



# EASEMENT PROTECTS Side Hill *Citrus Mandarin Orchard*



**P**lacer County along with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Emigrant Trails Greenway Trust, and Placer Land Trust acquired an agricultural easement on the Side Hill Citrus property, a family-owned orchard in rural Lincoln. This forty-seven acre farm produces a variety of citrus including mandarins, Meyer lemons, limes, and grapefruits.

A dedication ceremony was held in January 2015 recognizing the agricultural easement, the third private-public easement in the county. The easement ensures the farm will be protected from development in perpetuity and will remain as an important agricultural resource. It also preserves a wooded riparian corridor along a tributary to Doty Ravine and oak woodlands on the site.

Family owned and operated, Side Hill Citrus is a certified organic ranch originally established on 17 acres in 1975. At the time of purchase by Richard Ferreira, a small number of diverse citrus trees already existed on the property. Since 1975 another 30 acres has been purchased and added to the ranch, and a mandarin grove of approximately 2,500 trees has been planted on 24 acres of the ranch.

“My family and I intend to continue to be an integral part of Placer County agriculture and help to educate our community about agriculture well into the future,” said Richard.

Mandarins are a staple fruit of Placer County, and are enjoyed November through February. The first mandarin trees were planted by Welsh immigrants in Penryn in the 1880s. After pear blight in the mid-twentieth century destroyed the County’s bountiful pear industry, mandarins became a choice crop for area farmers.

Today, with approximately 60 local mandarin growers, the Placer County mandarin harvest is celebrated by the annual Mountain Mandarin Festival held each November and Orchard Days in December.

“Placer Land Trust is proud to work with Placer County in what is shaping up to be the premiere public-private conservation partnership in California,” said Placer Land Trust Executive Director Jeff Darlington. “It’s rare to see a county so actively protect the future of their agricultural economy and rural quality of life. We’re

really blessed to have local leaders who understand the benefits of investing in perpetuity.”

Side Hill Citrus is Placer Legacy’s third agricultural easement. In 2007, Placer County in partnership with Placer Land Trust, the United Auburn Indian Community, and the California Wildlife Foundation acquired a 281-acre easement on Kirk Ranch to protect a cattle ranch operation along with oak woodland. In 2010, Placer County purchased an agriculture conservation easement on the 40-acre Natural Trading Company organic farm in Newcastle.

# WHAT'S NEW AT

## Hidden Falls REGIONAL PARK

*"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."*  
— John Muir

Shady picnic and rest areas welcome you along the way.

SYMBOL	FEATURE
[P]	Parking
[A]	Picnic Area
[T]	Trash Receptacles
[R]	Restrooms
[E]	Emergency Phone
[M]	Map/Sign Marker
[W]	Waterfalls
[D]	Viewing Deck
[V]	Vista Point
[B]	Bridge
[EQA]	Equestrian Staging Area
[HWA]	Horse Watering

- Network of **30 miles of trails** through the 1,200 acre park have been completed.
- The trail system has amenities such as **kiosks, directional signs, benches, two waterfall overlook decks, and picnic areas.**
- **Two 100-foot span bridges** were constructed over Coon Creek as part of the trail network that will provide **incredible views** of Coon Creek as well as access for emergency and service vehicles

Hidden Falls Access Trail

Parking Lot Detail

Detail Inset

**LOCALS TIP** | If you're going, Hidden Falls Regional Park has experienced great popularity, particularly on weekends and during holiday periods. In some cases, visitors must wait or go elsewhere if the parking area has reached capacity. Placer County Parks and Recreation is excited that Hidden Falls is such a popular place to hike and ride, but please plan your trip accordingly and consider a visit during off-peak times such as the early morning or late afternoon.

## Coon Creek WATERSHED ASSESSMENT

Coon Creek in southwestern Placer County originates near Meadow Vista and flows for 18 miles to where it enters the Sacramento River just below the confluence of the Feather River. The creek offers multiple species benefits, as well as scenic recreation opportunities in Hidden Falls Regional Park. Several rare and threatened flora and fauna are present in Coon Creek, including Chinook salmon. The creek and the surrounding riparian habitat currently face threats from development, water diversions, fish passage impediments, and water quality impacts. To identify restoration opportunities Placer County has begun conducting a watershed assessment of Coon Creek.

