

# PLACER LEGACY PROGRAM SUMMARY

Issued May 2012

## Background

Adopted in June 2000, Placer Legacy is a program of the County of Placer to protect and conserve open space and agricultural lands. The program has been developed to implement the goals, policies and programs of the 1994 Placer County 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; and,
- Separate urban areas into distinct communities, and ensure public safety.

## **Program Funding**

Program funding for Placer Legacy is derived from several sources including donations, grants, in lieu fees collected to mitigate the impacts of developments, the County General Fund and federal and state monies. Placer Legacy expenditures to date total approximately \$36 million with offsetting revenues of approximately \$13 million. Table 1 lists expenditures to date by program area.

**Table 1—**Through March 2012

Cost by Program	Total Cost	Outside Funding & Reimbursement	Net County Cost
Program Start-up	\$465,016	\$0	\$465,016
Natural Resources Activities	\$4,271,591	\$1,730,842	\$2,540,749
Program Implementation	\$30,252,206	\$11,852,328	\$18,399,878
Public Outreach	\$1,193,967	\$32,879	\$1,161,088
Total Cost	\$36,182,780	\$13,616,049	\$22,566,731

Several departments work to meet program objectives and implement program activities. Facility Services oversees land acquisition negotiations and the development and maintenance of parks. The Planning Department implements watershed planning, property evaluations, conservation planning and public outreach activities. The Agricultural Commissioner provides input related to the agricultural component of the work program and promotes the availability and sale of locally grown agricultural products. The County Executive Office and County Counsel provide administrative support in policy direction, process, legal assistance and financial oversight.



# **Program Description**

Placer Legacy comprises four primary areas of program work including program startup, natural resource activities, program implementation (acquisition, monitoring, development and maintenance) and public outreach.

**Program Start-up** activities included preparing an implementation plan to direct program activities and assembling staff to implement the program. This phase of the program is completed.

**Natural Resource** activities involve realizing program objectives, such as watershed and conservation planning and stream and creek restoration projects.



**Program Implementation** activities consist of purchasing properties and conservation easements, monitoring acquired properties and easements, making improvements to acquired properties for public access and maintaining County parks and trails. This component of the program involves working with "willing-seller" property owners to ensure that the potential land acquisition meets the goals of the Placer Legacy program as well as the needs of the property owners. A summary of acquisitions to-date appears on the following pages.



Some improvements entail constructing trails and staging areas, providing restrooms and picnic facilities and improving road access. Maintenance activities on some properties consist of clearing plant debris, clearing brush to reduce wildfire risk and ensuring safe use for the public.

**Public Outreach** activities consist of educating the public about the Placer Legacy program through publications, billboards and ongoing media stories, giving presentations to the Board of Supervisors and interested stakeholders at meetings, workshops, forums and events, and supporting local farmers and ranchers by marketing local agricultural products at festivals, fairs, grocery stores, farmers' markets and restaurants.

# Placer Legacy County Acquisitions

Property / Date Acquired	Acres	Use	Purchase Price	Secured Grants and Other Funding	County Contribution	Improvement Cost Projections (County)	Annual Maintenance Projections (County)
Aitken Ranch Fall 2000	320	Agricultural easement	\$399,000	\$0	\$399,000	\$0	\$0
Green Valley Trail* Fall 2003	234	Trail & conservation easement	\$314,000	\$298,000	\$16,000	\$30,000	\$2,000
Lyndell Grey Farm Fall 2003	17.6	Agricultural easement	\$65,000	\$0	\$65,000	\$0	\$0
Hidden Falls Regional Park Phase 1* Fall 2004	220	Fee title - passive regional park	\$767,000	\$0	\$767,000	\$1,800,000	\$121,000
Hidden Falls Regional Park Phase 2* Winter 2003	961	Fee title - passive regional park	\$3,500,000	\$1,279,066	\$2,220,934	\$4,600,000	\$200,000
Blue Oak Ranch Fall 2004	500	Open Space easement		Gift	\$0	\$0	\$0
Heritage Plaza* Winter 2004	0.8	Fee title - Lake Tahoe open space & public access	\$1,319,000	\$980,000	\$339,000	\$0	\$7,000
Cisco Grove* Gould Park Winter 2004	15.7	Fee title - Yuba River public access	\$150,000	\$97,578	\$52,422	\$172,422	\$10,000
Sundance - Lakeview Farms Winter 2005	137	Conservation easement & Development rights	\$325,000	\$325,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Linda Creek Crossing* Winter 2005	0.58	Fee title - Trail access	\$70,000	\$0	\$70,000	\$400,000	\$1,000
Kirk Ranch Summer 2007	281	Conservation easement & Development rights	\$1,900,000	\$1,265,000	\$635,000	\$0	\$0
Natural Trading Company Winter 2010	40	Agricultural easement	\$665,000	\$337,500	\$327,500	\$0	\$0
	2,727	r will be everileble in th	\$9,474,000	\$4,582,144	\$4,891,856	\$7,002,422	\$341,000

