MARIPOSA COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA
ACTION FORM
DATE: Nov. 10, 2008
AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

DEPARTMENT: Board of Supervisors
BY: Supervisor Bibby
PHONE: 966-3222

RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:
Resolution certifying that the Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement proposal is consistent with the Mariposa County Voluntary Oak Woodland Management Plan and Landowner Guidelines, and authorizing Chair to sign required certification.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
The Board of Supervisors adopted the Voluntary Oak Woodland Management Plan and Landowner Guidelines on July 15, 2003, Resolution 03-266, assisting landowners in the management and stewardship of the oak woodlands of Mariposa County. Mariposa County recognizes the value of its oak woodland resources for their economic, recreational, wildlife habitat and aesthetic values.

The Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement proposal conserves approximately 2,550 acres of oak woodland and oak savanna including blue oak, valley oak and live oak mixed. The property is approximately 3,941 total acres located on Ben Hur Road, and provides a significant opportunity to protect scenic open space consistent with goals and objectives of the Mariposa County General Plan (Agriculture Element and General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element).

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION: This is a time sensitive item, in that the Oakvale Ranch, LLC and the American Land Conservancy are applying to the California Wildlife Conservation Board Oak Woodland Grant Program.

Financial Impact? ( ) Yes (X) No Current FY Cost: $ 
Budgeted In Current FY? ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Partially Funded 
Amount in Budget: $ 
Additional Funding Needed: $ 
Source: 
Internal Transfer 
Unanticipated Revenue 
Transfer Between Funds 
Contingency 
( ) General ( ) Other 
Annual Recurring Cost: $ 
List Attachments, number pages consecutively 
Description of project/grant proposal with maps; 
F & G Sect. 1366(f) and Required Cert. for execution; sections of Gen Plan re Conservation 
Easements; Res. 03-266 MPSA County 
Woodland Plan and Guidelines 
Letter from Planner 
Letter from CAO

CLERK’S USE ONLY:
Res. No. 0839 Ord. No. _____ 
Vote – Ayes: _____ Noes: _____ 
( ) Approved 
( ) Minute Order Attached ( ) No Action Necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.
Date: ____________
Attest: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board
County of Mariposa, State of California
By: ______________________
Deputy

COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:
( ) Requested Action Recommended
No Opinion
Comments: ________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
CAO: ________________________
______________________________
Required Certifications

1. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1363(d)(1), the grantee or holder of the conservation easement hereby certifies to review, on an annual basis, the conservation easement have been met for that year. The grantee or holder of the conservation easement further agrees to notify WCB that said review was performed and provide a brief summary of the review.

Certification: _________________________ Date: _________________________

2. Pursuant to the requirement of Section 1366(b), we, the project applicant and the landowner, hereby certify the conservation easement is not required to satisfy a condition imposed upon the landowner by any lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement of use issued by one or more public agencies, including but not limited to, the mitigation of significant effects on the environment of a project pursuant to an approved environmental impact report or to mitigate a negative declaration required pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Project Applicant Certification:

________________________________________ Date: ________________

Landowner Certification:

________________________________________ Date: ________________

3. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1366(f), Mariposa County hereby certifies that the project submitted for consideration by the Wildlife Conservation Board is consistent with the Oak Woodlands Management Plan of Mariposa County.

Certification: ___________________________ Date: 11-10-08

4. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1368, the project applicant hereby certifies that eminent domain proceedings have not been utilized to acquire the conservation easement.

Certification ___________________________ Date: _________________________
COUNTY of MARIPOSA
P.O. Box 784, Mariposa, CA 95338 (209) 966-3222

LYLE TURPIN, CHAIR
DIANNE A. FRITZ, VICE CHAIR
BRAD ABORN
JANET BIBBY
BOB PICKARD

DISTRICT II
DISTRICT IV
DISTRICT I
DISTRICT III
DISTRICT V

MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MINUTE ORDER

TO: SUPERVISOR BIBBY
FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board

SUBJECT: Adopt a Resolution Certifying that the Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement Proposal is Consistent with the Mariposa County Voluntary Oak Woodland Management Plan and Landowner Guidelines, and Authorize the Board of Supervisors Chair to Sign the Certification

RESOLUTION 08-529

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

ADOPTED THIS Order on November 10, 2008

ACTION AND VOTE:

10:01 a.m. Supervisor Bibby;
Adopt a Resolution Certifying that the Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement Proposal is Consistent with the Mariposa County Voluntary Oak Woodland Management Plan and Landowner Guidelines, and Authorize the Board of Supervisors Chair to Sign the Certification

BOARD ACTION: Supervisor Bibby initiated discussion and reviewed the request; and she advised that Jerry Preston/applicant and Ed Stanton/American Land Conservancy were present.

