RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2018-576

MEETING: December 4, 2018

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Sarah Williams, Planning Director

RE: Adopt a Resolution of Support for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:
Adopt a Resolution of support for the approval of the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement Proposal to the California Department of Conservation’s Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program on behalf of the Sierra Foothills Conservancy. Site is located at 1250 and 1330 Ben Hur Road, northerly of the Ben Hur and Raymond Roads intersection, Raymond. APN 018-340-0120 (190.71 acres), APN 018-340-0130 (5.3 acres) and APN 018-340-0170 (88.1 acres) [total 284.71 acres], Sierra Foothills Conservancy, proponent. Frederick and Carla Drayer, Owners.

The subject parcels are in the Agriculture Exclusive zone (AEZ) and Agriculture Working Landscape (AWL) Land use, and are in a Land Conservation Act (LCA) contract.

The purpose of the easement is to:

1. Avoid loss of agricultural lands in the Agriculture/ Working Landscape land use classification to maintain rural character;
2. Preserve agricultural economic viability;
3. Conserve and enhance the ecosystems, plant communities, wildlife habitats, and inherent diversity of plant and animal species.

Please see the attached information for more details.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
Board of Supervisors has taken no previous action on this request.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
Alternatives: Amendment of text in resolution.

Negative action would result in no resolution of support for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement. The proposal wouldn't comply with the grant agreement requirements, and the easement would likely not be acquired.
FINANCIAL IMPACT:
none

ATTACHMENTS:
Drayer Ranch BOS Resolution Letter (PDF)
BOS_Drayer_CE_Supporting Information (PDF)
181120 BOS Drayer Easement Draft (DOC)

RESULT: ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Marshall Long, District III Supervisor
SECONDER: Merlin Jones, District II Supervisor
AYES: Smallcombe, Jones, Long, Cann, Menetrey
STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF MARIPOSA  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  

Resolution No. 2018-576  
A resolution of support for the approval of the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement Proposal to the California Department of Conservation’s Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program on behalf of the Sierra Foothills Conservancy.

WHEREAS, the Planning Director received a request from the Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC) for a Board of Supervisors resolution of support for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement located in Mariposa County; and

WHEREAS, the Sierra Foothill Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Land Trust established in 1996. SFC’s mission is to protect and honor the natural resources and cultural heritages of the grasslands, foothills, and forests between Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks, while providing land for farms and ranches, a home for native plants and wildlife, and a source of clean water for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement is to protect and connect privately conserved working rangeland in southern Mariposa County, by permanently conserving the open space character, grazing, agricultural, scenic, habitat, natural, ecosystem and historic values of the Drayer Ranch by extinguishing the right to subdivide, the right to sell parcels individually while limiting the number of development rights for the purpose of conserving priority agricultural land resources; and

WHEREAS, the SFC has been awarded grant funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the California Department of Conservation (DOC) in support of the Drayer Ranch Conservation easement; and

WHEREAS, prior to finalizing the grant funding for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement, the DOC requires support from the governing body of which the proposed conservation easement is located; and

WHEREAS, the review of the requested support of the Drayer Ranch conservation easement was scheduled for the consideration by the Board of Supervisors at their meeting on the 4th day of December, 2018; and

WHEREAS, at their meeting on the 4th day of December, 2018 the Board of Supervisors considered the request and all supporting information provided.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Mariposa hereby finds and certifies that the easement proposal meets the eligibility criteria set forth in Public Resources Code Section 10251, to wit:

(a) The parcel proposed for conservation is expected to continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production. The land is also in an area that possesses the necessary market, infrastructure, and agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses will support long-term commercial agricultural production.
(b) Mariposa County has a general plan which demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation. This commitment is reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures of the plan, as they relate to the area of Mariposa County where the easement acquisition is proposed.

(c) Without conservation, the land proposed for protection may be converted to nonagricultural use in the future.

BE IT THEREFORE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Drayer Ranch Conversation Easement assists the County in the maintenance of the County’s rural character through the preservation of agricultural lands, which is a cornerstone of the Mariposa County General Plan.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Mariposa does hereby support the approval of the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement proposal funded in part by the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program on behalf of the Sierra Foothill Conservancy.