The Coon Creek Watershed Assessment is part of the proposed Placer County Conservation Plan (PCCP). The watershed assessment will provide an opportunity to inform the PCCP conservation strategy about protection and preservation opportunities within the Coon Creek watershed. The outcome of the assessment is to provide information that will be used to restore functionality to Coon Creek.

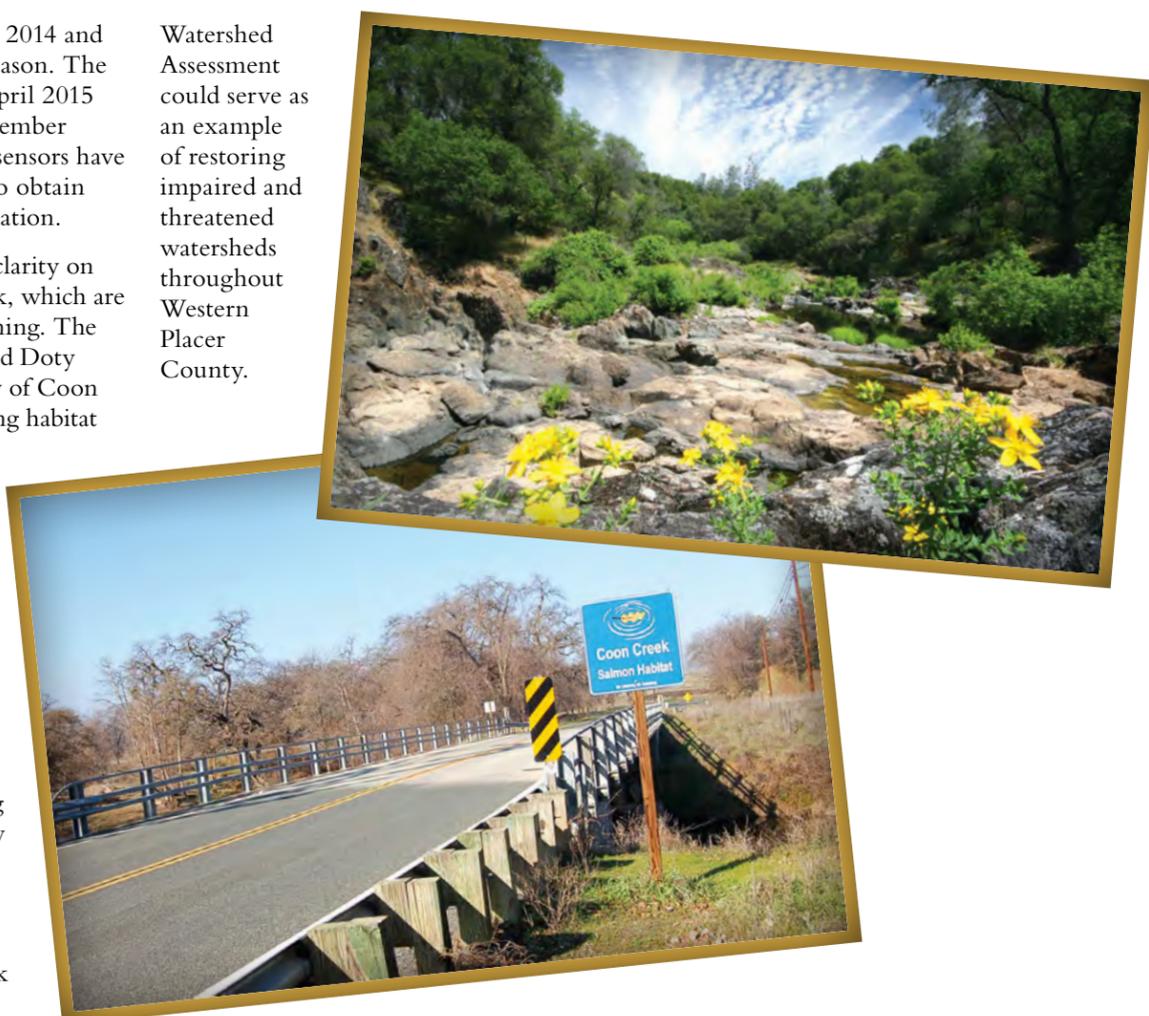
The assessment began in fall 2014 and paused for the winter rain season. The assessment began again in April 2015 and will continue until November 2016. Over 20 temperature sensors have been placed along the creek to obtain baseline temperature information.