Input from the public was provided by the following:

Ed Stanton provided input on the County’s role in providing the certification for the application, and he provided information on the process. Discussion was held. Supervisor Turpin noted that “city” needs to be changed to reflect the “town” of Mariposa in the application.

Bridgett Fithian, Sierra Foothill Conservancy, advised that they support this project.

(M)Bibby, (S)Aborn, Res. 08-529 was adopted approving the recommended actions/Ayes: Unanimous.

Cc: Dana Hertfelder, Public Works Director
File
November 12, 2008

Gary Preston
Oakvale Ranch, LLC
1968 Ben Hur Road
Raymond, CA 93653

Dear Mr. Preston:

At its meeting on November 10, 2008, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 08-529 certifying that the Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement Proposal is consistent with the Mariposa County Voluntary Oak Woodland Management Plan and Landowner Guidelines.

Enclosed for each of you is a certified copy of Resolution No. 08-529 and an original certification form as requested.

Should you have any questions please contact me at (209) 966-3222.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Margie Williams
Clerk of the Board

Enclosure

Cc: Edward Stanton
Planning Department
Supervisor Bibby
November 12, 2008

Edward Stanton
American Land Conservancy
250 Montgomery St., Suite 210
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Mr. Stanton:

At its meeting on November 10, 2008, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 08-529 certifying that the Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement Proposal is consistent with the Mariposa County Voluntary Oak Woodland Management Plan and Landowner Guidelines.

Enclosed for each of you is a certified copy of Resolution No. 08-529 and an original certification form as requested.

Should you have any questions please contact me at (209) 966-3222.

Sincerely,

Margie Williams
Clerk of the Board

Enclosure

Cc: Gary Preston
Planning Department
Supervisor Bibby
Required Certifications

1. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1363(d)(1), the grantee or holder of the conservation easement hereby certifies to review, on an annual basis, the conservation easement have been met for that year. The grantee or holder of the conservation easement further agrees to notify WCB that said review was performed and provide a brief summary of the review.

Certification: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

2. Pursuant to the requirement of Section 1366(b), we, the project applicant and the landowner, hereby certify the conservation easement is not required to satisfy a condition imposed upon the landowner by any lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement of use issued by one or more public agencies, including but not limited to, the mitigation of significant effects on the environment of a project pursuant to an approved environmental impact report or to mitigate a negative declaration required pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Project Applicant Certification:

______________________________ Date: ___________________________

Landowner Certification:

______________________________ Date: ___________________________

3. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1366(f), Mariposa County hereby certifies that the project submitted for consideration by the Wildlife Conservation Board is consistent with the Oak Woodlands Management Plan of Mariposa County.

Certification: __________________ Date: 11-10-08

4. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1368, the project applicant hereby certifies that eminent domain proceedings have not been utilized to acquire the conservation easement.

Certification: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
TO: Rick Benson, County Administrative Officer  
County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Kris Schenk, Planning Director

RE: Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement

Mariposa Planning has been asked to provide comments regarding the proposed Conservation Easement for the 4000-acre Oakvale ranch. This proposal is a grant application for funding from the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). The Board of Supervisors is considering this item at its November 10, 2008 meeting.

Based on documents and detailed resource management information supplied by Ed Stanton, Project Manager, on behalf of the American Land Conservancy, staff concludes that this project is consistent with and will help implement goals and policies of the Mariposa County General Plan. The General Plan broadly encourages “programs for management and conservation of natural resources and open space.” Policy 11-1(b) states: “Collaborate with other public and private agencies for conservation management plans and programs.” Numerous implementation measures in the General Plan are intended to protect the rural character and scenic resources of Mariposa County, as well as to preserve working agricultural landscapes. Sound and well-managed Conservation Easements, as envisioned with this application, constitute essential tools for private landowners and conservation agencies to protect the natural resources and open space heritage of Mariposa County. Protecting and enhancing the native habitats of oak woodlands, in concert with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the local Resource Conservation District, represents a collaborative resource management opportunity supported by the General Plan.

Conservation Easements between private parties in Mariposa County do not require local agency public hearings or approvals. Conservation Easements on ranches within Williamson Act contracts have not historically been considered by the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Nor does the County have a role in the environmental review (CEQA) of such agreements. The Board of Supervisors is therefore able to consider the Oakvale Ranch Conservation Agreement without further local review, based on the merits of the proposal for California Wildlife Conservation Board grant funding.

