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Breaking News: Historic Sinnamon Meadows Property now Permanently Protected by ESLT

1,240 Acres of Ranch Land and Important Wildlife Habitat Preserved Forever

Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) has achieved another success in its efforts to preserve the Eastern Sierra’s cherished landscapes. ESLT is thrilled to announce the permanent protection of Sinnamon Meadows, a stunning expanse of historic ranchland in northern Mono County. The 1,240-acre property’s working lands, extensive wetlands, natural springs, and vital animal habitat are now protected forever with an agricultural conservation easement held by ESLT. Thanks to the foresight of the property’s landowners, the efforts of ESLT, and the assistance of important funding partners, Sinnamon Meadows’ spectacular, High Sierra working ranch lands will continue to inspire generations to come.

At the base of Dunderberg Peak just south of Bridgeport, Sinnamon Meadows has been a high priority for ESLT and agency partners for several years. This is due to its historic agricultural value and the critical wildlife habitat it provides. Almost entirely surrounded by public lands, this unique property includes mountain meadows, aspen groves, coniferous forest, springs, and significant reaches of two creeks. “Sinnamon Meadows is simply a spectacular and special place. To know that people living 100 years from now will be able to enjoy these same vistas as you and I can admire today – that’s what really makes our success here meaningful,” commented ESLT Executive Director, Kay Ogden.

“My children are 4th generation cattle ranchers, and keeping our family and our land in the ranching business is very important to me,” said Bryan Masini, current property owner of Sinnamon Meadows. In 2012, Mr. Masini and his business partner approached ESLT to learn more about how they could permanently protect their land’s natural qualities, while retaining the ability to use the property for grazing as it has been for more than a century. “With the completion of this conservation easement with ESLT, we are excited that we will be able to continue to work our land for many years to come,” he added. “The experience and professional manner with which ESLT staff completed this complex project has continuously impressed my partner and me.”

Agricultural conservation easements on working farms and ranches such as Sinnamon Meadows provide a win-win situation for both landowners and the local community. Because the land remains in private ownership, it contributes to the local economy and tax base. Landowners are compensated for keeping their land in rural, low-intensity uses compatible with surrounding natural resources.

Situated above 8,000 feet in elevation, Sinnamon Meadows’ high-elevation irrigated



pastures serve as critical habitat for many notable wildlife species, including the iconic and elusive Sierra Nevada Bighorn sheep. Comprised of over 40 animals, the Mt. Warren herd unit congregates on the south-facing slopes of Lundy Canyon in the summer months. Another species of particular conservation concern is the Bi-State population of greater sage-grouse, which depends on pastures where irrigation and sustainable grazing provide essential late summer habitat for raising their young. With its open spaces and working ranch land, Sinnamon Meadows provides an ideal environment for this ground-nesting bird which is currently under consideration for Threatened species status under the Endangered Species Act.

“The ranch – with its many meadows and healthy stands of sagebrush – provides just what sage grouse need to forage, hide from predators, nest, and raise their young. It’s no wonder a healthy population of the imperiled Bi-State population of the birds remains on the ranch. The easement includes a plan to continue wise management practices that allow livestock and wildlife to happily coexist,” says Carlos Suarez, State Conservationist for NRCS in California. “That’s an awesome outcome and one we are happy to help facilitate.”

Sinnamon Meadows’ rich cultural heritage also makes the preservation of this property particularly vital to the Eastern Sierra region. The area was used on Native American trade routes, and later became the location of the historic Dunderberg Mill and town of Munckton. It has been used as summer pasture since it was originally claimed under the Homestead Act by early prospectors - including the property’s namesake, early Mono County pioneer James Sinnamon - in the late 1850’s. Numerous historic Basque carvings dating back 100 years or more can still be found on the property. Sinnamon Meadows was even the setting of a western film, “Belle Starr’s Daughter,” made in the late 1940’s!

Funding for this project has been provided by the California Wildlife Conservation Board and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife; the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), an agency of the State of California; and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Support from these critical funding sources allowed ESLT to complete a conservation easement on the property. “These working landscapes have a rich and important place in our region, so preserving that heritage is critical to our future,” said SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham. “These lands provide not only economic benefits, but substantial natural resource benefits as well. These projects will help conserve or restore land and water resources valuable to those living downstream.”

“I am proud that ESLT has completed such a significant conservation success at Sinnamon Meadows,” said Bob Gardner, President of ESLT’s Board of Directors. “With its varied and unique landscape, vital habitat, and history as a working ranch, this stunning property represents why our work in the Eastern Sierra is so critical. Protecting these special places so that my grandchildren – and their grandchildren – can appreciate their wonders is truly the legacy of our work here. Thanks to our staff and board members, past and present, and our conservation partners who helped accomplish this great victory – not just for ESLT, but for the future of the Eastern Sierra.”

ESLT works with willing landowners to preserve vital lands in the Eastern Sierra for their scenic, agricultural, natural, recreational, historical, and watershed values. For more information about this and other permanent land conservation tools, visit ESLT's website at www.eslt.org or call the ESLT office at (760) 873-4554.

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High resolution photos are attached to the email. Low-resolution images with captions are below. For more images, please contact Marguerite Burkham at (760) 873-4554.

Photo Caption 1: With the assistance of important funding partners and the support of concerned landowners, ESLT has successfully protected this spectacularly beautiful and historically-important working landscape in northern Mono County. Photo Credit: Stephen Ingram.



Photo Caption 2: Containing natural springs and important riparian habitat, ESLT's new conservation easement on Sinnamon Meadows preserves the property's vital resources, important wildlife habitat, and stunning views of Dunderberg Peak. Photo Credit: Stephen Ingram.

