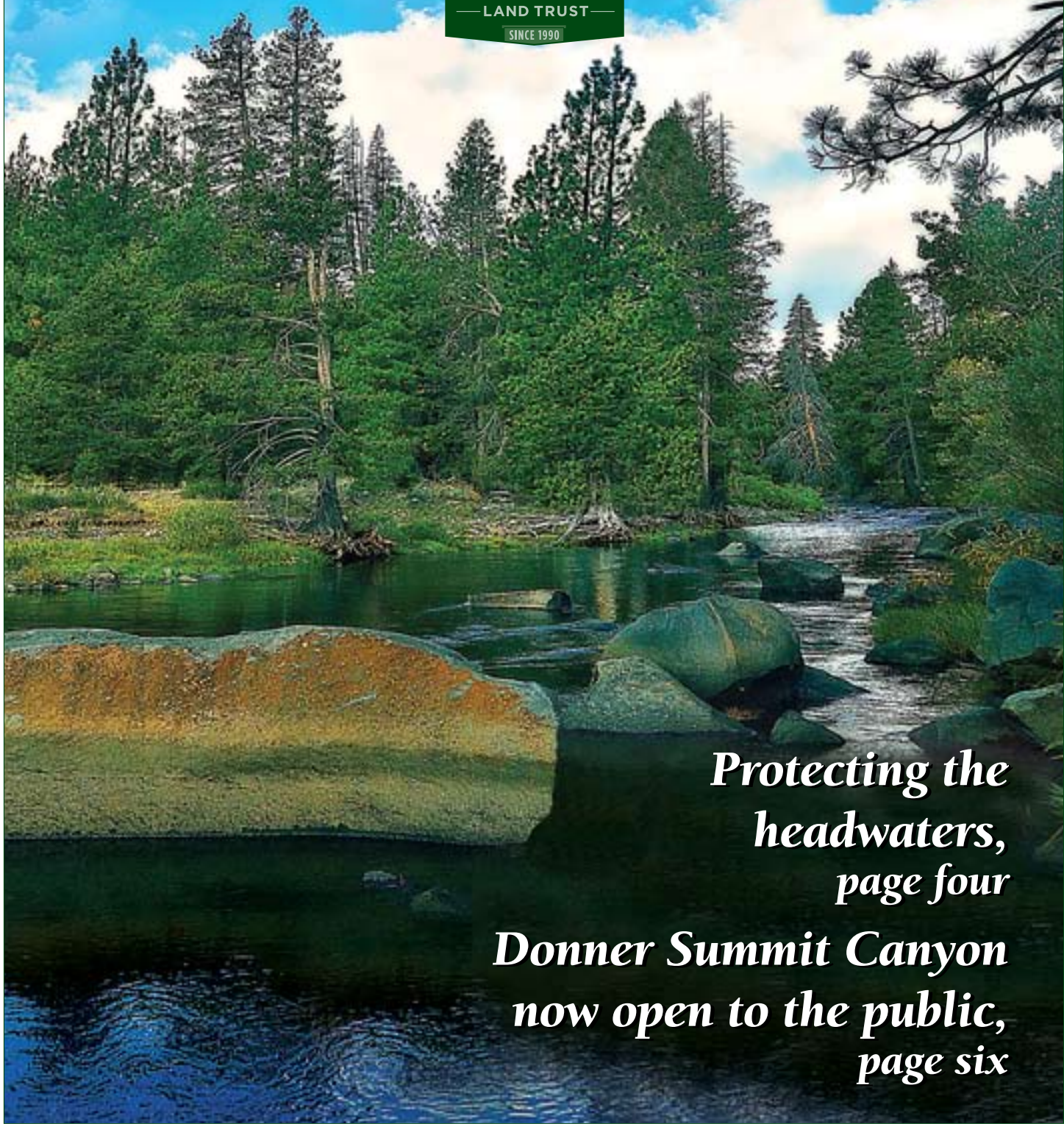


TRUCKEE DONNER LAND TRUST

The Truckee Donner Land Trust preserves and protects scenic, historic and recreational lands with high natural resource values in the Truckee Donner region.