Our Mission is to provide our clients with professional service and accurate information in a respectful, courteous, and enthusiastic manner resulting in a well-planned rural environment.
Resolution No. 03-266

MARIPOSA COUNTY
VOLUNTARY OAK WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN AND LANDOWNER GUIDELINES RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Mariposa County recognizes the value of its oak woodland resources for their economic, recreational, wildlife habitat and aesthetic values to the local population and visitors; and,

WHEREAS, the State of California has passed the Oak Woodlands Conservation Act (AB 242) encouraging and assisting counties to support the efforts of private landowners to protect oak woodlands; and,

WHEREAS, the economic, social, and environmental viability of the agricultural-forestry enterprises operating within these oak woodlands should be protected; and,

WHEREAS, Mariposa County recognizes that these lands are subject to devastating fires and forest pests, and it encourages the integration of protection measures in fuel modification within the oak woodlands to protect the resources, property, and life; and,

WHEREAS, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors recognizes that the citizens of Mariposa County have the land stewardship responsibility to manage the oak woodland resources and their social-economic values;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors of Mariposa County hereby adopts the following voluntary management plan and guidelines to assist landowners in the management and stewardship of the oak woodlands of Mariposa County; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these guidelines are voluntary and in no way are binding by force of law on the private landowner or abridge their private property rights, and that no governmental agency shall use these guidelines for regulatory or taxation purposes, and that the following are recommended guidelines.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, a political subdivision of the State of California, this 15th day of July 2003, by the following vote:

AYES: STETSON, BALMAIN, BIBBY, PARKER, PICKARD
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: NONE
ABSTAINED: NONE

BOB PICKARD, Chairman

ATTEST:

MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

JEFFREY G. GREEN, County Counsel
Proposal to:
California Wildlife Conservation Board
Oak Woodlands Grant Program

September 15, 2008

Submitted by:
American Land Conservancy

Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement
Part 1

Grantee and Landowner Information

Name of Applicant: American Land Conservancy

Project Title: Oakvale Ranch Conservation Easement

Project Manager: Edward Stanton

Mailing Address: 250 Montgomery St., Suite 210, San Francisco, CA 94104

Telephone Number: (415) 912-3666  Fax Number: (415) 912-3662

Email Address: ed@alcnet.org

Tax Payer ID Number: 94-3121656

Landowner Information

Name of Landowner: Oakvale Ranch, LLC

Mailing Address: 1968 Ben Hur Road, Raymond, CA 93653

Telephone Number: (559) 299-9210  Fax Number:

Type of Project: Conservation Easement

Project Location: Mariposa County
Town of Mariposa
Near intersection of Ben Hur Road and Preston Road
Part II

Required Attachments
And Certifications

1. Oak Woodland Resolution and Management Plan adopted by County of Mariposa.
   See Attachment 1.

2. Project Location Maps
   See Attachment 2.

3. Identification and location of project site within the Oak Woodland Section
   The project is located in the Sierra Nevada Foothills Oak Woodland Section.

   See Attachment 3.
4. Six color, 4X5 photographs of the project area.

Blue oak woodland with valley oaks and interior live oaks mixed in, Oakvale Ranch, Mariposa County.

Blue oak woodland, Oakvale Ranch, Mariposa County.
Valley oaks on the banks of Raynor Creek, Oakvale Ranch, Mariposa County.

Blue oak woodland, Oakvale Ranch, Mariposa County.
Blue oak savannah with scattered valley oaks, Oakvale Ranch, Mariposa County.

Annual grassland range with oak woodlands in the distance, Oakvale Ranch, Mariposa County.
5. Acquisition map showing exterior boundaries and parcel numbers. 
See Attachment 5.