ON MOTION BY Supervisor Long, seconded by Supervisor Jones, this resolution is duly passed and adopted this 4th day of December, 2018 by the following vote:

AYES: SMALLCOMBE, JONES, LONG, CANN, MENETREY

NOES: NONE

ABSENT: NONE

ABSTAIN: NONE

[Signature]
Rosemarie Smallcombe, Chair
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

Attest:

[Signature]
René LaRoche
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Approved as to Form:

[Signature]
Steven W. Dahlem
County Counsel
Re: Proposed Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement – BOS Resolution Request

Dear Mrs. Williams,

Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC) is in the final stages of closing a conservation easement on the Drayer Ranch property. SFC has been working with Rick Drayer, owner of the property since 2014. In that time SFC has been awarded competitive grant funding from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as well as the California Department of Conservation (DOC). The grant agreement between SFC and DOC requires that prior to recording the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement, SFC must receive a resolution of support from the governing body of the county where the proposed conservation easement is located.

The template form of required resolution is provided by DOC and has been edited by SFC to specify the location of the proposed conservation easement and it conservation values. DOC requests that the governing body of the county or city in which the property is located must certify that the proposed easement meets the eligibility criteria set forth in Public Resources Code Section 10251, by the governing body.

Please find attached the following for your information:
- Resolution
- Supporting information and maps

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Lauren Hubert
Conservation Director
Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement Project

Sponsored by

Sierra Foothill Conservancy
a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Land Trust
About Sierra Foothill Conservancy

Sierra Foothill Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Land Trust established in 1996.

Our Mission: The grasslands, foothills, and forests between Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks provide land for farms and ranches, a home for native plants and wildlife, and a source of clean water. Sierra Foothill Conservancy honors our natural and cultural heritage by protecting these resources and ensuring that present and future generations will continue to experience and enjoy the land in this region.

Our Vision: From the snow-capped Sierra to the Central Valley floor, expansive landscapes, important habitats, and clean water resources are conserved and managed to ensure continuing public benefits. SFC supports a thriving land-based economy while promoting a conservation ethic that spans generations.

➢ Sierra Foothill Conservancy is Accredited by the National Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission. Only 25% of the nation’s land trusts are accredited.

➢ Sierra Foothill Conservancy is a member of the California Council of Land Trusts, Sierra Business Council and the Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council.

➢ In 22 years, Sierra Foothill Conservancy has protected 24,000 acres of private land in partnership with willing landowners. 39% of our conservation easements are located in Mariposa County.

➢ Sierra Foothill Conservancy is specifically named in the County’s General Plan, Chapter 10.1.04 Maintaining the Rural Character of the County.

About Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement that allows a landowner to limit the type or amount of development on their property while retaining private ownership of the land.

Protecting agricultural and rangeland through conservation easements helps to maintain the viability of our region’s land-based economy. The foothill economy depends on the land being a productive source of income for much of our community. Easements protect habitat and water resources for the entire region, as well as a historical connection to an important way of life for many local ranchers. Conservation easements are becoming a popular solution to the pressures of land development as people learn about them and as more land trusts develop across the country.

SFC works with each landowner to create an easement unique to the property and the landowners’ goals. A few landowners generously allow SFC to host hikes and classes on their property, but generally there is no public access to SFC’s conservation easements as they are privately owned.
About the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement Project

Location: The Drayer Ranch is a privately owned and operated working ranch located in southern Mariposa County at the intersection of Ben Hur and Preston Roads near the Madera County border and the Public Recreation Area of Eastman Lake.

Landowner Partner: The landowner has been voluntarily engaged with Sierra Foothill Conservancy since 2014 and desires to conserve the Drayer Ranch in order to pass it down to his children and grandchildren so that they may continue the family cattle business.

Landowner Benefits: The landowner will receive the proceeds from the sale of the conservation easement. Sale of conservation easements is a great way for ranching landowners to earn income from their ranch property without converting to other land uses, developing, selling fee-title or subdividing.

Funding: The Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement will be purchased by Sierra Foothill Conservancy with grant funding awarded by the Department of Conservation under the Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Lands Easement Program.