Fall/Winter Newsletter
Volume 40 ❖ November, 2011



*Protecting the
headwaters,
page four*

*Donner Summit Canyon
now open to the public,
page six*

AN OPPORTUNITY ON DONNER SUMMIT

Dear Friends,

Royal Gorge, comprising 3,000 acres on Donner Summit, and recently slated for the development of 950 new residential units, is now in default of a \$16.7 million loan. While Royal Gorge, LLC, still owns the property, it has relinquished control of Royal Gorge to a court appointed receiver. By the time you read this the receiver will be marketing the property.

The Land Trust's Board has directed staff to work in partnership with The Trust for Public Land and other stakeholders to pursue a fee title acquisition of the property. For the Land Trust, this is our Number 1 priority.

For more than 20 years, the Land Trust has tried to protect all or parts of the Royal Gorge property, especially Van Norden Meadow. We now have our best shot in a generation to protect its remarkable meadows, peaks, forests, streams, and lakes.



Devil's Peak at the western edge of the property. Photo by Anne Chadwick.

In the meantime, we continue to work on closing the gap in funding another 3,000-acre project: Webber Lake and Lacey Meadows in the Little Truckee River watershed. Much of our work — by luck or design — is focused on the precious headwaters of the South Yuba, the North Fork of the American River, and the Little Truckee River. See the article on page 4 to learn why this work is so important for conservation.

And, as always, thank you for your support.

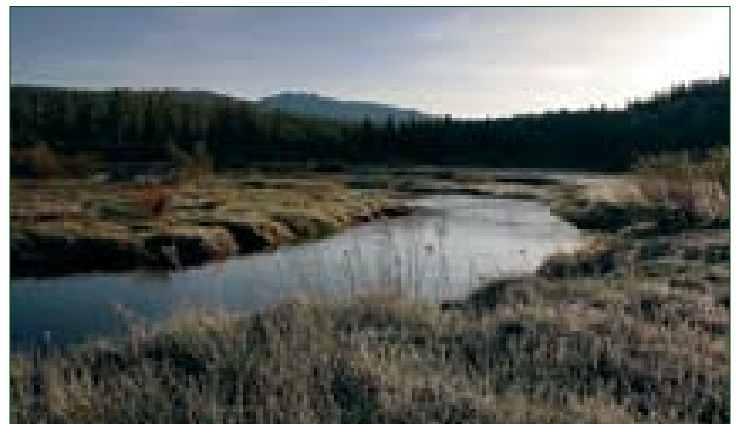
Perry Norris
Executive Director



Royal Gorge is not just the largest Nordic ski area in North America, it is also an important part of the local economy. The Land Trust is committed to seeing the ski area thrive. Photo by Anne Chadwick.

Royal Gorge is by no means a for-sure deal, and we have a long way to go to reach a transaction. The property's listing price is likely to be significantly higher than what we think it's worth and, more importantly, what we can raise in a relatively short time. Given the current governmental fiscal crisis, the majority of the funding we anticipate will have to come from the private sector, requiring an unprecedented fundraising effort in our region.

But as you know, the Land Trust has faced and surmounted similar challenges in the past. We will keep you posted.



Van Norden Meadow on a frosty morning. Photo by Anne Chadwick.

ENJOYING THE MARINA AT INDEPENDENCE LAKE

– Our First Year

By Dave Mandrella, Marina Manager

Many of the visitors to Independence Lake enthusiastically refer to it as “A hidden gem among the Sierra.” There is something special about this lake.

To many, the charm of Independence Lake lies in the solitude so easily found along the shoreline picnic areas and countless

brings a dazzling display of wildflowers, birds, and butterflies. A bit further off the beaten path, visitors have been lucky enough to witness red-tail hawks, coyotes, nighthawks, black bears, bobcats, and blue heron in their natural habitats.



It is best to get an early start at Independence Lake; windless afternoons are rare. Photo by Janet Zipser Zipkin.

other hidden beaches around the lake. The lake is home to a plethora of wildlife. Eagles and osprey circle overhead as mule deer sneak along on the lakeside trails. The springtime

preserve the pristine quality of this lake and through the joint efforts of The Nature Conservancy and the Land Trust a unique (and potentially more effective) solution to the



Independence Lake Preserve Manager, Dave Mandrella, with a brown trout; “the catch of a lifetime.”