Biologists found poor water clarity on the lower reaches of the creek, which are not suitable for salmon spawning. The upper reaches of the creek and Doty Ravine, a perennial tributary of Coon Creek, contain good spawning habitat for salmon. Two potential barriers to fish passage were identified at the NID South Canal Diversion and the bridge and culvert at Garden Bar Road.

Biologists noted the diversity of the creek and its vegetation, with its hilly, canyon-like topography and high energy flows at the upper reaches, and flattening out at the Valley floor to low energy flows.

Successful restoration efforts based on the information gained from the Coon Creek

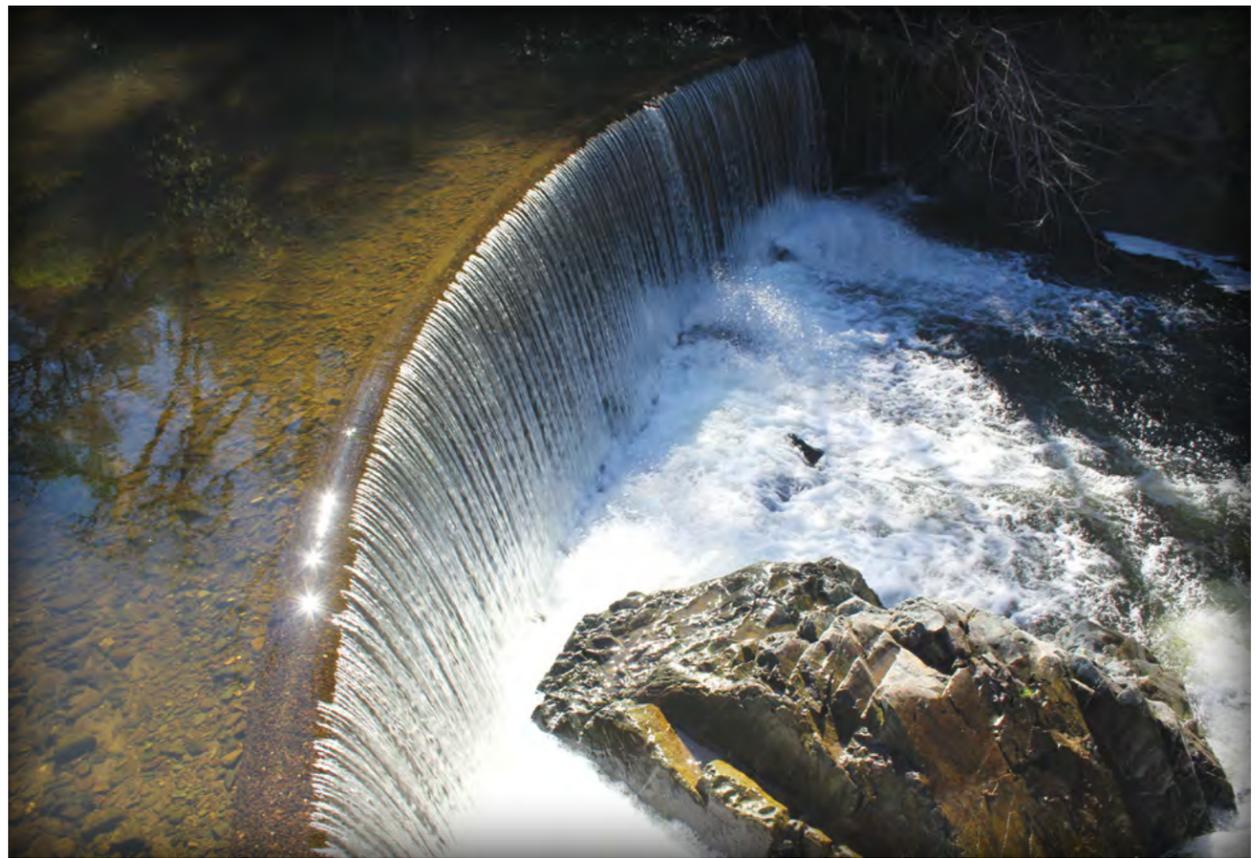
Watershed Assessment could serve as an example of restoring impaired and threatened watersheds throughout Western Placer County.