Threat: The Drayer Ranch contains three legal parcels and six development rights under its Ag Exclusive Zoning, only a ½ hour drive to the City of Madera and less than a mile from the Public Recreation Area of Eastman Lake the property is an easy target for development. Readily accessible from two paved county maintained roads with power throughout and gentle topography the property is highly vulnerable to being broken up or fragmented in the near future if not conserved.

Support: The Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement Project has received Letters of Support from the following individuals, entities and organizations.

- Yosemite Area Audubon Society
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife Central Region Director, Julie Vance
- Mariposa County Resource Conservation District
- Odell Planning and Research Inc.
- Raymond Historical Society
- University of California Cooperative Extension

Benefit to Mariposa County

Agriculture is Mariposa County’s number two economic driver and in order for the industry to be sustainable into the future its important to strategically protect working rangelands that will provide space for livestock grazing in perpetuity. Tourism is Mariposa County’s number one economic driver and Mariposa is Yosemite National Park’s most popular entrance out of convenience as well as the scenic appeal of the open spaces provided by grazed rangelands like the Drayer Ranch.
Conservation of the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement directly aligns with General Plan and accomplishes the goals below:

- Goal 10-2: Avoid loss of agriculture lands in the Agriculture/Working Landscape land use classification to maintain rural character. Policy 10-2a: Agriculture lands should be retained.
- Goal 10-3: Preserve agricultural economic viability to the greatest extent possible.
- Goal 10-6: Preserve agriculture lands to maintain County character.
- Goal 11-1: Conserve the natural and scenic resources, and open space lands to protect and enhance the County's quality of life and character ensuring a viable economy.
- Goal 11-4: Conserve and enhance the ecosystems, plant communities, wildlife habitats, and the inherent diversity of both plant and animal species for the recreational, commercial, aesthetic, and basic ecosystems needs.

Attachments

Referenced
- Mariposa County General Plan Relevance
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy's Mariposa Madera Focus Area
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy Fact Sheet
- Letters of Support

Maps
- Drayer Ranch Location Map
- Mariposa Madera Focus Area Map
- Land Use Map
- Conservation Easement Map
- Assessor's Parcel map
Applicants for an agricultural conservation easement or fee acquisition grant shall meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

(a) The parcel proposed for conservation is expected to continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production. The land is also in an area that possesses the necessary market, infrastructure, and agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses will support long-term commercial agricultural production.

(b) The applicable city or county has a general plan that demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation. This commitment shall be reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures of the plan, as they relate to the area of the county or city where the easement acquisition is proposed.

(c) Without conservation, the land proposed for protection is likely to be converted to nonagricultural use in the foreseeable future.

- Mariposa County General Plan Relevance

Below are General Plan excerpts including chapters, goals and implementation measures directly related to, accomplished and implemented by the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement.

Chapter 10 AGRICULTURE

10.1.01 PRESERVING AGRICULTURAL LANDS

10.1.02 WORKING LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP

10.1.04 MAINTAINING THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTY

There are effective programs to assist agricultural business owners in preserving their land. Some property owners have sold development rights creating “conservation easements.” The Sierra Foothill Conservancy, the California Rangeland Trust, and the recently-formed Sierra Nevada Conservancy are among the organizations that assist owners in establishing conservation easements.

Goal 10-2: Avoid loss of agriculture lands in the Agriculture/Working Landscape land use classification to maintain rural character. Policy 10-2a: Agriculture lands should be retained.

Goal 10-3: Preserve agricultural economic viability to the greatest extent possible.

Goal 10-6: Preserve agriculture lands to maintain County character.

Chapter 11 Conservation and Open Space

11.2 GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION
Goal 11-1: Conserve the natural and scenic resources, and open space lands to protect and enhance the County’s quality of life and character ensuring a viable economy.

Goal 11-4: Conserve and enhance the ecosystems, plant communities, wildlife habitats, and the inherent diversity of both plant and animal species for the recreational, commercial, aesthetic, and basic ecosystems needs.