To prevent the possible introduction of aquatic invasive species, an assortment of boats are available at no charge.

problem of Aquatic Invasive Species infestation went into action on Independence Lake early this year.

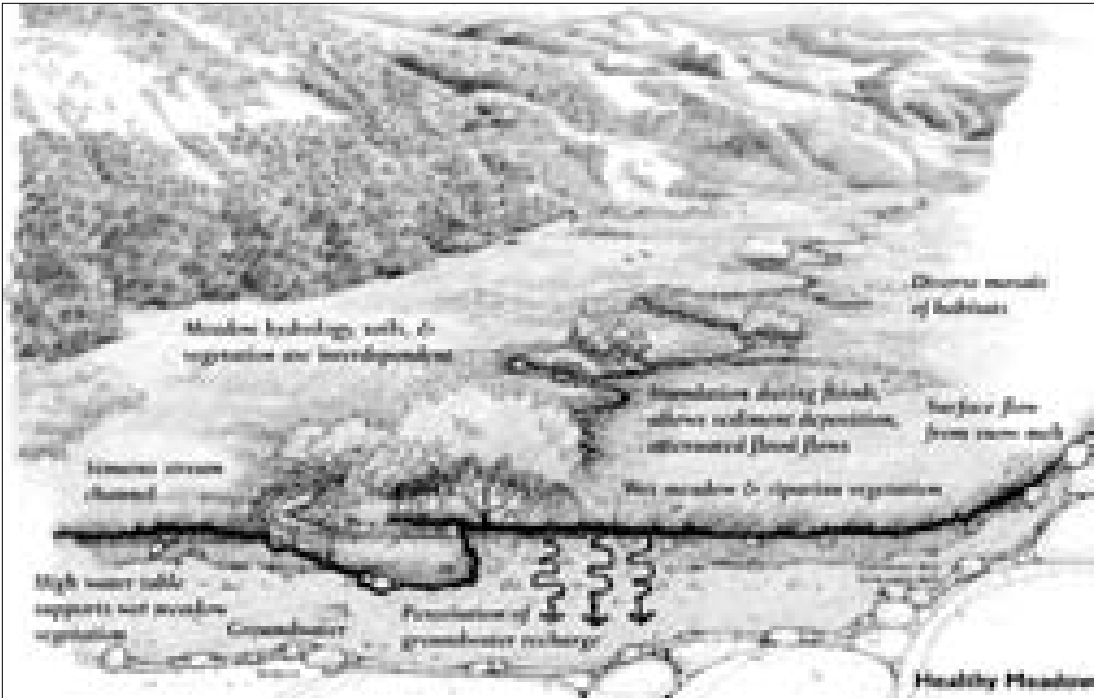
To minimize the possibility of “aquatic hitchhikers” making their way into Independence Lake (some of which can be microscopic spores that could easily sneak past check stations), outside watercraft are prohibited on the lake. Instead, a fleet of boats is available to the public, free-of-charge.

The fleet at Independence Lake offers a number of options to get out and enjoy the lake. There are 12 kayaks, both doubles and singles, available. The kayaks are excellent for spin-fishing along the shoreline and trolling the deeper waters of the lake. They are also the best way to get out on the lake and enjoy a serene trip along the shoreline. Motorboats, equipped with an ultra-quiet, 4-stroke motor, are also available. To offer users a non-motorized experience at the lake, motorboats are only available every other week.

The number of visitors to Independence Lake increased ten fold while under The Nature Conservancy and Land Trust’s management.

PROTECTING THE

A number of the Truckee Donner Land Trust's conservation efforts have focused on protecting the headwaters or the upper reaches of a watershed.



important role in water filtration, providing naturally low-gradient areas for sediment to settle, as well as containing thriving wetland vegetation for nutrient uptake.