# North American GOLDEN EAGLE



# SARSAS



Named for the gold-colored feathers on the back of their heads, North American golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are a prolific eagle species common in the Western US. Numbering in the tens of thousands across the West, there are only about 500 pairs of golden eagles in California. In Placer County, a pair of golden eagles inhabit Hidden Falls Regional Park. These birds of prey are known for their size, with a wing span ranging from over 5 feet to over 7 feet. They are known for their speed and soaring flights, and have been clocked at speeds close to 200 miles per hour.

Golden eagles are dimorphic, meaning that the females are larger than males. Unlike many bird species, the plumages of male and female golden eagles are similar. Golden eagles inhabit rolling foothills, mountain areas, sage-juniper flats, and deserts. They prefer secluded cliffs with overhanging ledges and large trees used for cover, and usually nest on cliffs or in large trees. Golden eagles build large 10-foot wide, 3-foot tall nests of sticks, twigs, and other vegetation. Golden eagles have been observed attacking calves, lambs, deer, coyotes and foxes, but prefer to hunt small mammals like rabbits and mice, and also eat birds and reptiles. They hunt in pairs over open terrain, soaring 100-300 feet above ground in search of prey. Sometimes they will perch and fly directly to prey or pirate food from other predators.

Golden eagles are found all over the world, and are commonly used in falconry. They are known for their hunting prowess, and in Eurasia, native communities have used golden eagles to hunt gray wolves. Mexico, Austria, Albania, Germany, and Kazakhstan claim the golden eagle as their national animal, making it the most common national animal in the world. The golden eagle is featured on the Albanian and Egyptian flags, and the Mexican flag shows the golden eagle with a serpent in its talon and mouth atop a cactus. In the Arab world, golden eagles symbolize power, and golden eagles were the symbol of Roman legions. In North America, golden eagles were considered sacred by many Native American cultures, including First Nation and Mesoamerican cultures.

Despite its international reverence, golden eagle populations have experienced sharp declines in parts of their ranges, and in some areas golden eagles have become completely extirpated. Human activity is the largest threat to golden eagles, from urbanization and habitat destruction. Deaths from man-made structures are also a common threat to golden eagles, and some utility companies have installed "raptor-friendly" power lines to help reduce threats to eagles and other birds. Hidden Falls Regional Park has provided this fascinating species with the habitat it loves. Rolling foothills and cliffs for nesting and perching, and open fields for hunting make this park perfect for these large raptors. The nesting pair at Hidden Falls shows the importance of protecting open space and enhances regional biodiversity.

Next time you are out at Hidden Falls, look up and if you're lucky, you might see one of these magnificent birds soaring overhead.

**S**ave Auburn Ravine Salmon and Steelhead (SARSAS) is a non-profit group of dedicated citizens that has been working to restore Auburn Ravine to enable Chinook salmon and Steelhead trout to inhabit upper reaches of the creek. Many of the streams in Placer County have been altered to such an extent that salmon and steelhead are prevented from reaching spawning sites, greatly impacting the long-term survival of these species in our community.