- **Mariposa Madera Focus Area**

The Mariposa Madera Focus Area (MMFA) is a recognized regional conservation plan by SFC and by the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition (CRCC). The Central Sierra Partnership, a collaborative group focused on conservation in the Central Sierra to the Central Valley floor, has also designated the MMFA as a priority area for their work. This focus area is composed almost entirely of critical or important land to conserve, according to the CRCC. The landowners and community of Raymond strongly support conservation as evidenced by the number of acres conserved in this region.

Open space and working rangeland are of high importance to the people of both Mariposa and Madera counties and the addition of the Drayer Ranch will further enhance the growing conservation corridor in this critical area. Sierra Foothill Conservancy has prioritized areas within our four-county region that have important resource values, contribute significantly to the local ranching economy and culture, and support large landscape conservation. The MMFA prioritizes the protection of the interface between oak woodland and grassland, as well as the conservation of several listed species. 14,350 acres have already been conserved by SFC, California Rangeland Trust, NRCS, Sierra Nevada Conservancy and other organizations. Including the federally protected lands around Eastman and Hensley Lake, more than 20,000 acres have been protected for their natural resource value in the MMFA. Phase 2, including the Drayer Ranch easement, would increase this total to nearly 22,000 acres of conserved rangeland in the MMFA. The MMFA is designed to create a buffer of large ranches between the expanding development of urban areas in the Central Valley and the rangeland of the foothills.
SIERRA FOOTHILL CONSERVANCY

Saving natural lands now and forever
Celebrating over 20 years since 1996

FACT SHEET – 2018

Organizational Status: 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Land Trust established in 1996.

Mission: The grasslands, foothills, and forests between Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks provide land for farms and ranches, a home for native plants and wildlife, and a source of clean water. The Sierra Foothill Conservancy honors our natural and cultural heritage by protecting these resources and ensuring that present and future generations will continue to experience and enjoy the land in this region.

Preserve Ownership: McKenzie Table Mountain Preserve (2,960 acres); Mary Elizabeth Miller Preserve at Black Mountain (1,450 acres); Tivy Mountain Preserve (826 acres); Ewell Fine Gold Creek (719 acres); Haslett Basin Preserve (125 acres); Feliciana Mountain (40 acres); Bean Creek (81 acres); Ted K. Martin Wildlife Preserve (280 acres)

Total Preserve Acreage: 6,441 Conservation Easements: 22,792 acres
Transfer to Public Agency: 2,554 acres
Total Acres Protected: 31,788 acres

Major Species/Habitat Protection: Carpenteria; Keck’s Checkerbloom; Orange Lupine; California Tiger Salamander; Limestone Salamander; Great Grey Owl; Western Pond Turtle; Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp; Golden Eagle; Prairie Falcon; Bobcat, Mastiff Bats; Gray Fox; Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle; Mountain Meadow, Conifer Forest; Blue Oak Woodland Habitat; Rangeland; Vernal Pools; Riparian Habitat; Native Bunch Grass Habitat.

Membership: + 1,900 members
Preserve Visitors: Over 4,000 visitors annually for research, classes, hikes, & school field trips
Area of Operations: Western Sierra Nevada; Fresno, Madera, Merced, Mariposa Counties
Annual Operating Budget: Approximately $2 million

LLC Ownership: Sierra Lands Beef
Affiliations: Land Trust Alliance; Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council; California Council of Land Trusts; California Cattlemen’s Association; Central Sierra Partnership; Sierra Business Council; San Joaquin River Partnership, Mariposa County Chamber of Commerce

Governance: Governed by an 11-member Board of Directors
Leadership: Lynn Gorman, President; Bridget Fithian, Executive Director

Prather Office
P.O. Box 529
Prather, CA 93651
(559) 855-3473

Mariposa Office
P.O. Box 691
Mariposa, CA 95338
(209) 742-5556

www.sierrafoothill.org
April 14, 2016

California Department of Conservation
Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program
801 K Street, MS 14-15
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear application reviewers:

The Yosemite Area Audubon Society (YAAS) enthusiastically endorses the Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC)'s Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Agricultural Conservation Easement application for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement. We are pleased to support the SFC's application for this project.

