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Eastern Sierra Land Trust Secures Conservation Easement for Historic Centennial Point Ranch

Voluntary agreement permanently conserves 1,741 acres and over five miles of rivers and streams in Bridgeport Valley, Mono County, CA.

The nationally accredited not-for-profit Eastern Sierra Land Trust has secured a conservation easement with ranchers John Lacey, Mark Lacey, and David Wood, to protect the historic Centennial Point Ranch. South of the town of Bridgeport, in the heart of Bridgeport Valley, this working ranch is now permanently preserved for water, wildlife, and sustainable ranching.

Nestled below the granite peaks of Yosemite, Bridgeport Valley is one of the largest intact mountain meadows in California. This verdant land, an emerald gem in the Eastern Sierra, supports a diversity of wildlife in tandem with agricultural production and economic benefits for the region. Among other conservation values, the easement ensures that the water and wildlife habitat on the ranch are protected. This land will continue to serve as a haven for species such as the mule deer, American badger, bald eagle, and Bi-State sage-grouse.

John Lacey, co-owner of Centennial Point Ranch, said: “The Lacey and Wood families are pleased to have once again worked with our trusted partners at the Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) to permanently protect the last of the Centennial Livestock holdings in Bridgeport Valley.

“The Point Ranch conservation easement not only preserves the grazing land, the ranching operation, and the ranching heritage of Mono County, but it also fulfills a promise John and Mark Lacey made to Kenneth and Carolyn Strosnider (the original owners) that if we ever purchased the ranch it would never be developed. Promise kept!

“The Centennial partners would like to thank ESLT, SALCP, WCB, and Mono County for funding, and supporting this project.”

Centennial Point Ranch is a historical fixture of this beautiful and productive region, and has been in agricultural production since the 1860s. The original scale house, built prior to 1905, is still in use and includes the first livestock scale in Mono County history. The voluntary conservation easement restricts development on the 1,741-acre ranch, ensuring that sustainable ranching practices on the ranch are maintained for generations to come.

The East Walker River and three of its tributaries meander through the meadows of Centennial Point Ranch. These wet meadows - “emerald islands” - provide important habitat for birds in the Sierra Nevada. For the Bi-State sage-grouse, the meadows serve as critical broodrearing habitat, allowing the birds to raise their chicks in the grass of the pasturelands.

In 2003, the Lacey and Wood families pioneered the use of conservation easements in Bridgeport Valley by protecting their 6,350-acre Centennial/Dressler Ranch. In 2011,



they worked with ESLT to protect an additional 718 acres. The new agreement to protect the 1,741-acre Centennial Point Ranch brings the total land in Bridgeport Valley that these conservation-minded landowners have conserved to over 8,800 acres. These protected lands are contiguous, ensuring habitat connectivity across Bridgeport Valley.

“We are so pleased to have worked with Mark, John, and David on this important project. Their dedication and perseverance to complete this complicated conservation project were inspiring. Because of their vision, this working ranch will remain undeveloped, protected forever for the wildlife that rely on its flowing waters and wide-open meadows,” says Kay Ogden, Executive Director/CEO of Eastern Sierra Land Trust.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust worked with John Lacey, Mark Lacey, and David Wood to craft the conservation easement, and secure the state funding needed to complete the project. Funders include the California Strategic Growth Council’s Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program and the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). Crucial technical support was provided by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service.

About Eastern Sierra Land Trust

Eastern Sierra Land Trust works with willing landowners to protect vital lands in the Eastern Sierra region for their scenic, agricultural, natural, recreational, historical, and watershed values, and is an accredited land trust. To learn more about ESLT’s work and how to get involved, visit www.eslt.org.

About our Funding Partners

The Wildlife Conservation Board protects, restores, and enhances California’s spectacular natural resources for wildlife and for the public’s use and enjoyment in partnership with conservation groups, government agencies, and the people of California.

The Centennial Point Ranch project was supported by California Strategic Growth Council’s Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in collaboration with the Department of Conservation. SALC is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Photos (for high resolution images, please contact byron@eslt.org or kay@eslt.org.)



Caption: The 1,741-acre Centennial Point Ranch conservation easement protects the wet meadows that provide crucial brood-rearing habitat for the Bi-State greater sage-grouse. Photo by Sara Kokkelenberg.



Caption: The pastureland of Centennial Point Ranch will be preserved for sustainable ranching practices. Photo by Sara Kokkelenberg



Caption: The Sawtooth Range, bordering Yosemite National Park, rises dramatically above Centennial Point Ranch. The conservation easement will preserve the undeveloped, scenic views from the ranch. Photo by Andrew Ehlert.



Caption: Centennial Point Ranch provides vital habitat for the Bi-State greater sage-grouse. Photo by Bob Wick.