



**Eastern Sierra Land Trust**

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## **Preserving the Rural Character** **and Prime Soils of Mono County**

602 acre Alfalfa Farm in Hammil Valley Preserved

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Eastern Sierra Land Trust's latest conservation project is a beautiful farm tucked under the towering White Mountains, north of Bishop. Richard Moss and his wife Barbara have preserved their organic alfalfa farm, known as Cinnamon Ranch, in the Hammil Valley. The Moss' purchased the ranch in 1970, making alfalfa hay the primary agricultural product from the ranch. These long-time landowners retain title and management of their property, while designating how their land may be used now and in the future. "Preserving this ranch with a family like the Moss' is what a local land trust is created to do. This family contributes so much to our community, including producing food and crops with sustainable practices that benefit all of us. ESLT is excited to assist them and to help ensure that their land stays beautiful and productive forever," commented Karen Ferrell-Ingram, executive director of ESLT.

Cinnamon Ranch has a history of over 150 years, dating back to the first recorded landowner, William Hamil, who founded the ranch in 1864. The Sinnamon family, ranchers from northern Mono County who capitalized on the Bodie gold mining boom, acquired the land in 1900. The ranch became a significant crossroads in Mono County, with a railroad station and county road servicing the ranch.

Agriculture remains an integral part of Mono County's economy and regional identity, with field crops like alfalfa contributing 40% of Mono County's agricultural income. The property's important scenic value to residents and visitors to the Eastern Sierra provides travellers along Highway 6 with a taste of Mono County's rural character.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust works with local farmers like the Moss' to sustain financially viable agricultural operations on their land against rising pressures to subdivide. "It is important to me that this land remains open for agriculture and not be split up. That way it can always provide a home and a way of life for my family like it does now. After seeing many of the farms in Lancaster where I grew up turned to dust and subdivisions, I always knew that I wanted this land to remain available for farming," said Richard Moss.

ESLT partnered with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to preserve this prime farmland and ensure it will continue to be productive far into the future.

"We are proud to have partnered on protecting this beautiful and prosperous land in the Eastern Sierra region," said Michael Bilancione, NRCS California realty specialist. "Because the vast majority of this region is public lands, private farms and ranches are under increased pressure to be converted to non-agricultural uses. Now, the Cinnamon Ranch prime soils and wildlife habitat will be protected for generations to come."

**About the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP):** The federal FRPP is a voluntary easement program that protects productive agricultural land by purchasing conservation easements to limit conversion of farm and ranch lands to non-agricultural uses. NRCS partners with state, tribal or local governments, and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. More information is available at [www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov).

Eastern Sierra Land Trust works with willing landowners to preserve vital lands in the Eastern Sierra region for their scenic, agricultural, natural, recreational, historical, and watershed values.

Photo Caption: *ESLT helps local farmers preserve their prime farmland in the Hammil Valley.*