6. Topographic map of property highlighting oak woodlands and associated habitat. 
See Attachment 6.

7. Name and mailing address of all adjacent landowners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OWNER'S NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>CITY/STATE/ZIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brossard, Mike &amp; Tracy</td>
<td>1662 Ben Hur Rd</td>
<td>Raymond CA 93653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, Clyde &amp; Fern</td>
<td>17237 Geneva Ct</td>
<td>Grass Valley CA 95949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennett, G. Helen</td>
<td>PO Box 213</td>
<td>Mariposa CA 95338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camin, Ernest</td>
<td>2291 E Warwick Ave</td>
<td>Fresno, CA 93720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkerson, Roy &amp; Caroline</td>
<td>2247 Ben Hur Rd</td>
<td>Raymond CA 93653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hart, Harold &amp; Josie</td>
<td>1559 Ben Hur Rd</td>
<td>Raymond CA 93653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbourne, Ronald &amp; Linda</td>
<td>12499 Colony Ave</td>
<td>Tulare CA 93274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen Trust c/o Amanda Stameart</td>
<td>13771 Ave 18 1/2</td>
<td>Chowchilla CA 93610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santos, Isidro &amp; Rossana</td>
<td>29877 Venderbilk St #2</td>
<td>Hayward CA 94544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Preston</td>
<td>4421 S Cook St</td>
<td>Le Grand CA 95333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Preston Chapman</td>
<td>13173 Le Grand Rd</td>
<td>Le Grand CA 95333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emery Preston</td>
<td>17626 S Britto Rd</td>
<td>Dos Palos CA 93620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westfall, Gerald &amp; Patricia</td>
<td>18225 Buchanan Hollow Rd</td>
<td>Le Grand CA 95333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westfall, Lenice</td>
<td>1330 W 21st St</td>
<td>Merced CA 95340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Smith</td>
<td>PO Box 378</td>
<td>Le Grand CA 95333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosasco, Allan</td>
<td>PO Box 12</td>
<td>Oakhurst CA 93644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowell, Jerry &amp; Kimberly</td>
<td>PO Box 80965</td>
<td>Las Vegas NV 89180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownbey, Betty</td>
<td>123 S &quot;J&quot; St</td>
<td>Madera CA 93637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapman, June</td>
<td>1250 Ben Hur Rd</td>
<td>Raymond CA 93653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright, Philip &amp; Gay</td>
<td>1195 Ben Hur Rd</td>
<td>Raymond CA 93653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wight, John &amp; Nadine</td>
<td>1890 Ben Hur Rd</td>
<td>Raymond CA 93653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston, Clinton</td>
<td>1972 Ben Hur Rd</td>
<td>Raymond CA 93653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Kevin &amp; Carlinda</td>
<td>2117 Ben Hur Rd</td>
<td>Raymond CA 93653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Restoration Plan
Not applicable.

9. Applicable management plans
There is no written management plan guiding ranching operations. Operations of the ranch will continue to be the responsibility of the property owner, which is the family that has owned the property for more than 150 years. Funding for management is generated from income related to ranching operations.

Though Oakvale Ranch LLC does not have a written management plan, standard practice is that at the beginning of each calendar year the General Manager
presents a verbal report explaining his goals for the coming calendar year to the Operations Manager's Committee (a seven-member committee consisting of one family member from each branch of the family). He then updates the Committee verbally at each of the succeeding meetings, which are conducted quarterly or as needed throughout each year.

Examples of current management activities:

- In 2007 the General Manager proposed completing a new well with solar power, a 4,000-gallon tank in an area known as Grandma's Field, and conversion of two additional wells to solar (along with the existing windmills). The new well/solar panel/tank/through was completed in 2007 and work began on the other two upgrades. The added solar panels, new troughs, and storage tanks for the upgrades were completed in March of 2008.

- Oakvale Ranch attempts to replace a designated amount of fencing each year as part of its on-going maintenance and repairs. In 2007, approximately 2 miles of fencing was replaced. The goal for 2008 is to replace 1 1/2 miles of fencing. To date, about one-half has been completed.

- The ranch is in the process of replacing the gates on the ranch and converting them from wood/barbwire to metal gates with cemented/braced posts. Most gates have already been replaced over the last two years.

- The General Manager appraises the Committee on ranch road conditions and maintenance is performed while the ground is still workable and long before the fire season.

- The General Manager apprises the Committee of all large fallen trees and/or limbs so that any family member who needs firewood can be directed to those spots for their wood needs (the ranch does allow the cutting of any living trees). Occasionally the ranch will clear brush and undergrowth near/around trees where there is the potential for grass to grow to provide more feed for the cattle.

- Unwanted problem weeds (such as yellow star thistle) are treated with chemical and mechanical methods when they begin growing and as they are spotted.

- On an annual basis, the General Manager clears grasses between the county roads, along fence lines, and at access points to the ranch from county roads.

- On an annual basis the Committee chooses one site on the ranch (often a former home site) to clean up by removing any wood, nails, barbed wire, pieces of metal/glass, etc.
Required Certifications

1. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1363(d)(1), the grantee or holder of the conservation easement hereby certifies to review, on an annual basis, the conservation easement have been met for that year. The grantee or holder of the conservation easement further agrees to notify WCB that said review was performed and provide a brief summary of the review.

Certification: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

2. Pursuant to the requirement of Section 1366(b), we, the project applicant and the landowner, hereby certify the conservation easement is not required to satisfy a condition imposed upon the landowner by any lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement of use issued by one or more public agencies, including but not limited to, the mitigation of significant effects on the environment of a project pursuant to an approved environmental impact report or to mitigate a negative declaration required pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Project Applicant Certification: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Landowner Certification: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

3. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1366(f), Mariposa County hereby certifies that the project submitted for consideration by the Wildlife Conservation Board is consistent with the Oak Woodlands Management Plan of Mariposa County.

Certification: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

4. Pursuant to the requirements of Section 1368, the project applicant hereby certifies that eminent domain proceedings have not been utilized to acquire the conservation easement.

Certification ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Part III

Program Guidelines and Selection Criteria

The project is of sufficient size to promote biological integrity and provide superior wildlife values.