Sierra meadows provide habitat for native grasses, willows, and of course beautiful wildflowers. They also provide habitat for endangered species such as the mountain yellow-legged frog and the willow flycatcher, as well as many other amphibians, birds, and mammals. In addition, many Sierra riparian habitats are dependent

on upstream meadows to deliver cold, clean water throughout the dry summer. These waters sustain native fish populations and the macroinvertebrates (bugs) that the fish like to eat.

Many Sierra waterways experience late summer temperatures on the high-end of what is tolerable to the fishery. Meadows impaired by human use are often named as the culprit in driving up the water temperatures and lowering the amount of water during the summer making the fishery less productive.

Humans need meadows too. In addition to the recreation, meadows reduce stress on our water storage and delivery infrastructure. Meadows are effective in attenuating floodwaters and trap sediments

By John Svahn, Stewardship Director

Next to mountaintops and lakes, meadows are a favorite a destination for exploring the Sierra Nevada. Meadows are prominent in iconic photographs by Galen Rowell, Ansel Adams and Truckee's own Olof and Elizabeth Carmel. Moreover, the alpine, sub-alpine, and montane meadows of the Sierra provide habitat for wildlife while providing essential hydrologic and ecosystem functions.

A basic understanding of how meadows work in the Sierra is key to understanding why they need to be protected and restored. Meadows act as giant sponges, rapidly absorbing water in the spring run-off and then releasing

it slowly over the summer, much like a dry kitchen sponge placed in a bowl of water; first it will swell, absorbing the water, then slowly the water will be released back into the bowl. In the Sierra, almost all precipitation occurs in the winter months. As spring runoff arrives, the snow melts quickly, and if the watercourses do not contain meadows, this snowmelt makes its way out of the mountains just as quickly.

Watercourses containing meadows attenuate spring runoff, storing water, keeping mountain water stocks colder, and extending higher stream flows into the dry Sierra summers. Meadows also perform a very

HEADWATERS

that would be deposited behind dams, reducing over time, the capacity of a reservoir. Also, meadows at the headwaters of the system are in essence a natural reservoir above the manmade reservoirs, increasing the seasonal water storage capacity in a given river system.

As Sierra watercourses have been modified in the past century to transport large volumes of water more quickly for downstream use and to dry meadows for grazing, meadows have become degraded over time. Now, fine sediments that have settled for millennia in meadows are picked up by the modified watercourses, transported downstream, and deposited elsewhere. The sediment often settles in reservoirs, irrigation canals, flood control channels, or sensitive downstream habitat. This can lead to a lack of available water storage, costly dredging and repairs, and/or habitat restoration needs downstream.

Protecting and restoring meadows is of paramount importance to the Land Trust and other conservation groups working in the Sierra. Acquiring the land or protecting the resources via a conservation easement is often the first step. From here, the Land Trust can slow future degradation through management practices such as relocating trails and roads out of meadows, and installing erosion-reducing dips on roads and trails upstream from the meadows. If grazing is an existing use on the property, scientists evaluate if it is a compatible use with managing the property's natural resources.

Certain meadows in the area, although looking great to the layperson, are not functioning properly and need large-scale restoration. The Land Trust partners with experts at the Truckee River Watershed Council, the U.S. Forest Service, and local Trout Unlimited chapters to complete

the necessary restorations. Often meadow restorations can be done with volunteers by de-compacting old roads, adding structures to watercourses, and planting willows. However, sometimes restorations require extensive work and heavy machinery to temporarily dam the watercourse and flood the meadows. This method, called "plug and pond" can be seen in action on Merrill Creek, and on the Little Truckee River at Perazzo Meadows.

The Land Trust has acquired numerous meadows in the area including Lake Ella and East Martis Creek Meadows at Waddle Ranch Preserve, Cold Stream meadow along the Mt. Lola Trail, Meathouse Meadow, a tributary to Independence Creek, and parts of Saddle and Perazzo Meadows on the Little Truckee River.



Protecting and restoring meadows is of paramount importance to the Land Trust and other conservation groups working in the Sierra.