Rangeland conservation is critical throughout California. The Drayer Ranch is extraordinarily scenic and biologically diverse, and it warrants protection as an important part of the rangelands in Mariposa County. This working ranch, a significant piece in landowner Rick Drayer's cattle operation, connects land from the San Joaquin grasslands to the foothills of Mariposa. It is ideal foraging habitat for Bald Eagles and Double-crested Cormorants and nesting sites for Golden Eagles. Chapman Creek runs the length of the property and, with its dense riparian cover, is a potential home for Yellow Warblers. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will enhance the viability of the ranch operation as well as the local agricultural economy and an array of ecosystem services.

Public road access, multiple parcels and proximity to expanding urban centers such as Madera make the ranch a likely candidate for future development. Placing a conservation easement on the property would ensure that it remains a viable working landscape that protects important native habitat and limited water resources. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will add 287 acres of critical rangeland habitat to thousands of acres of contiguously protected working rangelands already conserved by private landowners throughout the Raymond area.

The SFC is dedicated to working with landowners to uphold the terms of all of their easements (now numbering 29) and creating partnerships that benefit ranchers and natural resources. The collaboration between the SFC, the Drayer Ranch, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Conservation and other nonprofits such as the YAAS will further sustain a strong partnership that will enhance the ecosystem values in our county. This project aligns closely with the YAAS mission to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biological diversity. We trust we can look forward to your approval of it.

Sincerely,

Lowell Young, President
Yosemite Area Audubon Society

Yosemite Area Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) organization.
June 23, 2016

California Department of Conservation  
Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program  
801 K Street, MS 14-15  
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: Conservation Easement for Drayer Ranch, Mariposa County

To Whom It May Concern:

The Sierra Foothill Conservancy is seeking funding through the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program to acquire a conservation easement for the Drayer Ranch in Mariposa County. The Department of Fish and Wildlife supports this effort.

The Drayer Ranch is a biologically diverse 287 acre property. Chapman Creek runs the length of the property providing dense riparian cover and potential habitat for yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechial*) and Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*), both listed as California species of special concern. The property also contains important cultural and historic resources including a historic cemetery and bedrock mortars.

Public road access, multiple parcels and proximity to expanding urban centers such as Madera, makes the ranch a likely candidate for development. Placing an easement on the Drayer Ranch would ensure the conservation of the property and contribute to the thousands of acres of contiguously protected working rangelands already conserved by private landowners throughout the Raymond area.

The collaboration between Sierra Foothill Conservancy, the Drayer Ranch, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Department of Conservation creates a strong partnership that will enhance the conservation values in Mariposa County.
If you need additional information regarding the Department’s support, please contact Terry Palmisano, Environmental Program Manager, at (831) 649-2890.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Vance
Regional Manager

cc: Bridget Fithian, Executive Director
    Sierra Foothill Conservancy
    5065 Hwy 140, Suite G
    PO Box 692
    Mariposa, CA  95338

cc: T. Palmisano, G. Gerstenberg, T. Kroeker
    California Department of Fish and Wildlife
To: California Department of Conservation
Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program
801 K Street, MS 14-15
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear application reviewers:

The Mariposa County Resource Conservation District (MCRCD) enthusiastically endorses the Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC)’s Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Agricultural Conservation Easement application for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement. We are pleased to support the SFC’s application for this project.

Rangeland conservation is critical throughout California. The Drayer Ranch is extraordinarily scenic and biologically diverse, and it warrants protection as an important part of the rangelands in Mariposa County. Encompassing three large vernal pools, it also contains important cultural and historic resources—a historic cemetery and bedrock mortars. This working ranch is a significant piece in landowner Rick Drayer’s cattle operation, which connects land from the San Joaquin grasslands to the foothills of Mariposa. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will support the viability of his operation as well as the local agricultural economy.

Public road access, multiple parcels and proximity to expanding urban centers such as Madera make the ranch a likely candidate for future development. Placing a conservation easement on the property would ensure that it remains a viable working landscape that protects important native habitat and limited water resources. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will add 287 acres of critical rangeland habitat to thousands of acres of contiguously protected working rangelands already conserved by private landowners throughout the Raymond area.

The Sierra Foothill Conservancy manages and stewards eight preserves and holds 29 conservation easements throughout the four counties it serves. The SFC is dedicated to working with landowners to uphold the terms of all of their easements and creating partnerships that benefit ranchers and natural resources.

