

Special-status species in the area include Swainson's hawk, Tricolor blackbird, California black rail, steelhead,

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*The property's oak woodlands host an incredible abundance of wildlife, as well as distinctive natural rock formations.*

and salmon, as well as several plants listed as rare by the California Native Plant Society. The landowners have observed a variety of wildlife on the property including bald eagles, golden eagles, various hawks, owls, hummingbirds, wood ducks, mallards, woodpeckers, turkeys, quail, deer, bobcats, foxes, and skunks.

Funds for the Upper Ranch project were made available through the 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.

Placer County remains one of the fastest-growing counties in California, and the growth of Lincoln has been particularly explosive, with hundreds or even thousands of acres of farmland being converted to development every year. Agricultural conservation easements that limit or prohibit future residential development avoid ongoing greenhouse gas emissions associated with that development, and also promote healthy land use practices that promote environmental health.

"We're thankful for the State's investment in protecting agricultural lands like Upper Ranch," says Placer Land Trust Executive Director **Jeff Darlington**. "It's great when we can bring conservation funding to our community, and partner with local landowners who are thinking ahead and protecting their agricultural lands today to benefit future generations."



*Raccoon Creek flows through the newly-protected ranch.*

# PLACER LAND TRUST CONSERVATION CELEBRATION WEEK

September 22-28, 2025

Scan for  
event info,  
tickets, and  
more!



## Announcing our 2025 Conservator of the Year: Colfax-Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe

Conservation Celebration Week is coming! This week is all about celebrating the people who make land conservation in our region possible – Placer Land Trust members, local conservation leaders, and landowners who choose to preserve their land. Together we accomplish so much!

During the week of **September 22 through 28**, we will shine a spotlight on the value of protected lands with an **online auction**, the **Placer Conservator Reception**, and **Party on the Preserve**. There will be something for everyone! Visit our website or scan the QR code above for event info.

We hope you'll join us at one or both events to help us honor the **Colfax-Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe (CTVCT)**, the recipients of the 2025 Placer Conservator Award. CTVCT is a California Tribe of (Nisenan) Maidu and Miwok people. Placer Land Trust is excited to honor them for their stewardship of land using traditional cultural practices such as prescribed burns and native plant revitalization. We are grateful for their leadership and education of Placer Land Trust staff in these practices as they continue to reacquire and care for their ancestral homelands.

Tickets sales and sponsorship opportunities are open now at [placerlandtrust.org/conservation-week/](https://placerlandtrust.org/conservation-week/)

*Top photo: Yo' Dok'im Pakan - Gerjuoy North Fork Preserve, transferred by Placer Land Trust to CTVCT's Koy'o Land Conservancy in 2022.  
Above right: A traditional roundhouse, photo courtesy CTVCT. Below right: CTVCT members at the Yo' Dok'im Pakan dedication ceremony.*





## Grant Supports Good Fire

Placer Land Trust is honored to receive a grant from **Metabolic Studio**. Grant funds will support our prescribed burns program, which reduces fuel loading in dense areas, promoting safer and healthier forest ecosystems.

Placer Land Trust has been expanding our use of fire as a land management method to successfully steward the lands in our care. We are currently planning to broadcast burn approximately 20 acres across three preserves that were recently thinned, piled and burned using CAL FIRE funding.

Broadcast burning is a critical follow-up treatment to thinning and pile burning because it removes the lighter fuels such as pine needles, leaves, and grass from the ground. Broadcast burning involves acquiring the necessary permits and creating a burn plan, as well as digging containment lines around the perimeter of the unit, running hose lays along these lines to provide pressurized water during the burn, carefully lighting the fuels, and fully extinguishing the unit after the burn is completed.

Securing funding for such treatments has proven to be challenging, so we are especially grateful to Metabolic Studio for making this project a reality for us!

## Planned Giving Workshop

**Wednesday, August 13, 11am-12pm**

**Hybrid - Placer Land Trust office and Zoom**

Join Placer Land Trust for **“Preserving Placer County with Planned Giving,”** a free presentation on how to use your estate plan to protect the natural beauty of our region for future generations. Whether you’re new to estate planning or already have a plan in place, you’ll learn helpful tools and tips to support your favorite causes, care for your family, and minimize taxes. Hosted by attorney **Ali Goff**, owner of Goff Legal, this session will empower you to create a legacy that reflects your values and ensures that Placer County’s natural and agricultural lands remain protected for years to come. For more info and registration, please visit [placerlandtrust.org/goff-2025](http://placerlandtrust.org/goff-2025).

