Legal Dispute Finally Over 760-Acre Linden Lea Ranch & Nevada County Free Range Beef Protected

Anna and Bill Trabucco donated a conservation easement on their ranch, Linden Lea, in late 2001. The purpose of the easement was to keep the land in productive ranching and farming use forever. A short drive from downtown Grass Valley, the property had been considered for heavy development several years ago. The beautiful 760 acre property contains plentiful oak woodlands, a creek, several springs, a tree plantation and amazing vistas overlooking the South Yuba River canyon.

A conservation easement is a legal deed restriction that prohibits development on protected property in perpetuity. It is designed to protect environmental conservation values and maintain land as natural habitat, open space or, as in this case, working agricultural land forever.

In 2005, local developer Ian Garfinkel purchased a 160-acre parcel adjacent to Linden Lea Ranch. Mr. Garfinkel had a recorded access easement to his property with a route through a small subdivision on another property line. However, creating a road through this route would have been challenging and costly. So, he chose to sue the Trabuccos, the Land Trust, and Paul and Kellye Manuel, another neighbor, to gain approval to create a two-and-three-quarter-mile road through their property as an alternate route. Garfinkel had successfully challenged neighbors with two separate lawsuits previously with other parcels that he purchased in Nevada County over the years. He argued then as in this case, that his parcels were intended for his family residence. Both were settled out of court.

The essence of the case brought by Garfinkel was that old homesteader trails from the 1850s most likely crossed the Trabucco and Manuel properties, and as public byways he claimed he could use them as a more convenient way to access his parcel. Garfinkel claimed his property was landlocked by arguing that the previously established easement was too costly to develop.
President’s Message

As we are in harvest time in Nevada County, it is appropriate to celebrate the work which Nevada County Land Trust has done in partnership with our agricultural community.

In the 2003 report “A Sierra Landscape in Transition” by Peter A. Walker, it was found that many Nevada County residents support agriculture because it provides open spaces and scenic qualities that might otherwise be lost to development. It also helps to preserve a sense of rural community and a ‘slower pace of life.’ Agriculture is an important part of our county history, and many felt it was ‘unfair’ that farmers and ranchers, who generally arrived in the county earlier than most residential owners, should be displaced by residential development.

In the past, farmers and conservationists were at odds concerning farming practices and were considered antagonists. Over the years however, both groups have learned to respect the work of the other. Conservationists realize that farmers and ranchers are excellent stewards of their land for a number of reasons, not least of which is their respect for the land which is the basis of their livelihood. The agricultural community has learned that clean and sufficient water and soil protection are important to their businesses. The vast majority of land trust conservation easements are multi-use, incorporating appropriate agricultural practices to enhance the conservation of habitat and open space on protected lands.

The Land Trust has recently applied to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for a funding grant to acquire agricultural conservation easements on six separate working landscapes that total more than 600 acres of farming, grazing and timber land in western Nevada County. If completed, these acquisitions will conserve more than just land (a worthwhile goal in its own right), they will also provide jobs and create local food products to enhance our economy.

Our work with the local agricultural community has been spearheaded by Dan Macon, our director of conservation programs. Since stepping down as executive director of Nevada County Land Trust two years ago, Dan has worked diligently to enhance the cooperative conservation efforts between local land owners and the Land Trust. In support of our mission, to sustain a healthy environment and a strong local economy, Dan has been truly invaluable in his dedication to supporting working ranches and farms, and protecting natural areas and healthy rivers. His sincerity, integrity and ready smile have made him a pleasure to work with. In addition to his duties with the Land Trust, Dan has had his hands full running Flying Mule Farm in Auburn with his wife Sami and their two young girls, Lara and Emma. We regret that Dan has decided to work closer to home and has accepted a position with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Dan has created a legacy of close partnership with the agricultural community here in Nevada County which we will wholeheartedly continue. Thanks and good luck Dan, you will be missed!

Nevada County Land Trust

Mission

The Nevada County Land Trust exists to create a balance between nature and the needs of the people who make a life and a livelihood here. This is our home.

Our mission is to enrich the deep community connection with our land – today, tomorrow, and forever.