1. How many acres of oak woodland does the project conserve?

   The project conserves approximately 2,550 acres of oak woodland and oak savanna.

2. Describe other habitat types found on the property and how the project will conserve perennial or seasonal creek frontage, if present.

   Other than oak woodlands and oak savanna, the dominant habitat type on Oakvale Ranch is annual grassland. Patches of foothill pine/chaparral are also present. Soils on the ranch are sandy loams to rocky loams with a few granitic outcrops throughout the ranch. Slopes are from 0-30 percent with most of the ranch being on slopes from 5-15 percent. The western half of the ranch is annual grasslands and oak savanna while the eastern half of the ranch is oak woodland with oak canopy from 10-80 percent cover.

   The ranch lies within the Raynor Creek watershed, which flows into the Chowchilla River. Approximately two miles of Raynor Creek channel are within the Oakvale Ranch property. Approximately one linear mile of Dutchman Creek is within the property, and short reaches (< 0.5 mi.) of unnamed, seasonal blue-line tributaries to Chapman Creek also are within the property. Drainage patterns are from north to south toward Eastman Lake and the Chowchilla River. The restrictions in the conservation easement will aim to protect the creek channels from degradation due to overuse by cattle and other harmful land management practices.

3. Does the property meet multiple nature resource conservation objectives, including but not limited to wetlands, riparian habitat, and/or scenic open space preservation? Please explain.

   The property meets multiple nature resource conservation objectives, including riparian habitat and scenic open space preservation. Two seasonal creeks run through the property. While neither is significant for anadromous fish, both provide a water source to local wildlife. Vernal pools are potentially on the property, but no surveys have been conducted to verify their presence. Vernal pools are widely distributed in western Mariposa County grasslands, and Oakvale Ranch’s western areas extend into this grassland habitat type.
The property is approximately 3,941 acres, providing a significant opportunity to protect scenic open space in western Mariposa County in the foothills below Yosemite National Park. The property extends for 2.5 miles along Ben Hur Road, a well-used, local thoroughfare that is increasingly being subdivided and developed into ranchettes and urban sprawl southward from the City of Mariposa. The easement will protect the ranch from future subdivision and development, with limited exception of future ability of the landowner to construct residential units for personal use in defined envelopes along Ben Hur Road.

4. Please describe the aquatic, plant and wildlife species that benefit from your proposal or will benefit because of the restoration effort.

Sensitive species that may directly benefit for the long-term conservation of Oakvale Ranch include mountain lion, western pond turtle, California red-legged frog, western spadefoot toad, and California tiger salamander. No biological surveys have been conducted on the property, therefore the presence of these species cannot be verified, but they are all known from the vicinity of Oakvale Ranch. The following species are documented in the immediate vicinity of Oakvale Ranch from the California Natural Diversity Database:

### Mammals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black-tailed jack rabbit</th>
<th>Brush rabbit</th>
<th>California voles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California ground squirrel</td>
<td>Heermann’s kangaroo rat</td>
<td>Ornate shrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert cottontail</td>
<td>Black-tailed mule deer</td>
<td>Botta’s pocket gopher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquin pocket mouse</td>
<td>Coyote</td>
<td>Virginia opossum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western gray squirrel</td>
<td>Hoary bat</td>
<td>Large-eared woodrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western mastiff bat</td>
<td>Brazilian free-tailed bat</td>
<td>Long-tailed weasel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western red bat</td>
<td>Deer mouse</td>
<td>Western spotted skunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripped skunk</td>
<td>Wild pig</td>
<td>Mountain lion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reptiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California mountain king snake</th>
<th>Western rattle snake</th>
<th>Gilbert’s skink</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western pond turtle</td>
<td>Common garter snake</td>
<td>Southern alligator lizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-nosed snake</td>
<td>Western fence lizard</td>
<td>Rubber boa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western whiptail</td>
<td>Gopher snake</td>
<td>Sierra aquatic garter snake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Amphibians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California red-legged frog</th>
<th>Western spadefoot toad</th>
<th>California tiger salamander</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western toad</td>
<td>Bullfrog</td>
<td>Foothill yellow-legged frog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensatina</td>
<td>Pacific tree frog</td>
<td>California newt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Birds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Killdeer</th>
<th>Bushtit</th>
<th>California quail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey vulture</td>
<td>Oak titmouse</td>
<td>Mourning dove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-tailed hawk</td>
<td>Western bluebird</td>
<td>Horned lark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American kestrel</td>
<td>Mountain bluebird</td>
<td>European starling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acorn woodpecker</td>
<td>Ash-throated flycatcher</td>
<td>Black-headed grosbeak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern flicker</td>
<td>Black phoebe</td>
<td>Spotted towhee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-gray gnatcatcher</td>
<td>Western kingbird</td>
<td>Lark sparrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western scrub jay</td>
<td>Western meadowlark</td>
<td>Lesser goldfinch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-billed magpie</td>
<td>American robin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plant species observed include: Wild oats, ripgut brome, soft chess, filaree, clovers, red brome, mouse barley, foxtail fescue, burclover, needlegrass, blue wildrye, blue grass, poison oak, deer brush, buck brush, black sage, California sage, white sage, silver hairgrass, lupine, tomcat clover, nitgrass, foothill pine, whiteleaf manzanita, California buckeye, elderberry, California yerba santa, black walnut, ironwood, showy milkweed, aster, brodiaea, fiddleneck, larkspur, blue-eyed grass and buttercups.