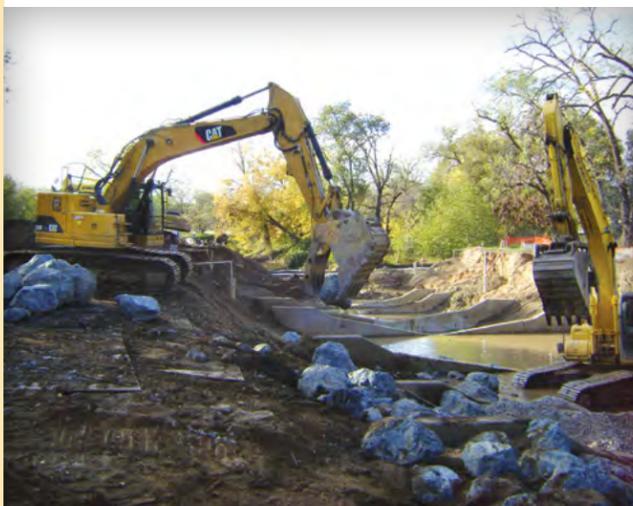
SARSAS has worked with local government agencies to improve passage for Chinook

and steelhead, and continues to identify potential sites on Auburn Ravine for restoration efforts. In 2012, SARSAS, the Nevada Irrigation District, and Placer County worked together to construct a fish ladder at the NID Gaging Station in Lincoln. This ladder has been a tremendous success, and SARSAS volunteers have spotted salmon upstream of the gaging station and at the bottom of Hemphill Dam.

SARSAS engages in public outreach events to engage the community about native salmon in local streams. They participate at the annual Salmon Celebration every October in

Lincoln, and they invite the community to volunteer with their Citizen Scientist program to observe Auburn Ravine for the presence of salmon and steelhead during their fall, winter, and spring runs. Volunteers and SARSAS leaders recently spotted numerous salmon fry schooling near their nesting sites, which will return to Auburn Ravine in three to four years after migrating to the Pacific Ocean this season.

Previous and ongoing SARSAS accomplishments provide a strategy to improve local streams and good stewardship of our watersheds.



# 3,000 ACRES

## PROTECTED ON DONNER SUMMIT



Photo courtesy of Truckee Donner Land Trust

The Donner Summit is a well-known year-round recreation mecca: Boreal Ski Resort, Castle Peak, Sugar Bowl, Granite Chief Wilderness, and the Pacific Crest Trail at the Summit are popular with outdoor enthusiasts. The newest addition to these resources is Royal Gorge, a 3,000 acre property that contains remnants of the area's long history, including rock art from the Martis Culture Native Americans, remnants of historic travel along the Overland Emigrant Trail (OET), and snow sheds from the construction of the Transcontinental Railway. Royal Gorge is also an important migration corridor for 20 species of mammals, 100 species of birds, and more than 500 plant species.

In 2012, The Trust for Public Land and the Truckee Donner Land Trust worked as part of the Northern Sierra Partnership to raise \$11.25 million to buy the 3,000-acre Royal Gorge property on Donner Summit. Sugar Bowl Ski Resort signed a long-term lease with the Truckee Donner Land Trust to continue Royal Gorge's operation as a major Nordic ski resort, saving the property from foreclosure in 2011 and a development plan that would have included 950 units.

"At The Trust for Public Land, we conserve land for people, and that is exactly what we have done together here at Donner Summit. [We have] saved a truly special place for this and future generations," said Sam Hodder, California State Director. "The miles of trails through the forests and meadows of Royal Gorge will bring joy to California families for years to come."

The property was purchased from Court-appointed receiver Douglas P. Wilson, who took over the property after a failed development plan to build the 950-unit community. More than 1,000 people donated to the fundraising campaign, including private funds from local residents at Serene Lakes and Sugar Bowl on Donner Summit and environmental groups. The Palisades, Mountain Area Preservation, Sierra Business Council, North Fork American River Alliance, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy

and Sierra Watch also helped raise funds for the campaign.

"This was truly an unprecedented, grassroots fundraising campaign, with nearly 1,400 folks making donations between \$5 and \$1,000,000; a rare event for a community to rally behind saving a piece of land and to raise such a significant amount," said Perry Norris, Executive Director of the Truckee Donner Land Trust. "The signs that had peppered Donner Summit for the last several years went from 'Let's buy it!' to 'We did it!'"