PROTECTING A BIT OF HISTORY

DONNER SUMMIT CANYON

Donner Summit Canyon, acquired by the Land Trust in 2010, is the gateway to what many consider the most important square mile in California history. Donner Pass, located just west of the property is home to the first transcontinental telephone line, railroad, and highway. Many of the people who shaped California travelled over this very property.

The property has a lengthy and important history spanning thousands of years, from Native Americans, to the Western Expansion, to creating a recreational destination in the region.

Native Americans

Native Americans seasonally crossed the Sierra over what we today refer to as Donner Pass. Petroglyphs from the Martis People estimated to be up to 2,500 years old can be viewed on the granite slabs in the small valley just west of the Donner



The confluence of Summit Creek and Billy Mack Canyon Creek is on the property. Together, they are the largest tributary to Donner Lake.

Summit (Rainbow) Bridge on Old U.S. 40. The Paiute and Washoe tribes of the western Great Basin and the Maidu of the western foothills of the Sierra, are believed to have traversed this pass as a trade route.



Looking south from Old Highway 40 across Donner Summit Canyon to Donner Peak.

American Western Expansion

In 1844, the Stephens-Murphy-Townsend Party were the first emigrants to successfully cross this summit into California. Due to early snowfall, they left their wagons at the east end of "Truckee Lake," now known as Donner Lake, under the watchful eye of young Moses Schallenger, who safely wintered in a hastily constructed cabin. The high ridge rising from the South shore of Donner Lake, is named Schallenger Ridge in his honor.

The tragedy of the Donner Party is well known. The party was late arriving into the Sierra in October, 1846 and became trapped by early, heavy snows at two locations: the Donner's Camp six miles northeast of "Truckee

AT DONNER SUMMIT CANYON



The Beaver Pond. Photo by Janet Zipser Zipkin.

Lake” (Alder Creek Valley), and on Donner’s east shore. Some of the party used cabins that had been built to house Moses Schallenberger just a few years prior. The party quickly exhausted their food supply, hunting was scarce (although a 600 pound bear was killed) and their oxen were lost to snow drifts. A small group did make it over the summit and brought back supplies, rescuing survivors the following spring.

In 1862, the federal government, fully engaged in the Civil War, did not have the ability to finance the transcontinental railroad it dearly wanted. Instead, President Lincoln supported its construction with U.S. government bonds and something the Federal government had in abundance: land. Every other square mile was granted to the Central Pacific Railroad to incentivize them to lay track across the Sierra.

This “checkerboard” pattern of private and public ownership is a legacy that can be seen today on any map of the area. It also is the rationale behind much of the Land Trust’s work, Donner Summit Canyon being no exception.

The Donner Summit Canyon property originated as a Land Grant to the Central Pacific Railroad in 1862. Above the property you can view the famous China Wall, a dry-stacked rock wall built by Chinese laborers for the railroad, hand-cut train tunnels, and snowsheds to protect the trains from avalanches.

Needing to get construction materials and laborers to Donner Summit, the Central built the

Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Road and operated it as a toll road from 1864-1867. Upon completion of the railroad, the old road fell into disrepair. After the turn of the century, the old road, now modified for automobile use, served as the Lincoln Highway, and then the Victory Highway, until Highway 40 was built in the 1920’s. As you hike, look closely at rock faces, a good eye will find the faded, painted signs advertising hotels and eateries at Donner Lake and Truckee from this bygone era.

Highway 40 was instrumental in Truckee and Lake Tahoe’s emergence as a resort and recreation destination, and “Old 40” is still heavily used as the area’s gateway despite the construction of Interstate 80.

Lands surrounding Donner Lake are an integral component of California’s history and heritage, as well as a recreation destination for the entire nation. By the Land Trust’s good work, this property, Schallenberger Ridge, Lakeview, Coldstream, and Emigrant Canyons are now permanently protected and open to the public as additions to Donner Memorial State Park.

The Land Trust is delighted by the number of people discovering or re-discovering this remarkable and historic property.



Bill Thauvette (Board), Jeff Hamilton (Board), Janet Zipser Zipkin (Board), Perry Norris (Staff), and Bill Goerke (Board) on a pre-acquisition visit to the property.

