

Stewardship Leaders in Agriculture

Land and Wildlife Conservation

Koopmann Ranch

The 850-acre Koopmann Ranch, located in Sunol, CA, has been in operation since 1918, but Bay Area development and extremely high estate taxes on the small working ranch in the 1990s nearly forced the ranch to be sold. Despite being tucked in-between a golf course, Interstate Highway 680, and a number of ranchettes, Tim Koopmann's fourth generation ranch has thrived thanks to a number of innovative conservation efforts. Mr. Koopmann has not only managed to protect his family's ranching legacy but he has also become a leader in land conservation.

A Land Ethic at Work

Mr. Koopmann has embodied the land ethic through his establishment of two wildlife habitat easements and protection of grassland habitat that have provided sanctuary to a number of endangered species. Water distribution on the ranch is done with solar power and takes into consideration not only the needs of the cattle but also the needs of the abundant wildlife. Partnerships with non-traditional allies, such as the Ohlone Audubon Chapter, have resulted in 75 protected bird boxes for the Western Blue Bird and a dozen bird ramps that allow birds and small wildlife to escape from watering troughs.

"Tim Koopmann's commitment to the health of the land and wildlife in his family's care is exemplary, but he has also made extraordinary improvements in water quality that benefit those on and off of his ranch. In addition, he has taken steps to help ensure that his land and land ethic will continue to thrive for future generations." - Brent Haglund, Sand County Foundation President



Photo courtesy of California Cattlemen's Association

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Recipient of the 2011 California Conservation Award
- Founder of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition
- Provides protected habitat for the endangered California Tiger Salamander, California Red-Legged Frog, and the Callippe Silverspot Butterfly
- As a certified rangeland manager, Mr. Koopmann manages 33,000 acres of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission watershed lands



Photo courtesy of California Cattlemen's Association



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“This was a team effort to bring together many years of negotiation to complete a mitigation project that provides habitat for species of concern, while at the same time protecting a working family ranch. The agreement will help maintain the viability of agriculture in Alameda County, sustain natural resources and provide a scenic vista for the public.” - Nita Vail, executive director of the California Rangeland Trust

PROJECT PARTNERS

Alameda County Resource
Conservation District

California Department of
Fish and Game

California Cattlemen's
Association

California Rangeland
Conservation Coalition

California Rangeland Trust

City of Pleasanton

Ohlone Audubon Chapter

Sand County Foundation

USDA Grassland Reserve
Program

USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Grassland Reserve Program

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency has a number of conservation programs including the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). Mr. Koopmann entered into a 10-year GRP rental agreement that prevents grazing and pasture land from being converted into cropland or otherwise developed. The land may still be used for livestock grazing and forage or seed production, but the land owner voluntarily limits future development of the land. The protection of grasslands is important for many protected bird species and maintains diversity within and across plant species.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers that help to manage natural resources with sustainable practices that help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal and related resources. The NRCS offers five voluntary financial assistance programs including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Mr. Koopmann used an EQIP grant to fund a number on conservation efforts on his ranch including; restoration of existing springs, installation and restoration of water troughs as part of an extensive solar-powered water distribution system, creation of riparian habitat in conjunction with the Western Bluebird Recovery Plan, and pond restoration. The NRCS financial assistance programs are available to California farmers and ranchers who are looking to implement sustainable conservation practices that will ensure the long term success of the land and of their farms.

Rangeland Trust Conservation Easements

In cooperation with local, state, and federal officials the Koopmann Ranch established two voluntary conservation easements on their property that not only provide critical habitat to endangered species but also protect the land as open space in perpetuity. With funding from the city of Pleasanton, the California Department of Fish and Game, and a local developer a 31 acre easement in 2003 and 107 acre easement in 2005 were formed that protect the Viola (Johnny-Jump-Up) wildflower, California Tiger Salamander, California Red-Legged Frog, and the Callippe Silverspot Butterfly while still allowing for managed grazing. The California Rangeland Trust helps to establish conservation easements that are voluntary agreements between private land owners and qualified land trust, conservation group or government agencies that protect the land's agricultural, scenic, historical and wildlife values.

PROJECT DETAILS

IMPLEMENTATION

Koopmann Ranch was close to being sold in the 1990s, and it has only been through Mr. Koopman's willingness to partner with unconventional allies and to view endangered species not as enemies, but as allies that can provide support to the ranching operation, that the ranch has succeeded. What was at the time a last-ditch effort to save the farm has become a part of lifelong commitment to conservation.

FOSTERING SUCCESS

Mr. Koopman is an active member of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition, a group founded on his ranch in 2005 that advocated for the preservation of working ranches, serves on the board of the California Rangeland Trust, and is chairman for the California Cattlemen's Association Water and Environmental Quality Committee. As a Watershed Resource Specialist for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Mr. Koopman manages over 30,000 acres of watershed lands. He has worked with the Alameda County Resource Conservation District to host education workshops focused on the stockpond management and routinely opens his ranch student and community members.

For more information please contact: