

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control,
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

Applicant: EASTERN SIERRA LAND TRUST

Project Title: CINNAMON RANCH AGRICULTURE AND RESOURCE PROTECTION PROJECT

Subregion: EAST SIERRA

County: MONO

SNC Funding: \$735,000.00

Total Project Cost: \$1,452,660.00

Application Number: 387

Final Score: 93.1

PROJECT SCOPE

This project will result in an agricultural conservation easement on 602 acres of the Cinnamon Ranch in the Hammil Valley of Mono County. The project will aid in the preservation of the area's threatened working landscapes and also protect historical and natural resources which exist on this site. This easement will prohibit future subdivision, limit development and eliminate the potential for future water exportation as the ranch holds surface water rights for three creeks which flow directly from the White Mountains. Irrigation on the ranch is largely accomplished by using surface water and storage reservoirs, rather than relying on groundwater pumping, and as a result a portion of the water used on the property is retained where it can recharge the groundwater table below.

A conservation easement on the Cinnamon Ranch will continue the existing agricultural practices of organic alfalfa farming and cattle ranching. Sport-fish aquaculture and hydroelectric power generation also occur on this family owned farm which is currently operated by three generations. Beyond the benefits to the State and local economy, this project will protect important habitat for several species of special concern including Swainson's Hawk, the Casa Diablo mule deer herd and desert big-horn sheep. It will also preserve dramatic pastoral views from US Highway 6 which helps maintain the rural character of this region for visitors and residents. The landowner has agreed to a

partial donation of land and will contribute towards the perpetual stewardship fund. The remaining funding is being sought through the NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program. Assessor parcel numbers (APN) for the subject properties are 25-200-05, 25-200-16 and 25-240.06.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Baseline documentation report completed	June 2011
Final easement terms determined	July 2011
Final legal review	August 2011
Submit 6 month progress report	November 2011
Easement completed, signed, recorded- Escrow completed	December 2011
Final report submitted	March 2012
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	April 29, 2012

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Easement Acquisition	\$715,000.00
Staff Expenses	6,720.00
Mileage	200.00
Contractor/Consultant/Legal Council	6,000.00
Fees (Escrow, Title, Closing)	5,000.00
Performance Measure Reporting	480.00
Administration Costs	1,600.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$735,000.00

PROJECT SUPPORT LETTERS

- Counties of Inyo & Mono, Agricultural Commissioner
- President of the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
- California Natural Resources Agency, Department of Fish and game, Inland Deserts Region, Deputy Regional Manager
- California Deer Association, Eastern Sierra Chapter

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include between one and three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Acres of Land Preserved
- Kilowatts of Renewable Energy Production Capacity Maintained or Created

PROJECT SUMMARY

County: Mono County, CA

Applicant: Eastern Sierra Land Trust

Project Title: Cinnamon Ranch Agriculture & Resource Protection Project

PROJECT GOAL

This important project will permanently protect a historic and organic certified working farm on 602 acres of important farm and rangeland by acquiring an agricultural conservation easement from a willing long term landowner. This project will aid in the preservation of our region's threatened working landscapes while also protecting the significant natural and historical resources that exist at this site. This easement will prohibit future subdivision, limit development, and, importantly, eliminate the potential for future water export, as the ranch holds surface water rights for three creeks.

PROJECT SCOPE

This grant will enable the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement on 602 acres of important farm and rangeland, the majority of which is NRCS designated prime soils, in the Hammil Valley of Mono County, California.

Cinnamon ranch is a family owned and operated organic alfalfa farm and cattle ranch with historic roots as the first ranch established in this region of Mono County. Currently three generations of the family run a diverse agriculture operation that includes organic alfalfa, locally raised and marketed grass-fed beef, commercial sport fish aquaculture, and recently an experimental bio-fuel crop. Electricity used on site is generated utilizing a permitted 175kW hydroelectric facility that capitalizes on the historic irrigation infrastructure and long standing surface water rights to three creeks draining from the White Mountains.

Unlike the majority of farms in the region which rely heavily on groundwater, a limited and over-utilized resource, irrigation on this property is largely accomplished by using surface water and storage reservoirs. As a result, a portion of the water used on the property is retained where it can recharge the groundwater table below.

Beyond the benefits to the State and local economy resulting from continued agricultural production on this land, this project offers many other benefits for the region. The project will protect important habitat for a number of species of special concern including the Swainson's hawk, the Casa Diablo mule deer herd, and desert bighorn sheep. An easement on the property will also preserve the dramatic pastoral views over the green valley bottom farmland with the White Mountains towering above as viewed from U.S. Highway 6. Such views are important to preserving the rural character of the region enjoyed by visitors and residents alike.

Specifically, this agricultural conservation easement will protect these important resources by limiting future development on the property to within a pre-designated area away from the most productive soils, prohibiting subdivision, identifying and protecting unique historical features, and ensuring that the unique water resources tied to the land remain on the property where they contribute to the agricultural productivity as well as the local flora and fauna and replenish the aquifer below.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust is requesting \$980,000 to be applied towards the total easement value of \$1,400,000. Additionally, ESLT is requesting \$20,000 for necessary direct project related costs, indirect costs, and administration. These costs include escrow fees, title insurance, closing costs, legal counsel, and staff time and expenses for easement drafting, baseline documentation, performance measure reporting, and a portion of the overhead administrative costs related to this project. The landowners have agreed to a partial donation of land value of \$40,000, will contribute \$25,000 towards the perpetual stewardship fund at closing, have provided a preliminary title report for the property, and have paid for a portion of the appraisal. Eastern Sierra Land Trust has committed to paying for the majority of the appraisal and a portion of the administrative expenses related to this project. The remainder of the acquisition funding is expected to be provided by the NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

1. George Milovich, Agricultural Commissioner, Inyo and Mono Counties
2. Pete Pumphrey, President, Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
3. Brad Henderson, Deputy Regional Manager, California Department of Fish & Game
4. Doug Brown, Eastern Region Representative, California Deer Association

SNC PROJECT DELIVERABLES AND SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Baseline Documentation Report completed	June 2011
Final easement terms determined	July 2011
Final legal review	August 2011
Submit 6-month progress report	November 2011
Escrow completed, easement completed, signed, and recorded	December 2011
Final report submitted to SNC	March 2012

SNC PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Easement Acquisition Funding	\$980,000
Staff Expenses	\$6720
Mileage	\$200
Contracts/Consultants	\$6,000
Fees	\$5,000
Performance Measure Reporting	\$480
Administrative Costs	\$1600
SNC GRANT TOTAL	\$1,000,000