The collaboration between the SFC, the Drayer Ranch, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Conservation, the MCRCD and local nonprofits will help sustain a strong partnership that will enhance the ecosystem values in our county. This project aligns closely with the MCRCD’s mission to encourage and facilitate cooperative solutions to local resources conservation issues and promote stewardship of private land.

Sincerely,

David Mecchi, President
Mariposa County Resource Conservation District
April 20, 2016

California Department of Conservation
Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program
801 K Street, MS 14-15
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Letter of Support for Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement

To whom it may concern:

It is with enthusiasm that I write this letter on behalf of Sierra Foothill Conservancy and their application to the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement for the Drayer Ranch. This project strongly aligns with Odell Planning & Research, Inc.’s support of open space conservation, compatible uses of rangelands, and biologically important areas.

The Drayer Ranch is incredibly scenic, biologically diverse, and should be protected as part of the important rangelands in Mariposa County. The property is designated as “critical rangeland” for conservation by the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition, and also contains important cultural and historic resources—a historic cemetery and bedrock mortars. This well-managed ranch is a critical piece in the cattle operation of landowner, Rick Drayer, and provides habitat for a diversity of both common and protected species. I have personally observed suitable habitat for several special status species on the ranch, including western spadefoot (positively identified in vernal pools in 2016), California tiger salamander, and a vast array of protected migratory birds, including several raptors like Swainson’s hawk, golden eagle, and bald eagle. Chapman Creek, a tributary to the Chowchilla River, runs the length of the property and its healthy riparian cover is a potential home for yellow warbler and western pond turtle, among others.

Public road access, multiple parcels and proximity to expanding urban centers such as Madera, makes the ranch a likely candidate for future development. Placing a conservation easement on the Drayer Ranch would ensure that it remains a viable working landscape that protects high-quality, important native habitat and limited water resources. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will add 287 acres of critical rangeland habitat to thousands of acres of contiguously protected working rangelands already conserved by private landowners throughout the Raymond area.

Sierra Foothill Conservancy’s history and experience illustrates their dedication to working with landowners to uphold the terms of all of their easements and create partnerships beneficial to ranchers and natural resources. The collaboration between SFC, the Drayer Ranch, National Resources Conservation Service and the Department of Conservation creates a strong partnership that will enhance the conservation values in our county. Investment in the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement will conserve habitat of great value to many species, while helping link many other conserved ranches and open space in the area. Therefore, this project has the full support of Odell Planning & Research, Inc.

Sincerely,

Melissa Odell
Senior Biologist/Planner
To: California Department of Conservation
Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program
801 K Street, MS 14-15
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Lynn Northrop, Owner-Curator
Raymond Historical Museum
P.O. Box 113
Raymond, CA 93653 US

To whom it may concern,

It is with enthusiasm that I write this letter on behalf of Sierra Foothill Conservancy and their Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Agricultural Conservation Easement application for the Drayer Ranch. We at the Raymond Historical Museum are writing in support of SFC and their application for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement.

The Drayer Ranch is incredibly scenic, biologically diverse, and should be protected as part of the important rangelands in Mariposa County as well as the critical to conserve the rangelands of the state of California. It also contains important cultural and historic resources—a historic cemetery and bedrock mortars. This working ranch is a critical piece in landowner Rick Drayer’s cattle operation, which connects land from the San Joaquin grasslands to the foothills of Mariposa. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will support the viability of his operation and support the local agricultural economy.

Public road access, multiple parcels and proximity to expanding urban centers such as Madera, makes the Ranch a likely candidate for development. Placing a conservation easement on the Drayer Ranch would ensure that it remains a viable working landscape that protects important native habitat and limited water resources. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will add 287 acres of critical rangeland habitat to thousands of acres of contiguous protected working rangelands already conserved by private landowners throughout the Raymond area.

Sierra Foothill Conservancy holds 29 conservation easements throughout the four counties they work in. They manage and steward eight preserves. SFC is dedicated to working with landowners to uphold the terms of all of their easements, and creating partnerships that benefit ranchers and natural resources.