Placer County pledged \$300,000 to the Truckee Donner Land Trust, and has

negotiated a funding agreement that detailed the transfer of a 50-foot wide easement across the entire east-west width of the Royal Gorge property to construct a three mile interpretive trail and recreation staging area. Environmental surveys and trail alignment surveys are being initiated with the goal to finalize the easement by September 2015. Trail construction will follow once the environmental review is complete and funding is secured. This trail will provide access to a portion of the OET that hasn't been accessible to the public for over 50 years.

The California Wildlife Conservation Board approved a \$3 million grant to the Truckee Donner Land Trust to support

the acquisition. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation provided support with bridge funding for the campaign. Overall, the groups raised \$15.5 million to acquire the property and provide for future stewardship and improvements.

"We couldn't have succeeded today without the astounding generosity of hundreds of people who dug deep into their pockets to make this conservation victory possible," said Lucy Blake, President of the Northern Sierra Partnership. "This successful campaign is a testament to the power of collaboration."

Royal Gorge is at Donner Pass, one of the West's best-known historic sites, chiefly because of the tragic story of the ill-fated Donner Party. In 1869, the nation's first transcontinental railroad crossed the Sierra at Donner Summit, opening the region to travelers. The Royal Gorge resort was opened in the 1960s by alpine skier John Slouber. A number of famous winter athletes have trained there, including Glenn Jobe, Katarina Nash, and Marcus Nash.

Royal Gorge offers over 120 miles of groomed trails across 6,000 acres on six track systems with eight warming huts, classic striding, cross country skating, snowshoeing, snowkiting, and fat tire snow biking, poising it to claim again its world famous status in the Nordic skiing world. Royal Gorge also contains the headwaters of both the Yuba and American Rivers, and contains one of the few strands of old growth forest that exists outside of a national park.

"This lease agreement with Sugar Bowl ensures the goal the Land Trust, its partners, and area businesses had envisioned; a vibrant, sustainable economy on Donner Summit," said William Thauvette, a Director of the Truckee Donner Land Trust.

The 25-year lease is extendable to 60 years, and will provide the public with access to a swath of the Sierra that has significant historic, scenic, and wildlife resources for years to come.

For more information about exploring the trails and wild places on this remarkable property, visit the Truckee Donner Land Trust at [www.tdlandtrust.org](http://www.tdlandtrust.org).

## Visit these trails that offer variety and spectacular scenery



Photo courtesy of Janet Zipser Zipkin

- **SUMMIT VALLEY HISTORY TRAIL** | The Summit Valley History Trail is an easy 4-mile loop around Summit Valley, a beautiful sub-alpine valley with history going back 4,000 years to the Martis Culture of Native Americans. Its modern history includes being a brief stopover for emigrants who had just successfully scaled Donner Summit, and being the route of the first transcontinental railroad.
- **LYLE'S LOOKOUT** | A short 3-mile hike from Summit Station provides a spectacular view of the iconic Devil's Peak and the Land Trust's Snow Mountain project.
- **ROWTON PEAK** | This moderately strenuous 4-mile hike leads through several wildflower and bird areas, offers expansive views of the Pacific Crest and the Granite Chief Wilderness, and passes through some impressive volcanic geology.
- **POINT MARIAH** | The highlight of this 5-mile moderate route is a viewpoint down 4,000 feet into the Royal Gorge of the North Fork of the American River.