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Summer 2008
Jim Gates, You Might Know Him

Maybe you have visited with him at one of the local growers markets or heard him at a Land Trust event telling one of his humorous or thrilling yarns about his days as a cattle rancher. If you have met him you won’t soon forget him. Jim Gates is the enthusiastic and spirited owner of Nevada County Free Range Beef. His grass fed and grass finished cattle are ranched on local lands, including Linden Lea Ranch, the same property which has been the subject of a controversial lawsuit for the past several months. In celebration of the recent success of that lawsuit we would like to honor Jim for the pride he takes in his work and for the quality beef he produces right here in Nevada County.

We collected questions from community members. Here are a few things we learned about Jim Gates.

Q. Do you have more than one location you graze your cattle on, and if so, how do you rotate them and when?

A. I lease 20 places in Nevada County. I graze a minimum number of cows on each piece, which allows them to grow to their full genetic potential. They are not moved to different locations and I do not “finish them off” – they eat only Nevada County clover.

Q. What is your biggest disappointment in agriculture today?

A. The packers! They control the price of beef by keeping the money in the middle—them being the middle! We need our own local processing facility and there are big positive changes underway right now.

Q. How many hours of sleep do you get during the summer?

A. Very funny Dan! I probably get about as many as you do during lambing! Maybe four or five.

Q. I am in awe of what you do for this community. What inspires and motivates you?

A. That person would need to be someone not set in their ways, as things change around here from moment to moment. This would need to be something they really chose to do… it couldn’t work if they were looking at it as just a job. Hard work is a big part of this game.

Q. Where do you see yourself and Nevada County Free Range Beef in five years?

A. I will be here till the very day I die, producing good food for the consumer that they can afford to buy and that I can make a living on.

Q. How is your method of raising grass fed beef adapted to the environmental conditions of Nevada County?

A. This operation is 10% genetics and 90% environmental. The entire management system is completely dependent on the environment. The calving schedule is dependent on the natural feed cycle we have in Nevada County. Calves can gain a full five pounds in just one day on grass alone. A baby calf will take just one year to reach its market potential.

Grass Fed and Grass Finished

“Healthier for you & the environment”

Cattle fed on natural grasses without hormones or antibiotics, means happy, healthy cattle loaded with heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, health-promoting CLA, anti-aging anti-oxidants, and vitamins.

To locate local retailers, or to order freezer beef visit Jim Gates online.

www.NevadaCountyFreeRangeBeef.com

For additional info call 530-273-1025

Visit us online for more information at www.NevadaCountyLandTrust.org or call our office.
Support Local Agriculture
What You Can Do

In order to keep land in agriculture farms and ranches must be economically viable. In our current economy this is one of the most significant challenges small ag businesses face. There are two main things that need to happen to make economic viability possible. First, community members must commit to spending food dollars locally. They must also be willing to support efforts to preserve agricultural lands in the face of development pressures.

Buy Local
Most local grower’s markets operate through the end of October. Local food can also be found at farm stands, local grocers, restaurants and cafés.

Subscription farming (also known as Community Supported Agriculture) creates a relationship with the grower by purchasing a “share” of the harvest. To learn more about Community Supported Agriculture look for the 2008 Farm Guide, published by the Local Food Coalition. The Farm Guide can be viewed online or in hard copy at numerous locations around town, including Briar Patch, Flour Garden, B&C, Madelyn Helling Library and the Land Trust office.

Get Involved
Become involved in influencing local land use policies and development issues. Read your local paper. Vote. Attend Land Trust workshops, read Land News, and become a Land Trust member. Attend Agricultural Advisory Commission meetings (3rd Wed. of each month, 7 pm at the Rood Center).

Local Resources
Nevada County Land Trust and the Local Food Coalition are two local non-profit organizations committed to supporting small farmers meet the many challenges of sustaining economic viability.

Local Food Coalition works to support local farmers, preserve local farms and farmland, and ensure the local food supply in the western Nevada County area of California. Among the many exciting resources available for small farmers through LFC is FarmLink, offering a variety of programs and services. Programs include a land linking program matching retiring farmers and landowners with beginning and aspiring farmers, as well as the Individual Development Account (IDA) program which helps farmers save money and build equity (through matching funds) in order to buy assets for their farm or to put a down payment on land.