<sup>\*</sup> Available for public use or will be available in the future

# County Contributions to Other Agency Acquisitions in Placer County

Property	Use	Acres	Fee or Easement Holder	County Contribution
Schallenberger Ridge* 2005	Fee Title - Public Access	1,970	Donner Lake State Park	\$150,000
Taylor Ranch* Spring 2007	Fee Title - Public Trail Access	321	Placer Land Trust	\$285,000
Liberty Ranch Big Hill Preserve* Summer 2007	Conservation Easement - Public Trail Access	313	Placer Land Trust	\$315,000
Waddle Ranch* Fall 2007	Fee Title - Conservation Easement - Public Access	1,482	Truckee Donner Land Trust/Truckee Donner Airport	\$6,741,192
Bruin Ranch* Winter 2010	Fee Title - Conservation Easement - Public Access	1,773	Placer Land Trust	\$5,000,000
Doty Ravine Preserve Winter 2010	Conservation Easement	427	Placer Land Trust	Included in Bruin Ranch Contribution
Totals		6,286		\$12,491,192

<sup>\*</sup>Available for public use or will be available in the future.

# **Property Descriptions**

#### Aitken Ranch

Located along Auburn Ravine, this 320-acre property is protected bγ an agricultural conservation easement and contains the largest single valley foothill riparian habitat on any single parcel in western Placer County. In addition, the easement protects one mile of Auburn Ravine, valley grasslands, vernal pools and existing ranching operations. Future replacement of the existing easement in favor of a state or federal habitat conservation easement will result in the return of the County's original purchase costs plus interest. No public access is permitted on this property.

#### **Green Valley Trail**

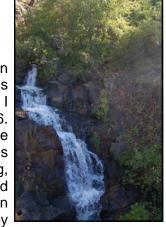
The acquisition included the purchase of a habitat conservation easement and public access trail easement on 234 acres of forested land located in Alta near Giant Gap overlooking the North Fork American River Canyon. A public trail staging area on Moody Ridge Road provides access to the Green Valley Trail which leads to the North Fork American River.

## **Lyndell Grey Farm**

This 17.6-acre property on Crosby Herold Road is protected through an agricultural conservation easement. The property is a portion of what remains of a much larger family ranch that had been held by the same family for generations. The easement does not permit public access.

## <u>Hidden Falls Regional</u> Park - Phase 1

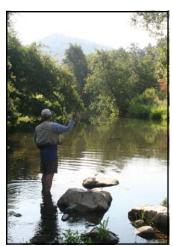
Located between Auburn and Lincoln, Hidden Falls Regional Park - Phase I opened in October 2006. The 220-acre open space park features seven miles of trails suitable for hiking, running, biking and horseback riding. In addition, visitors can enjoy



fishing, picnicking, wildlife viewing, photography and other passive recreational pursuits. A paved, ADA-accessible trail, parking lot, equestrian staging areas are also available.

#### **Hidden Falls Regional Park - Phase 2**

Phase 2 (Spears Ranch) consists of 961 acres of blue oak woodland with over two miles of Coon



Creek in the center of a valley running east/west through the site. When combined with adjacent Phase I, over 1,200 acres will be available for passive recreational activities. An Environmental Impact been Report has completed a n d improvements to this acreage are beginning. Phase 2 is tentatively scheduled to open for public use in Fall 2012.

#### **Blue Oak Ranch**

Through a gift from the long-time property owner, the County secured a conservation easement over 21 residential lots totaling 500 acres. Adjacent to Hidden Falls Regional Park, this easement removed approximately 140 units of potential holding capacity from sensitive habitat and limits each remaining parcel to a 3-acre use area. The easement preserves the rural residential landscape and open space character of this property, which is dominated by blue oak woodlands and riparian areas. The easement does not permit public access.