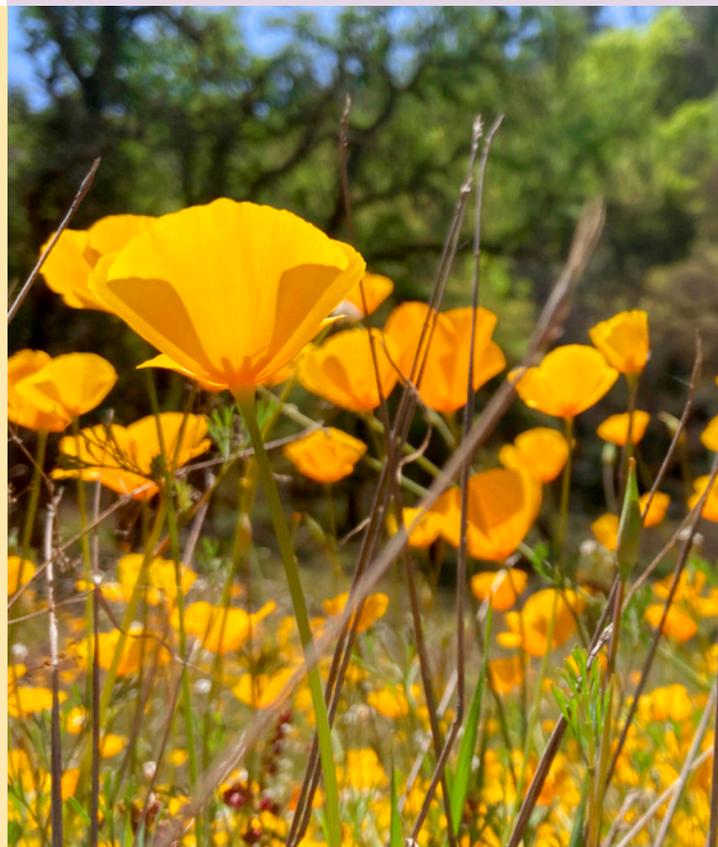


## Introducing the Poppy Club!

Caring for land is a lot like managing funds – it’s wise to do it sustainably. While Placer Land Trust appreciate gifts of all sizes and in all forms, our recurring donors provide a steady source of income that we can rely on to make the biggest impact. That’s why this growing group of members deserves a name.... introducing the **Poppy Club!**

Poppy Club members make monthly or quarterly gifts in a variety of ways—credit card donations online, recurring checks through bank payments, Donor Advised Fund gifts, distributions through IRAs, etc. This resilient and reliable support allows Placer Land Trust to plan better for the future, which is so important when we protect land in perpetuity. Every poppy is beautiful on its own, but together, our Poppy Club members create a breathtaking landscape, making a powerful impact on conservation.

**THANK YOU to all of our Poppy Club members!** And if you haven’t already, join this group of super-supporters by starting a recurring donation, and help create the promise of regeneration and resilience for years to come!



# Answering Your Questions about Conservation Easements

**Conservation Easements** protect land while allowing the landowner to keep the title and use of the land... a true “win-win” for everyone! They benefit landowners, the land itself, and our community. We often hear questions about how these easements work, so we’re sharing some of the most frequently asked ones here.

## **Q: What is a Conservation Easement, anyway?**

**A:** Donating or selling property to a land trust is not always the best approach for conservation, and it definitely isn’t the only approach! For lands that require involved management, or in cases where the landowner desires to continue to live or work on the land, Conservation Easements are an effective, time-tested tool.

A Conservation Easement is a *voluntary legal agreement* between a landowner and a land trust that forever limits a property’s uses in order to preserve its “conservation values” (which could include scenic open space, wildlife habitat, water quality, agriculture, recreation, etc.). Conservation Easements are permanent agreements, recorded by the County on the deed of title to the land. Any future landowners will also be bound by the same terms and conditions.

## **Q: How does a conservation easement work?**

Conservation Easements keep land in private ownership. When you own land, you also own many rights associated with it, such as the rights to farm, graze, harvest timber, and build structures. When you donate or sell a Conservation Easement to a land trust, you voluntarily give up some of those rights. For example, you might give up the right to build additional residences while retaining the right to grow crops. In this case, your land would be protected as farmland forever – it could not be turned into a subdivision in the future.

Designing an easement is a collaborative process between the landowner and the land trust, fully “personalized” to fit the situation. Each of Placer Land Trust’s Conservation Easements, including Agricultural Conservation Easements, is negotiated to meet the specific needs and desires of the landowner.

## **Q: What is the difference between a “regular” Conservation Easement and an Agricultural Conservation Easement?**

**A:** An **Agricultural Conservation Easement** is simply a specialized type of Conservation Easement that includes conservation of agricultural land as part of its main purpose.

## **Q: What are the tax benefits?**

**A:** There are tax benefits to donating an easement to a nonprofit land trust like PLT. A qualifying farmer or rancher may also deduct federal income tax up to 100% of their annual income each year for up to 15 years. A non-farmer or rancher may deduct federal income tax up to 50% of their annual income each year for up to five



*Natural Trading Company, protected by Conservation Easement.  
Photo: Loren Clark*

years. (If you are interested in placing an easement on your land, we strongly recommend you consult with a tax advisor about the potential tax benefits.)

## **Q: But I heard that landowners who protect their land don’t have to pay property tax...**

**A:** Sometimes people assume that a conservation easement means that the landowner does not pay taxes on their land. This is not true, but a different type of conservation program, the Williamson Act, does lower property taxes significantly.

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, is a state law that encourages the preservation of agricultural and open space land in California through property tax relief. Landowners who voluntarily enter into contracts with local governments to restrict their land to agricultural or open space uses receive lower property tax assessments. This contract is automatically renewed for a period of 10 to 20 years.

Conservation easements, on the other hand, are permanent – they run with the deed of the land and are binding on future successors, owners, or heirs. Placer Land Trust works directly with landowners to place Agricultural Conservation Easements on land. At this time, Placer County does not reduce property taxes when a conservation easement is placed on the property.

## **Q: How can I learn more about protecting my land?**

**A:** Visit our landowner info page on our website at [placerlandtrust.org/conservation-easements](http://placerlandtrust.org/conservation-easements), or contact us at [info@placerlandtrust.org](mailto:info@placerlandtrust.org) or (530) 887-9222. We welcome your questions!



A peaceful moment by Raccoon Creek at Taylor Ranch Preserve



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## Nature Quest Sparks Outdoor Joy

We are delighted by the successful launch of this year's inaugural Nature Quest! This series of events was designed to welcome everyone to Placer Land Trust's public preserves via free, hosted activities each month January through May. The outings included a games day, a wildflower stroll, forest bathing, and concluded with bring-your-own picnic by the creek at Taylor Ranch Preserve.