5. Does the property contain sufficient surface or ground water to sustain the goals and objectives of the restoration project?

Not applicable.

The project area contains oak woodlands and/or a diversity of oak classes that will promote the sustainability and perpetuation of oak woodlands.

1. What oak species are present on the property? Describe the approximate size classes of oaks present on the property, i.e. presence of oak seedlings, young oak trees and older, mature oak trees and the approximate percentage of area occupied by such trees relative to the entire project.

Four oak species are present on the property: Blue Oak, Interior Live Oak, Valley Oak, and Scrub Oak, covering approximately 65% of the property.

Size and Age Classes of each species:

a) **Blue Oak** constitutes approximately 79% of the oak canopy area on Oakvale Ranch, which is consistent with the distribution of cover types throughout the San Joaquin region as described by the California Oak Foundation. Size classes of blue oak ranged from seedling through mature trees (see details in table below). Recruitment was evident in this species as seedlings were seen primarily in uplands where rock outcrops occur. Most trees were in the 8-24” diameter at breast height (dbh) range, with many old mature trees present. Approximately 1,530 acres of blue oak woodland and 495 acres of blue oak savanna are present on the property.

b) **Interior Live Oak** size classes ranged from seedling through mature trees. There are more seedlings of this species present on the ranch than any other
oak species. This could be due to the spiny nature of the leaves so livestock and wildlife do not want to browse the leaves. Most trees ranged from 3-12” dbh while some were as large as 22” dbh. Approximately 400 acres, or 17% of the oak canopy area on the property, are covered by Interior Live Oak.

c) **Valley Oak** are primarily mature trees ranging 20-34” dbh. No seedlings were observed and few young trees were present. The young trees are likely in the range of 50-80 years old, with most probably being well over 100 years old. Approximately 125 acres, or 5% of the oak canopy area on the property, of Valley Oak are present.

d) **Scrub Oak** age class ranged from seedling through mature trees. Recruitment is occurring in rocky outcrop areas and in upland rocky soils. Few scrub oak are present on the ranch and only isolated individuals are found in the uplands. Most trees are 4-6” dbh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Class Distribution by Species (approximate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oak species</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Live Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrub Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Describe how the project will contribute toward the regeneration of oak woodlands on your property.**

Current grazing practices on the Oakvale Ranch favor oak recruitment and establishment. The conservation easement will be established to ensure existing conditions on the property are maintained in perpetuity. These conditions are due to the quality of the resource management in place on the ranch since the Preston family has been present, therefore these practices will be continued.

Current grazing practices on the Oakvale Ranch should favor oak recruitment and establishment. Cattle graze the ranch very lightly, leaving approximately 1,000 –
1,200 lbs/acre residual dry matter. The ranch has a high amount of organic matter and little active erosion. Grazing on Oakvale Ranch is done in winter, with cattle being removed in spring when grasses dry out and turn brown; in 2008 cattle were removed in mid-April. Winter grazing has been shown to have the lowest negative impact on oak seedlings and saplings.

The stand structure throughout most of the ranch is mature trees with a few saplings and seedlings, except for the Valley oak population which does not appear to be regenerating. All oak species other than Valley oak seem to have a sustainable population on the ranch. No Valley oak seedlings have been seen on the property, but more research is needed to determine the cause for this situation in order to make appropriate management recommendations to improve Valley oak populations. Health and vigor of all the oaks, including Valley oak, is good. No pests or disease were observed.

3. Please provide a topographic map or aerial photo showing distribution/location of other habitat types present on the property, i.e. wetlands, chaparral, mixed conifer, grasslands, etc.

See attachment 6.

The property is adjacent to other protected areas and will contribute toward ease of wildlife movement across ownerships.

1. Is the project area located adjacent to other protected property? Please indicate on a map the location of the project area in relation to other protected areas.