#### Heritage Plaza

This acquisition comprises 0.8 of an acre of lake front property in Tahoe City. This parcel was the last privately owned, undeveloped parcel in the commercial core area. With a grant from the California Tahoe Conservancy and funding from the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, this property preserves and enhances regional public access and recreational opportunities in the Lake Tahoe basin.

#### **Cisco Grove Gould Park**

This 15.7 acre park opened in October 2006 and includes picnic tables, paved parking, a restroom and two historic structures from the commercial era of Cisco Grove on old Highway 40. The park currently sits adjacent to Interstate 80 along the South Fork of the Yuba River and protects aquatic and montane riparian habitat. The Placer Land Trust, in partnership with the Emigrant Greenway trust, helped purchase the property.

#### **Sundance - Lakeview Farms**

The 137-acre property is protected through the purchase of conservation values that include floodwater conveyance and storage, flood management and wildlife habitat and agricultural purposes. The project was funded 100%

by a grant from the Department of Water Resources and includes opportunities for riparian restoration. No public access is permitted.



## **Linda Creek Crossing**

The County purchased the fee title interest in 0.58 of an acre in the Wexford Subdivision in Granite Bay to allow the realignment of a regional trail in order to allow for construction of a crossing over Linda Creek. This trail connection is the final segment to allow year-round use of the regional trail from the State Park at Beals Point connecting to trails within the City of Roseville.

#### Kirk Ranch

This 281-acre property in western Placer County near Camp Far West Reservoir is protected through the purchase of a conservation easement, thus preserving the property's long-standing history of agricultural activities and a large tract of rangeland. Property assets include dense stands of blue oak woodland,



grassland/dry pasture, perennial and seasonal creeks, and scenic views. This easement does not permit public access.

## **Natural Trading Company**

In an effort to preserve land for continued agricultural use, Placer Legacy, the California Department of Conservation, and Placer Land Trust established an agricultural conservation easement on a 40-acre Newcastle farm property. The easement, finalized in February 2010, prevents any use of development of the property that would significantly damage or impair the property or its agricultural values. The Natural Trading Company is certified organic by the California Certified Organic Farmers. Public access is not permitted.

#### Schallenberger Ridge

Placer County contributed \$150,000 toward the purchase of the 1,970-acre Schallenberger Ridge property from the Croman Timber Corporation. Acquisition of this property tripled the size of Donner Lake State Park. The ridgeline property dominates the skyline immediately south of Donner Lake and will provide public access.

#### **Taylor Ranch**

The Placer Legacy program was a funding partner in this acquisition effort led by Placer

Land Trust. The County \$285.000 contributed towards the fee title purchase of 321 acres of oak woodlands situated less than a mile from Hidden Falls Regional Park. The site features a wide range of riparian and foothill habitat and is traversed by Coon Creek. The purchase includes a public access trail



easement to be improved once additional trail connections are obtained.

#### **Liberty Ranch Big Hill Preserve**

Secured by the Placer Land Trust, the County contributed \$315,000 towards this 313-acre conservation and public access trail easement. Previously known as the Freiheit property, it is located in the Big Hill/ Garden Bar area situated



between the Coon Creek and Bear River watersheds. The property contains significant oak woodlands, granite rock outcroppings, seasonal streams and habitat for numerous wildlife species. Liberty Ranch offers panoramic views of the Central Valley, Sutter Buttes, Coast Range and Sierra Nevadas. The property adjoins two Land Trust properties (the 160-acre Kotomyan Big Hill Preserve and the 321-acre Taylor Ranch Preserve) and is approximate to the Hidden Falls Regional Park creating a 2000-acre open space preserve.

#### Waddle Ranch

Placer County's significant contribution to the Truckee Donner Land Trust led to the purchase of 1,481 acres of land in the Martis Valley. This acquisition preserves the most ecologically diverse property in the entire valley due to its undeveloped status and the diversity of the site, ranging from meadow habitat to upland riparian and forested features. The property contains a significant

diversity of wildlife habitat, including sagebrush and grasslands, bitterbrush, two linear miles of streams, seasonal wetlands and vernal pools, and old growth pine forests. The



protection of Waddle Ranch as permanent open space links Martis Creek Lake National Recreation Area with the Tahoe National Forest and other nearby open space areas. Funded with development fees, federal revenue and state grants, the property closed escrow in October 2007. The property is currently open year-round for non-motorized recreation.