STEWARDSHIP

As we acquire our lands, they need to be managed. In some cases, a lot of TLC is needed. This can include mitigating legacy impacts from previous uses of the property, annual monitoring of forests and waterways, trail construction, installation of signage, and general clean-up. This was a very busy year with over 200 volunteers working on projects on Land Trust properties. A huge thank you to our volunteers!



DONNER SUMMIT CANYON

New stairs curb erosion and welcome visitors at the entrance of the Donner Summit Canyon Property.

NEGRO CANYON

Volunteers proudly stand in front of trash and recyclables collected after a long winter in Negro Canyon.



WADDLE RANCH

Land Trust volunteers Dylan Farnsworth and Chuck Zipkin take water samples from East Martis Creek. This was done as a part of the Truckee River Watershed Council's Truckee River Snapshot Day.

OF OUR LANDS

PERAZZO MEADOWS

Constructing the trailhead at the new Perazzo Meadows day use area.



MARTIS CREEK ESTATES

Damage by an illegal off roader to the meadow at Martis Creek Estates. The damage was repaired this summer. See page 14 photo.



INDEPENDENCE LAKE

Demolition of an old cabin at Independence Lake. The site, on a knoll overlooking the lake, is one of the lake's most scenic spots.



WAYS TO GIVE

There are many ways to support the critical work of the Truckee Donner Land Trust. Here are a few unique programs we offer that you may not be aware of.

Lookout Circle

As a Lookout Circle donor, you join generous individuals who support the Land Trust with an annual gift of \$2,500 or more pledged for 3-5 years. Lookout Circle donors contribute 60 percent of the annual funds to the Land Trust and help ensure the protection of tens of thousands of acres of historic, scenic and recreational open spaces. The Lookout Circle takes its inspiration from its definition: a strategic act of observing or keeping watch. The common interest in and commitment to land protection and preservation among the Lookout Circle donors has allowed the Land Trust to play a big role in preserving over 22,000 so far. Gifts from Lookout Circle donors are fundamental to the Land Trust's success. If you would like to join the Lookout Circle contact Kellie at kellie@tdlandtrust.org.



A bald eagle enjoys the sunshine. Photo by Janet Zipser Zipkin.

Forever Wild Society

Leave a legacy of open space for future generations.

When you include the Land Trust in your will or estate plans, you leave a legacy for future generations, ensuring they will be able to enjoy the lands we cherish today. A planned gift — depending on your situation — may reduce your income taxes, reduce or eliminate capital gains taxes, reduce your gift or estate tax, provide income to you and your loved ones, and help support the Land Trust's efforts to protect threatened lands.

We have established this group to honor donors who provide a future legacy for land protection in our area. If you have thought about leaving the Land Trust a legacy gift, let us know so we can acknowledge your generosity and welcome you to our Forever Wild Society.



One of the Sierra's most conspicuous inhabitants, the yellow-bellied marmot. Photo by Stan Wingate.

Twice the Impact

Many companies will double the value of their employees' gifts to non-profit organizations. Check with your company to see if they offer a matching gift program, and help the Land Trust obtain vital funds to do its work.

All cash contributions are tax-deductible. Consult your tax advisor for details.

Contact Kellie at our office to answer any questions you may have (530) 582-4711, kellie@tdlandtrust.org.

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for all occasions.*

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way to show your friends and family
how much you care about them
and the environment.*

*Call the Land Trust at
530-582-4711 for more information.*

WELCOME GEOFF GRIFFIN AND THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

Geoff has been involved in the greater Lake Tahoe area since the late 1970s. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Tahoe City. Geoff enjoyed a long international career in management consulting in advising financial services organizations, technology companies, and payments associations. He is currently involved with the Far West Nordic Ski Education Association and the Auburn Ski Club. Geoff is an avid cross-country skier, hiker, kayaker, cyclist, flyfisher, and photographer. He earned an MBA

from Stanford Business School and an engineering degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Geoff is putting his skills to good use by serving on the Land Trust's Finance Committee.

Special Volunteers

A very special thank you to Lorrie Poch and Rachel St. Pierre for their many hours helping us with our mailings. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you Lorrie and Rachel.