This property is approximately 8 miles south of Long Ranch Conservation Area, a conservation easement held by the Sierra Foothill Conservancy over private lands, and 8 miles east of East Merced Vernal Pool Grassland Preserve, a conservation easement held by the California Rangeland Trust (CRT) over private lands. The Nature Conservancy’s Merced Grasslands project, encompassing 250,000 acres of grasslands with vernal pools, includes the easement held by CRT. Oakvale Ranch is also within an area that has been identified as critical and important for protection by the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition.

In addition, California Department of Fish and Game has maintained a series of wildlife guzzlers on the property since the 1930s or 1940s.

See attachment 2a.

2. Describe the degree of similarity in habitat types and conditions across adjacent ownerships.
Adjacent properties support habitat types consistent with those found on the Oakvale Ranch, with properties to the west dominated by grasslands and properties elsewhere supporting oak woodlands. The California Oak Foundation places the ranch within the San Joaquin region, where 27% of California’s oak woodlands occur. Within this region, more than one-third of California’s blue oak woodlands and more than two-thirds of California’s interior live oak woodlands occur.

The project contributes toward regional or community goals, provides scenic open-space, protects historic or archeological values or contains unique geologic features.

1. Describe how the project contributes toward a regional or community land use goals.

Oakvale Ranch is currently zoned Agricultural Exclusive. In December 2006, Mariposa County adopted an updated General Plan that included a distinct Agriculture Element. The primary issues addressed in the Agriculture Element are preserving agricultural land; working landscape stewardship; nurturing the agricultural economy; and maintaining the rural character of the County. The preservation of Oakvale Ranch will assist Mariposa County in meeting its land use goals.

Furthermore, in 1995, Mariposa County adopted a resolution and voluntary oak woodland management plan. This program encourages property owners to retain trees of all sizes and species and to maintain clumps of undisturbed vegetation. The program also discourages the use of heavy equipment in tree root zones and dripline. The guidelines also encourage retention of 25% canopy cover at elevations below 1000’, 30% at 1000’-2500’, and 30% on single-stemmed and 15% on multi-stemmed oaks above 2500’. Efforts to increase regeneration should be made on grazing lands where canopy cover drops below 25%. The easement will require that the property owner follow the otherwise voluntary guidelines in the county oak management plan.

The Preston family has managed the property in a way that differs from the management practices of neighboring properties, and this is visually apparent when visiting the property. The Oakvale Ranch has an obviously greater amount of forage remaining on the ground after the winter/spring grazing season than do other ranches in the region. The Prestons remove cattle from the property earlier in the spring than do the majority of ranchers in the region, thus the threat of overgrazing is comparatively low.

2. Describe the relationship of the project to any publicly protected open space, viewshed, or other habitat plan.
This property is near a number of publicly protected open spaces. Eastman Lake National Recreation Area is approximately 1.0 mile south of Oakvale Ranch. The project is approximately 20 miles west of the Sierra National Forest and 25 miles from Yosemite National Park.

3. **What historic or unique geologic features are present on the property?**

   The Preston Family has been raising cattle on the ranch for more than 150 years. Present use is as a full calving cattle ranch with calf weaning weights averaging 650 pounds. The third generation of the Preston family currently manages the ranch, but is expected to be joined by members of the fourth generation in the coming years. Members of the Preston family have been interred in a family cemetery on the property for more than 150 years, and this cemetery will be permitted to be used and maintained within an envelop of the conservation easement.
The property is a working landscape. The landowners have implemented or agree to implement, stewardship practices that recognize and incorporate the ecological requirements of oak woodlands and associated habitats, thus promoting the economic and resource sustainability of the farming and ranching operation.

1. **What stewardship practices has the landowner implemented (or agrees to implement) that makes the ranch operation unique and promotes the conservation and integrity of the oak woodlands located on the project area?**

   The family has utilized responsible land stewardship practices during its tenure, protecting habitat along the way. Current grazing practices on the Oakvale Ranch favor oak recruitment and establishment. They graze the ranch very lightly only in winter and spring, leaving approximately 1,000 – 1,200 lbs/acre residual dry matter. The ranch has a high amount of organic matter and little to no active erosion. Firewood cutting is limited to removal of dead trees and downed limbs; no live trees are removed unless there are threats to safety or property. The family wants to continue with its current management strategies and incorporate those strategies into the conditions of the easement.

   Terms of the conservation easement will prevent further subdivision of the property, require land and grazing management practices that are conducive to maintaining a healthy oak woodland ecosystem, prevent commercial extraction of surface minerals and timber, prevent intensification of agricultural practices on more than 10% of the easement area, prevent the establishment or maintenance of commercial feedlots, and establish other similar restrictions on use and development of the property that may be inconsistent with the conservation values, including protection of oak woodland, as described in the conservation easement.