#### **Bruin Ranch**

Placer County teamed up with the State to contribute to Placer Land Trust's acquisition of 1,773 acres of oak woodlands located outside of Auburn. In December 2010, the Board of Supervisors approved an agreement that allowed the Placer Land Trust to complete acquisition of the property in cooperation with The Trust for Public Land. The property is part of the 2,300-acre Bruin Ranch, which is located in the Auburn Valley-Big Hill



area. The ranch is west of Highway 49 and just south of the Bear River, the boundary between Placer and Nevada counties. Under the agreement, Placer County contributed \$5 million to acquire a conservation easement

on the 1,773-acre site. As part of the deal, the County also will receive a conservation easement from Placer Land Trust for a 427-acre West Placer property known as the Doty Ravine Preserve. The Bruin Ranch is now open to the public during Placer Land Trust docent-led tours.

# **Accomplishments to Date**

- Worked with willing-seller property owners and other agencies to conserve 9,013 acres of land throughout Placer County.
- Opened Cisco Grove Gould Park and Hidden Falls Regional Park in October 2006.
- Awarded \$1.8 million in state River Parkway
   Grant Program funding for park site improvements.
- Secured nearly \$5.8 million in grants to assist in land transactions, restoration activities, biological surveys, and natural resource planning efforts.
- Secured three Sierra Nevada Conservancy grants totaling \$200,000 for creek crossing signage, Low Impact Development Guidebook and Hidden Falls Regional Park Connectivity Study.
- Completed Squaw Creek Restoration Feasibility Study.
- Completed the Rock Creek Restoration Plan.
- Completed the Truckee River Corridor Access Plan and Dry Creek Greenway Regional Vision.
- Completed watershed plans for Auburn Ravine, Markham Ravine, Coon Creek, Pleasant Grove, Curry Creek and Dry Creek.
- Joined the Consumnes, American, Bear & Yuba (CABY) River Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.
- Completed a riparian-restoration project along Miners Ravine, a fish-passage study for Coon

- Creek and Auburn Ravine, and a water quality monitoring assessment for the Pleasant Grove and Curry Creek watershed.
- Teamed with the Nevada Irrigation District to prepare a fish-passage improvement design project for Hemphill Dam and the Route 65 gauging station.
- Secured \$303,645 funding from CALFED for a fish passage project on Auburn Ravine.
- Completed the Coon Creek stream restoration and wetland enhancement project on the Lakeview Farms Property west of Dowd Road and south of Waltz Road in western Placer County.
- Promoted the Auburn Wine, Mountain Mandarin and Placer Farm and Barn Festivals, which have enjoyed increasing attendance each year.
- Developed outreach brochures for the Auburn Ravine/Coon Creek and Dry Creek watersheds
- Publish Placer Legacy newsletter periodicals.
- Secured grant funding for agricultural marketing activities, including publishing numerous promotional materials and enhancing growers' marketing and outreach efforts.
- Completed a new brochure- "Conservation Tools for Placer County Property Owners"
- Created a Placer Legacy web page:

# **Current Activities**

- Conducting ongoing property investigations and real estate negotiations to explore a variety of land conservation opportunities.
- Working with funding partners, assisting with acquisitions for blue oak woodlands by providing technical assistance and by potentially providing match funding to complete transactions on one or more properties.
- In concert with the Nevada Irrigation District and several funding partners, initiating a fish-passage
   project on Auburn Ravine.
- Working with the Flood Control District to secure •
  flood and conservation easements in the west Coon •
  Creek watershed.
- Initiating additional park improvements to Hidden Falls Regional Park site Phase 1 and Phase 2.

- Working with the Department of Public Works to prepare a comprehensive Water Quality Monitoring Program in the Martis Valley.
- Coordinating with the Truckee Watershed Council, the Tahoe Public Utilities District and Public Works on the Truckee River Riparian Restoration Project.
- Coordinating with Public Works on the Blackwood Creek and Ward Creek restoration efforts in the Tahoe area.
- Continuing to assist Placer County growers to enhance their marketing efforts.
- Publication of the Placer Legacy newsletter.
- Continued attendance at Earth Day events promoting the Placer Legacy Program and other public outreach activities.
- Ongoing monitoring of conservation easements and stewardship of County-owned properties.