A Heartfelt Thank You!

Kevin Starr spent this summer as the Stewardship Coordinator for the Land Trust. He recruited over 200 volunteers for Gooddirtyfun trail maintenance and other stewardship projects, and maintained our impeccable volunteer safety record. He also completed many stewardship projects including the new

stairs and parking area at Donner Summit Canyon and cleaning up Martis Creek Estates. Kevin also spent the summer living in the little green cabin at Donner Summit Canyon, greeting visitors and working on the trails. With Kevin, this summer was our best yet for stewardship.

If you made the trek out to Independence Lake and used one of our boats, it was likely Dave Mandrella that welcomed you. Dave's easygoing demeanor kept visitors safe and happy, and his previous experience with boats helped make what could've been a difficult first year in the boat business an easy one. In addition to getting people out on the boats, Dave rescued a capsized kayaker and some lost hikers (in the dark).



Geoff Griffin joins the Board of Directors.



Kevin Starr climbing in the High Sierra.

Buck for Open Space Partners

Donate a \$1 Today

Preserving open space in the greater Truckee Donner region is simply good business. The Land Trust would like to thank the following conservation-minded businesses and their customers and encourage you to give them your business.

- Robert Colpitts, DDS
- Cottonwood Restaurant
- Donner Truckee Veterinary Hospital
 - Dragonfly
 - Heat-Tech of Truckee
- The Lodge at Tahoe Donner
- Paco's Truckee Bike and Ski

Trails and Vistas Enjoys Another Successful Year

Trails and Vistas saw another wonderfully successful event at Spooner Lake thanks to all of the performers, volunteers, and supporters that helped make it all come together. The event was sold out and indescribably wonderful. Be sure to put this on your calendar for next fall!

THANKS TO SOME SPECIAL SUPPORTERS FOR NEEDS FROM SOUP TO NUTS

REI Awards Stewardship and Maintenance Grant

A big thanks to our partners in the great outdoors, REI, for a generous grant of \$10,000 to help the Land Trust with stewardship and maintenance of lands we have protected. REI is dedicated to inspiring people to love the outdoors and care for the places they love. REI focuses their philanthropic efforts on supporting and promoting volunteerism to care for public lands, natural areas, trails and waterways.



The 2011 REI trailcrew at Martis Dam. REI employees from the Sierra Nevada foothills and Reno help the Land Trust with stewardship duties every season.

Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation Helps with Tech Needs

Thanks to a grant from the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, the Land Trust has been able to upgrade and replace important operating equipment that was quite old or broken. With our new file server, crucial lands documents are safely stored electronically while new scanners/printers, routers, phones and cables are ensuring we are operating safely and efficiently.

Squaw Valley Shuttle Gets us There

Every year the Land Trust offers the popular Sugar Bowl to

Squaw Valley guided hike, and we'd like to thank Squaw Valley again for providing a shuttle to take hikers to the Lake Mary trailhead. We couldn't have so much fun without their help!

Dining for Charity Programs Supports the Land Trust

The Land Trust was a lucky beneficiary when local restaurants offered a portion of their diner's total food bills on specific evenings set aside for their dining for charity programs. Diners were able to enjoy great food with friends at River Ranch Restaurant and Sugar Bowl's Lake Mary Cabin and help the Land Trust.



Hikers enjoy the Sugar Bowl to Squaw Valley hike thanks to Squaw Valley's shuttle service. Photo: Geoff Griffin.

A High Five to The Martis Fund

The Martis Fund awarded a \$67,000 grant to the Land Trust and the Truckee River Watershed Council for conservation in the Martis Valley. Part of the grant will support management and forestry work on the Martis Creek Estates property (across from the entrance to Northstar) acquired by the Land Trust in 2011.

Thanks to Our 2011 Hike Leaders

Land Trust guided hikes are offered every summer to give members a chance to get out and enjoy our incredible open spaces and to meet Board members and staff. Thanks to this year's hike leaders for their service to the Land Trust: Bill Goerke, Geoff Griffin, Bill Thauvette, Janet Zipser Zipkin, John Svahn and Kevin Starr.