# EXPLORE

## Green Valley Trail

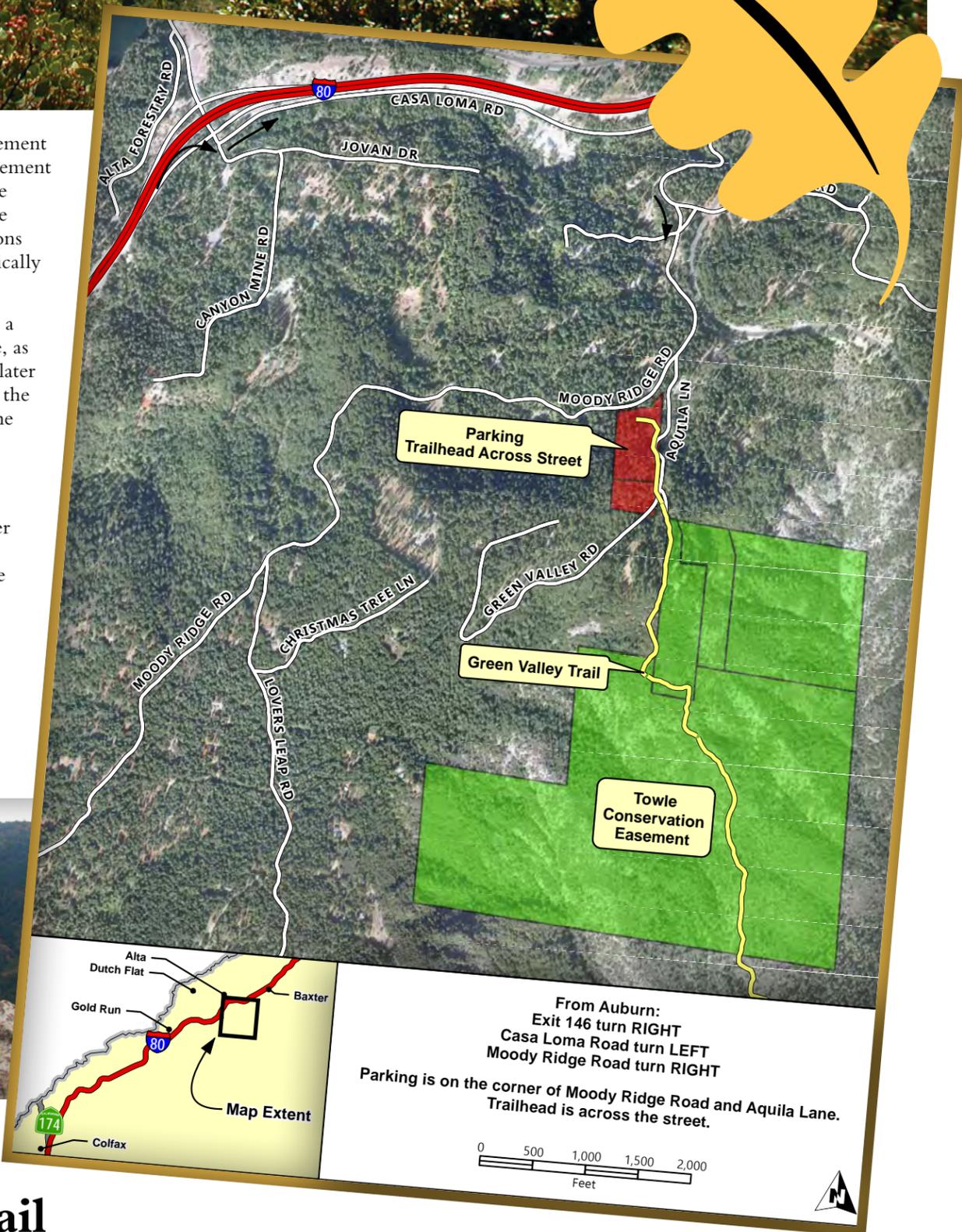


In 2003, Placer County acquired a trail and conservation easement on 235 acres of land in Alta from the Towle family. This easement allowed for the creation of a trail that begins at the top of the American River canyon and progresses to the North Fork of the American River below. The trail offers views of the steep canyons of the river, as well as Giant Gap and Green Valley, two geologically significant areas in this portion of the North Fork.

Giant Gap and Green Valley have captivated people since it was a vibrant mining community during the Gold Rush. At one time, as many as 2,000 people mined in Green Valley. Mule trains, and later the transcontinental railroad, trekked through Giant Gap along the canyon walls. Trains stopped here so passengers could admire the area once described as “Placer County’s Little Switzerland” and “Jehovah Gap.”