Though the Land Trust has a variety of programs which support local agriculture, working lands easements have the most significant impact. In accordance with the Williamson Act, the Land Trust establishes 10-year contracts with agricultural landowners. This allows the land to be assessed at its agricultural value rather than its “highest and best use” value, which can result in substantially lower property taxes. This arrangement helps farmers afford to keep land in agriculture.

These are just a few of the resources available for those interested in supporting local agriculture. For more information on these topics or to learn how you can receive email updates about local food producers, upcoming meetings and events, resources for local farmers, and so much more visit us online at www.LocalFoodCoalition.org or www.NevadaCountyLandTrust.org.

The Nevada County Land Trust commitment is to care for our open land continued p. 5
What is Community Supported Agriculture?

Since our existence is primarily dependent on farming, we cannot entrust this essential activity solely to the farming population—just 2% of Americans. As farming becomes more and more remote from the life of the average person, it becomes less and less able to provide us with clean, healthy, life giving food or a clean, healthy, life giving environment. A small minority of farmers, laden with debt and overburdened with responsibility, cannot possibly meet the needs of all the people. More and more people are coming to recognize this, and they are becoming ready to share agricultural responsibilities with the active farmers. (1)

In basic terms, Community Supported Agriculture consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community’s farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or “share-holders” of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer’s salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm’s bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land and participating directly in food production. Members also share in the risks of farming, including poor harvests due to unfavorable weather or pests. By direct sales to community members, who have provided the farmer with working capital in advance, growers receive better prices for their crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved of much of the burden of marketing. (2)

Becoming a member of one of your local CSAs is another way you and your family can support the local economy and the environment. Sign up now to receive weekly shares of some of the finest local foods our community has to offer. See list at right for local Community Supported Agriculture Farms, or consult the 2008 Farm Guide for details.


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and to retain the rural character that has been the source of our community prosperity. We believe that our quality of life is tightly connected to these precious resources. Please join us in supporting our local agriculture producers.

Francoise Bunnell

Cooking with Local Food

Restaurants & Caterers

New Moon 265-6399
Ike’s Quarter Café 265-6138
Country Rose 265-6248
Diego’s 477-1460
BriarPatch Co-op Deli 272-5333
Bank St. Café & Catering 271-7222
In The Kitchen Classes & Catering www.WendyVanWagner.com

Local Markets

BriarPatch Co-op Community Market 272-5333
Mother Truckers 292-3250
Natural Selection 272-8789
SPD Markets NC 265-4596 GV 272-5000

CSA Farms

Produce
Bluebird Farm 265-5012
Mountain Bounty Farm 470-8479 www.MountainBountyFarm.com
Riverhill Farm 263-1886 www.RiverHillFarm.com
Wildgrass Organics 844-1799 www.WildGraceOrganics.com
Mooney Flat Farm 432-6329
Garden Fare 913-2962 www.MyGardenFare.com

Grains, Edible Seeds, Milled Flours
Fulcrum Farm 274-3457
Grass Valley Grains 273-8818
Nevada County Land Trust would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all of our volunteers and staff for their contribution of time and energy in supporting our annual Stars at the Peak benefit concert in August. As a non-profit organization we depend on the commitment of those dedicated to conservation to fulfill our mission of enriching the deep community connection with our land.

To this year’s planning committee, leads, staff, and volunteers:
Marty Coleman-Hunt
Sandra Rockman
Tom Goodenough
Francoise Bunnell
Jean Gilbert
Bill Haire
Stephanie Lorenzen
Dan Macon
Wendy Johnson
Tom Taylor
John Taber
Dolores Miele
Robin Milam
David Brown
Jerianne VanDijk
Francesca Erickson
Nancy Nolan
Mike Thompson
Mark Weyman
Kevin Windrem

To our community partners:
Wildlife Rehabilitation and Release
SYRCL
The Tsi Akim Maidu Tribe
Local Food Coalition