The collaboration between SFC, the Drayer Ranch, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Department of Conservation creates a strong partnership that will enhance the conservation values in our county. This project aligns closely with the historic uses of the Raymond area and will support the preservation of the historic Brewer Family Cemetery.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
To: California Department of Conservation
Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program
801 K Street, MN 14-15
Sacramento, CA 95814

From:
Lynn Northrop
Raymond Landowner
Madera, CA 93639

To whom it may concern:

It is with enthusiasm that I write this letter on behalf of Sierra Foothill Conservancy and their Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Agricultural Conservation Easement application for the Drayer Ranch. As fellow landowner and cattle ranch in the Raymond area I am supporting SFC in their application for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement. With development pressure in our area continuing to grow, it is vital to protect properties like the Drayer Ranch.

The Drayer Ranch is incredibly scenic, biologically diverse, and should be protected as part of the important rangelands in Mariposa County as well as critical to conserve rangelands of the state of California. It also contains important cultural and historic resources—a historic cemetery and bedrock mortars. This working ranch is a critical piece in landowner Rick Drayer’s cattle operation, which connects land from the San Joaquin grasslands to the foothills of Mariposa. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will support the viability of his operation and support the local agricultural economy.

Public road access, multiple parcels and proximity to expanding urban centers such as Madera, makes the Ranch a likely candidate for development. Placing a conservation easement on the Drayer Ranch would ensure that it remains a viable working landscape that protects important native habitat and limited water resources. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will add 287 acres of critical rangeland habitat to thousands of acres of contiguously protected working rangelands already conserved by private landowners throughout the Raymond area.

Sierra Foothill Conservancy holds 29 conservation easements throughout the four counties they work in. They manage and steward eight preserves. SFC is dedicated to working with landowners to uphold the terms of all of their easements, and creating partnerships that benefit ranchers and natural resources.

The collaboration between SFC, the Drayer Ranch, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Department of Conservation creates a strong partnership that will enhance the conservation values in our county. This project aligns closely with character of the Raymond area and will support the economic viability of ranching and promote working rangeland.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
April 22, 2016

California Department of Conservation
Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program
801 K Street, MS 14-15
Sacramento, CA 95814

To whom it may concern:

It is with enthusiasm that I write this letter on behalf of Sierra Foothill Conservancy and their Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Agricultural Conservation Easement application for the Drayer Ranch. As the County Director and Farm Advisor for Mariposa County I am writing to support their application for the Drayer Ranch Conservation Easement.

The Drayer Ranch is incredibly scenic, biologically diverse, and lies entirely within CRCC’s designated priority area, containing 227 acre of “critical” to conserve rangeland and the remaining 60 acres designated as “important” to conserve. It also contains important cultural and historic resources—a historic cemetery and bedrock mortars. This working ranch is a critical piece in landowner Rick Drayer’s cattle operation, which connects land from the San Joaquin grasslands to the foothills of Mariposa. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will support the viability of his operation and support the local agricultural economy.

Public road access, multiple parcels and proximity to expanding urban centers such as Madera, makes the Ranch a likely candidate for development. Placing a conservation easement on the Drayer Ranch would ensure that it remains a viable working landscape that protects important native habitat and limited water resources. Conserving the Drayer Ranch will add 287 acres of critical rangeland habitat to thousands of acres of contiguously protected working rangelands already conserved by private landowners throughout the Raymond area.

Sierra Foothill Conservancy holds 29 conservation easements throughout the four counties they work in. They manage and steward eight preserves. SFC is dedicated to working with landowners to uphold the terms of all of their easements, and creating partnerships that benefit ranchers and natural resources.

The collaboration between SFC, the Drayer Ranch, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Department of Conservation creates a strong partnership that will enhance the conservation values in our county. This project aligns closely with the UCCE Cooperative Extension’s mission to bring together ranchers, conservationists and government entities to conserve and enhance the ecological values and economic viability of California’s working rangelands.

Sincerely,

Fadzayi Mashiri Ph.D.
County Director Mariposa
Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor Mariposa, Merced, Madera Counties

The University of California working in cooperation with Mariposa County and the USDA
Land Use Map
Drayer Ranch - ACEP 2015

Legend

- Drayer Ranch
- Privately Conserved Land_outline

Land use on the easement offering, consists of solely cattle grazing. The Drayer Ranch includes, rangeland, grassland, wetland, and oak savannah.