The easement on the Towle property provides the public with scenic opportunities and hiking. The trail passes through conifer forest and manzanita communities. Deer, squirrel, snakes, Western fence lizards, hawks, and a variety of other birds can be found in this area. Poison oak is also very common, and hikers should prepare accordingly.

The easement preserves plant and animal diversity and ensures the property will be protected from development in perpetuity. The Towle conservation easement is one of Placer Legacy’s many accomplishments in protecting Placer County’s natural resources.



## DIRECTIONS

### to Green Valley Trail

- 1 Take I-80 East to the Alta-Bonny Nook exit.
- 2 Take a right off of the freeway and make an immediate left on Casa Loma Road.
- 3 Turn right onto Casa Loma Road, and then make another right onto Moody Ridge Road.
- 4 When Moody Ridge Road and Aquila Road split, take Moody Ridge Road to the right.
- 5 The parking lot will be on the left, approximately .30 miles from the split.
- 6 Follow the trail at the parking lot to Aquila Road. Take a right on Aquila and follow the signs.
- 7 The trail is on the left.

# Fifteen Years of

# PLACER LEGACY

Farming and ranching have been part of the economic, cultural, and environmental fabric of Placer County since the first mass arrivals of Europeans and the discovery of gold near Auburn in 1848. Protecting farmland is a way for the public to produce food and fiber, maintain open space, retain natural systems and processes, control public infrastructure costs, preserve the local economic base and local self-sufficiency, promote rural lifestyles, maintain local specialty crops, and conserve energy. Protecting farmland also assists with groundwater recharge, flood storage, and to conserve wildlife habitat.

In April of 1998, the Placer County Board of Supervisors directed the Planning Department to prepare a program to implement the conservation goals and policies of the 1994 Placer County General Plan policy document. This program, known as the Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program, was adopted in June of 2000.

Placer Legacy implementation requires partnerships with State, Federal and Non-profit funding sources to assist with:

- Funding for conservation easements and land acquisition
- Passive park improvements
- Oak woodlands protection
- Vernal pool protection and restoration
- Trail easements and construction
- Riparian restoration and streambank restoration projects
- Fish passage improvement projects
- Wetland protection and restoration
- Education and outreach programs
- Water quality testing and monitoring

To date, the County has worked with willing-seller property owners and other agencies to conserve **9,644 acres** of land throughout the county. Through the program, the County is retaining its unique natural heritage, minimizing conflicts in achieving conservation and development goals, and enhancing the quality of life of current and future residents.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN SPACE

- Provides tranquility amid the rush and bustle of life
- Maintains the natural environmental processes and balances, helping to ensure a high quality water supply
- Preserves our connection with the natural world
- Helps lessen pollution by absorbing contaminants from our air and water
- Preserves areas of scenic beauty, and protects the semi-rural character of outlying areas
- Preserves lands that are not suited for development
- Provides land for active and leisure recreation
- Provides habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife

## CONSERVATION EASEMENT TAX BENEFITS

There may be tax benefits to donating or selling a conservation easement on your property. In order to qualify for an income tax deduction, the easement must be a) permanent b) held by a qualified organization and c) serve a valid conservation purpose, meaning that the property must have natural, scenic, historic, scientific, recreational, or open space value.

PRE-SORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PLACER COUNTY

## PLACER LEGACY

CONSERVING OUR LAND  
PROTECTING OUR HERITAGE

Placer Legacy, adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors in June 2000, was created to implement the open space and conservation policies of the General Plan by meeting a number of objectives:

- **MAINTAIN** a viable agricultural segment of the economy
- **CONSERVE** natural features necessary for access to a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities
- **RETAIN** important scenic and historic areas
- **PRESERVE** the diversity of plant and animal communities
- **PROTECT** endangered and other special status plant and animal species
- **SEPARATE** urban areas into distinct communities

To find out more about Placer Legacy, please contact the Placer County Planning Division at 530-745-3000. You can also learn more by visiting us at [www.placer.ca.gov/placerlegacy](http://www.placer.ca.gov/placerlegacy) or via email at [legacy@placer.ca.gov](mailto:legacy@placer.ca.gov).

