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Critical Wildlife Habitat Preserved

July 11, 2011

Eastern Sierra landowner Tina Bundy Nappe and her family have permanently preserved her 60 acres for future generations. Her land, known as Willow Flat, which includes a half a mile of the Little Walker River, has now been preserved with a conservation easement, a voluntary binding land protection agreement between the landowner and Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT). The Nappe family retains ownership and management responsibilities for her land while designating how the land will be used now and in the future. "Tina's land holds beautiful river-side aspen groves, important deer migration habitat and incredible views of Mt. Emma and the high Sierra," stated Karen Ferrell-Ingram, ESLT Executive Director. "We are thrilled to help ensure that those values will remain for the enjoyment of future generations and grateful for her vision and generosity."

The Willow Flat property first came into Tina's family through her parents Gus and Jeanne Bundy who purchased this magical piece of Sierra Nevada land located a little south of the junctions of Hwy 108 (Sonora Pass) and Hwy 395 in 1974. Gus and Jeanne had arrived in the Washoe Valley in Nevada in 1941 and quickly turned to trying to carve out an existence by working their land. They supplemented their income with hunting, fishing and purchasing sheep from Carson City pioneer Dominique Laxalt (father of former Nevada Governor and Senator Paul Laxalt). Gus later became a successful photographer. His collection of over 40,000 images (including some from the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley) is now housed in the Special Collections at the University of Nevada-Reno.

The property is part of an important migration route and summer range utilized by the West Walker mule deer herd. The property provides high quality habitat for this mule deer herd which according to a recent study has seen significant declines in the last 20 years. Little Walker River is one of only three drainages identified within this critical summer range and is of great importance to the West Walker deer herd. The property is also located within the important holding area for the West Walker deer herd. Holding areas provide necessary locations for deer to linger before more suitable habitat becomes seasonally available.

Magnificent Sierra junipers, lodgepole pine forest, sagebrush scrub, wet meadow, and montane riparian habitats make up the diverse landscape at Willow Flat. These habitats may be utilized by numerous wildlife including the Northern goshawk, California wolverine and American badger, of which the latter two are listed as threatened by the State Endangered Species Act. Other species that may utilize the habitats on and around the property include sage grouse, mountain lion, mountain beaver, jackrabbit, American martin, fisher, and great grey owl. A true sanctuary for Eastern Sierra wildlife, over 44 different varieties of birds have also been observed utilizing the properties varied terrains.

"The view from our property is exquisite" says Tina. "Many friends to Willow Flat do little more than bring a book to read, meander to the stream, or amble down to the road to the end of the valley. The hiker, of course, has many options. During the summer a steady stream of hikers, campers, and riders come up the road and around the locked gate to head up the canyon, some going to Anna Lake.

By investing in the conservation easement Tina and her sister Molly are doing so in honor of their parents, in expectation that Tina's daughter Sacha Walser and her family will continue to enjoy the beauty and ambiance of the property, and in recognition that Tina has spent over 40 years as a volunteer in land trusts and other organizations defending wildlife interests. "As a conservationist, I would be remiss in not protecting those same values on property that I now own" says Tina.

"It is with gratitude that Molly and I thank the Eastern Sierra Land Trust staff and its Board of Directors for creating ESLT and for their willingness to accept Willow Flat as an easement project and working patiently with us for now almost three years. An unexpected number of issues have arisen over those years bringing on much delay. But finally, as a result of ESLT's inexhaustible patience, a coming to terms on all issues has led to the signatures on this agreement."

"Our family has been blessed in that we were able to obtain this property, plan to continue to enjoy it and also provide the best protection we can for its natural values. In this process, we are grateful that ESLT exists and has been willing to work with us."



Magnificent Sierra Junipers



Willow Flat



Little Walker