To our sponsors:
Hansen Bros. Enterprises
KVMR
The Union
Gene West & Company
Loma Rica Ranch
Hills Flat Lumber
Coldwell Banker Grass Roots Realty
Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital
Brian Hollister
Pilot Peak Winery
Cooler Zone
Organic Valley
Perfect Foods Bar
Bakbraker Farms
Cascadian Farms
Coffee Roasters
Emerald Valley Kitchens
Follow Your Heart
Indian Springs Winery
Ito En – Tea’s Tea
The Old Barn Self Storage
Waste Management
Sierra Tile and Stone
Sierra Nevada Brewery
Indian Springs Vineyard
SPD Market
Mary Marlet of Conscious Catering
The Nut Boyz aka
Stephen Holland & Tom MacDonald

Welcome New Members
Mike and Mina Byrne
Diane Covington
Hilary Dart
Nancy and Dennis Davison
Steve DePue
Marsha Eagle
Francesca and Robert Erickson
Jan and Mark Fleming
John and Elly Gould
Greater Cement Hill
Neighborhood Association
Carl and Nancy Guastaferro
Monique Hanson
Ed and Linda Hawkins
Jerry and Pat Henderson
Sam and Jackie Higginbotham
Marv Hoffman
Gary Johnson
Leslie Kauk
Lisa Lackey
Bill Lightner
Tom Marino
Kathleen McIntire
Shelly and Lon McIntosh
Martha Meredith
Penn Valley Area Chamber of Commerce
Chet and Susan Platt
Richard and Rona Portalupi
Ed and Lucinda Porter
Mia Rice-Stone
Al and Virginia Sanchez
Gretchen Serrata
Stephen Thomas
Melony Vance
Linda Wallihan
Ross and Linda Waring
John and Jane Waskiewicz
Drs. James and Patricia Wells
Sue Wingate
Phil and Amy Wiser

Special thanks to all of our auction donors and Dan Macon, our incredible auctioneer! Thank you for making this event such a wonderful success. We truly could not have done it without you!
Trails Update

Bridge Over Wolf Creek

Construction of the Loma Rica Trail Bridge over Wolf Creek began September 25th with the excavation for the bridge abutments. Concrete abutments will be constructed to support the 30-foot span bridge to be built this fall by volunteers.

The project will be led by local contractor, Zachi Anderson. A $5,000 grant from the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District will be used to purchase some of the bridge materials. Caseywood and Hansen Brothers will contribute additional materials with the remainder of the costs to be paid by contributions made to the Nevada County Land Trust trails fund. The total cost of the bridge is estimated at about $10,000.

Extreme Treks

The 2008 Extreme Treks season got off to a good start with a group of about eight seasoned hikers enjoying a moderately difficult ramble to Fisher Lake and the grand views surrounding it. On the way down we encountered a display of black clouds, thunder, lightning, and some big rain drops, which capped off a truly wonderful day in the woods.

The second trip was far more challenging, with seven adventurous hikers climbing the Black Buttes. One radiant participant declared “the terms ‘up’ and ‘down’ have taken on a new meaning.”

As a leader it is a grand pleasure to share my special places. What made these trips especially enjoyable for me was the quality of the participants. All had a knowledge of the outdoors, experiences to share and a common care for the wild areas.

Albert Earl

“Thanks to Albert for leading us on such an incredible trek yesterday to the Black Buttes and beyond... This was an experience I will not forget! Thanks for offering this awesome adventure.”

—Nancy Lindberg
Save the Date

Trails Project: Volunteers Welcome

November 21-23

International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) Trail Crew to assist with trail construction on the Deer Creek Tribute Trail. This will be an opportunity for anyone with an interest in advanced trail building to learn professional level techniques. IMBA Trail Crew works throughout the US and Canada assisting clubs, agencies, and other trail groups in trail construction projects. Volunteers are welcome to participate. Contact Bill Haire, NCLT Trails Coordinator for details.

Nevada City Tree Guide

Self-Guided Walking Tree Tour

A self-guided walking tree tour of Nevada City is now available in a brochure. Cultivate your knowledge and appreciation of trees and their ecology with this free full-color guide featuring 42 trees throughout Nevada City. Includes two unique routes. Pick up your copy today at Nevada County Land Trust office, Nevada City Chamber of Commerce, and other select Nevada City locations.

To learn more or to join Friends of Trees of Nevada County, call 692-2324.