THANK YOU BUSINESS PARTNERS

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For more information about our Business Partner program, call Kellie Wright at 530-582-4711.

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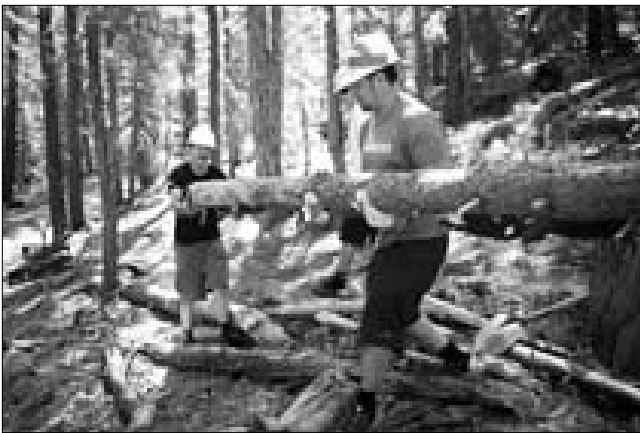
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COOL STUFF HAPPENING ON LANDS WE'VE PROTECTED

Hosting Shimano at Waddle Ranch Preserve

Mega bicycle parts manufacturer Shimano visited our area last summer to introduce new mountain bike components through on-trail riding experiences to large groups of media flown in from all over the world. While in Truckee, a group of top athletes, Shimano staff and members of cycling and outdoor media took time to help improve our local trails as part of their advocacy mission.



Mountain bike journalist, Richard Cunningham (left) and Shimano PR Manager, Devin Walton, move fallen trees at Waddle Ranch Preserve. Photo by Sterling Lorence.

Big Brothers & Sisters Bond During Trail Work

Big Brothers & Sisters of Nevada County got together for some trail work when Bigs and their Littles bonded with each other and with nature at Waddle Ranch



Bigs and their Littles enjoyed a fun day working at Waddle Ranch Preserve.

Preserve. The group spent a Saturday learning trailbuilding techniques from our Stewardship Coordinator, Kevin Starr.

Outdoor Classrooms for Kids

The Tahoe Institute of Natural Science (TINS), in partnership with KidZone Museum in Truckee, brought kids ages 6-12 out to Land Trust properties to focus on native wildlife. The kids explored the Wintercreek Wetland, Waddle Ranch Preserve, and Perazzo Meadows. Learn more about TINS here: www.tinsweb.org



Kids learn about native wildlife at the Land Trust's Wintercreek Wetland. Photo courtesy of TINS.

Vail Resorts Echo Day 2011 at Martis Creek Estates

Vail Resorts, the new operator of Northstar-at-Tahoe, and over 70 of its employees and their families spent a fall day at Martis Creek Estates, 122-acres the Land Trust recently acquired across from the entrance to Northstar. VR Echo Day is an annual company-wide volunteer day for Vail Resorts, its employees and their families, to help local non-profits on projects that are important to kids or the environment.



Vail Resorts Echo Day volunteers de-compact soil and rehabilitate a meadow degraded by off road vehicles.

A GLORIOUS FALL DAY AT LACEY MEADOWS



Remnants of the Johnson Family Homestead at Lacey Meadows.

Nearly 2,000 of the 3,000-acre property is sub-alpine meadow.



Lacey Creek flows year round through property.

All photos on this page by Sam Okamoto from Drunken Monkey.

The Truckee Donner Land Trust was founded in 1990 to preserve and protect scenic, historic and recreational lands with high natural resource values in the Truckee Donner region.

Tel. 530-582-4711
Fax 530-582-5528
info@tdlandtrust.org
www.tdlandtrust.org

The Truckee Donner Land Trust is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations to the Land Trust may be tax-deductible under the Internal Revenue Service Code.

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COVER PHOTO:

The Little Truckee River below Webber Lake. Photo by Sam Okamoto from Drunken Monkey.



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The Little Truckee River, a focal point of conservation in the Northern Sierra. Photo by Sam Okamoto from Drunken Monkey.



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