

SAVING THE SIERRA

Grassroots Solutions for Sustaining Rural Communities
A One-Hour Radio Documentary by jesikah maria ross & Catherine Stifter



SUSTAINING RURAL PLACES TOOL KIT

Brought to you by the Sierra Business Council in partnership with Saving the Sierra

The Conservation Easement Primer

Conservation easements have become increasingly popular tools to preserve land for future generations. Ranchers, farmers, timberland and other landowners are discovering that conservation easements can create important new sources of investment capital or deferred savings while achieving a desirable outcome for society at large.

Conservation easements enable the current owners of land to continue to use their property and sell it or pass it on to heirs.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between the owner of land and a land trust, or other qualified organization or governmental entity, that limits the uses of land in order to protect a set of identified conservation or agricultural values. The most common limitation is the retirement of development rights on portions of the subject property. The land trust or other qualified organization is responsible to ensure that the limitation is honored in the future.

Conservation easements are almost always permanent, but in some limited cases may be available for a shorter period of time. Conservation easements can either be sold or donated. Substantial tax advantages can be derived from the donation of conservation easements. When you donate or sell a conservation easement to a qualified entity you are giving up some of the rights associated with the land, which is the basis for the creation of value.

The benefits of conservation easements can be tremendous to landowners. Conservation easements create value that allows a landowner to monetize a portion of the value of a property. They can qualify as tax-deductible charitable contributions. They may also ease future estate tax payments by reducing the value of the property through monetizing the asset before succession, and allowing family lands to remain intact for future generations.

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For more information about conservation easements and how they work please review the following:

The Land Trust Alliance

www.lta.org

To find an organization working on conservation easements near you go to the link below and click on the interactive map:

www.ltanet.org/findlandtrust/

For information about conservation easements and options in California and the Sierra Nevada please see:

The California Council of Land Trusts

www.calandtrusts.org/

The Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council

www.sierracascadelandtrustcouncil.org/

For information about conservation easement options in some of the areas covered by the “Saving the Sierra” radio documentary please contact:

The Sierra Business Council

www.sbcouncil.org

The Feather River Land Trust

www.frlt.org

The Truckee Donner Land Trust

www.tdlandtrust.org

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For recent success stories please see the following:

The California Rangeland Trust, The Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Business Council collaborate on the largest easement in Sierra Valley:

www.lta.org/publicpolicy/ca_trust_story.htm

The Nature Conservancy works to protect grazing and family ranching in Teton County Wyoming:

www.choteauacantha.com/articles/2008/03/27/news/news4.txt

The Truckee Donner Land Trust uses easements to protect important recreational and green space access:

www.tdlandtrust.org/easements.html

The Trust for Public Land works to normalize the land ownership pattern in the Sierra Nevada with its groundbreaking “Checkerboard” campaign:

www.tpl.org/tier3_cd.cfm?content_item_id=19498&folder_id=2987

The Feather River Land Trust works to maintain the viability of family ranching in the northern Sierra:

www.frlt.org/oursuccesses.html

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