2. **Please describe or attach pertinent sections of any ranch or other plan guiding the management of the property.**

   Oakvale Ranch LLC does not have a written management plan, but management practices are firmly established and have been carried out consistently by the landowners. Standard practice is that at the beginning of each calendar year the General Manager of Oakvale Ranch LLC presents a verbal report explaining his goals for the coming calendar year to the Operations Manager’s Committee (a seven-member committee consisting of one family member from each arm of the family). He then updates the Committee verbally at each of the succeeding meetings, which are conducted quarterly or as needed throughout each year.

   Examples of current management activities:
   - In 2007 the General Manager proposed completing a new well with solar power, a 4,000-gallon tank in an area known as Grandma’s Field, and conversion of two additional wells to solar (along with the existing windmills). The new well/solar
panel/tank/trough was completed in 2007 and work began on the other two upgrades. The added solar panels, new troughs, and storage tanks for the upgrades were completed in March of 2008.

- Oakvale Ranch attempts to replace a designated amount of fencing each year as part of its on-going maintenance and repairs. In 2007, approximately 2 miles of fencing was replaced. The goal for 2008 is to replace 1 1/2 miles of fencing. To date, about one-half has been completed.
- The ranch is in the process of replacing the gates on the ranch and converting them from wood/barbwire to metal gates with cemented/braced posts. Most gates have already been replaced over the last two years.
- The General Manager appraises the Committee on ranch road conditions and maintenance is performed while the ground is still workable and long before the fire season.
- The General Manager apprises the Committee of all large fallen trees and/or limbs so that any family member who needs firewood can be directed to those spots for their wood needs (the ranch does allow the cutting of any living trees). Occasionally the ranch will clear brush and undergrowth near/around trees where there is the potential for grass to grow to provide more feed for the cattle (though this has not happened for several years).
- Unwanted problem weeds (such as yellow star thistle) are treated with chemical and mechanical methods when they begin growing and as they are spotted.
- On an annual basis, the General Manager clears grasses between the county roads, along fence lines, and at access points to the ranch from county roads.
- On an annual basis the Committee chooses one site on the ranch (often a former home site) to clean up by removing any wood, nails, barbed wire, pieces of metal/glass, etc.

The project removes or reduces the threat of conversion to the oak woodland resource.

1. Describe the project location relative to the nearest population center (name of town).

The nearest population center is the town of Mariposa, approximately 15 miles to the northeast, with a population of 1,373 people in 754 housing units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census). The city of Merced, with approximately 65,000 residents, is the nearest major population center, approximately 28 miles west of the property.

2. What is the project's proximity to an urban sphere of influence?

The project is approximately 12 miles east of the Chowchilla (Madera County) urban sphere of influence.
3. Describe the current and/or foreseeable potential land use threat to the property including but not limited to conversion to urban or the intensification of agriculture.

Most of the oak woodlands in the region are privately owned. According to the California Oak Foundation, nearly a quarter million oak woodland acres in this region have been developed into ranchettes or higher-density residential, and another quarter million acres are at risk of development by 2040. One-third of the state’s oak woodlands at risk are found within the San Joaquin Region. The area around Oakhurst and Mariposa is classified as oak woodlands at highest risk of development.

The property’s proximity to the Highway 99 corridor (approximately 20 miles to the west) and Highways 140 and 49 as they approach Yosemite National Park, puts it at risk of subdivision and development, particularly for second homes and retirement homes. Within the past five years adjoining and nearby ranches have been subdivided into smaller parcels and sold as ranchettes. Of similar threat is the intensification of agriculture to more profitable forms, such as vineyards, orchards, or concentrated animal feeding operations.

4. How is the property zoned?

The property is zoned Agricultural Exclusive, which “is applied to land considered to be most desirable for agriculture use. The purpose is to preserve the agricultural industry of Mariposa County as a viable economic activity.”

The project has the potential to serve as a stewardship model for other landowners.

1. Does the project provide an opportunity to work with contiguous properties and conserve oak woodlands? Please explain.

Adjacent properties are large and support oak woodlands similar to those found on Oakvale Ranch, and these properties will be targeted by American Land Conservancy for conservation. The relationship being developed with the Preston family should encourage neighboring property owners to consider recording conservation easements over their properties with the objective of harboring oaks and wildlife within a working landscape. ALC intends to do outreach to neighboring landowners once this easement is recorded. Of particular interest is to secure conservation easements over parcels between the two disjunct areas of the Oakvale Ranch.

2. Does the project provide an opportunity to foster cooperation with local ranchers and other community organizations? Please explain.
With appropriate outreach and publicity, exposure from a project with such a prominent ranching family in the Mariposa County community can be expected to translate to an expansion of conservation interest among ranchers in the community. A collaborative relationship among the grantee, the property owner, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the local Resource Conservation District in the management of the resources being protected through this project will serve as a model program within the broader community. Such a model can yield beneficial results throughout the region as other ranches recognize the value of the program and begin to participate.