



# SIERRASCAPES

Eastern Sierra Land Trust Newsletter and  
2017 Annual Report Highlights

[www.eslt.org](http://www.eslt.org)

Fall/Winter 2018

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

— John Muir





# Peace, Hope, Joy

## *Letter from the Executive Director*

When I was a little girl, my Dad taught me that nature and land would help my spirit soar. There were times when things didn't go as planned, when I found myself grappling with the challenge of losing a friend who moved away, or a beloved pet who had been important to me for so many years.

My heart would ache, my passion subdued. And then, with my Dad and my sister, we would go find a special place – a place that brought me outside of myself and into a place of caring for others.

For me, and so many I know, nature and these beautiful lands provides a sense of peace, hope, and joy. We find common ground, a sense of shared passion and compassion – for each other and those around us.

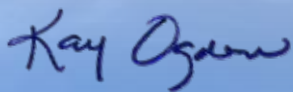
My Dad continues to be a big part of that. Every time I'm out hiking, listening to the call of the whooping cranes migrating overhead, or sitting with a ranching family as they share with me their dreams of conserving their land---Dad, and his connection to the land, his humility and commitment to bring people together, grounds me.

Now, the same is true with you. As we work together to conserve the precious places in the Eastern Sierra, you give me hope and a sense of peace that together, we really can make the seemingly impossible, possible. It is you, and those you join who care about this place, that make the Eastern Sierra the community it is.

That's why, this holiday season, I believe more than ever of the power of land to heal, inspire, and draw us together. You are part of a growing conservation family, the very strength of Eastern Sierra Land Trust; you are the inspiration that lifts us in hard times and brings us joy throughout the year.

All of us at Eastern Sierra Land Trust are deeply grateful your support.

Wishing you peace, hope and joy,



Kay Ogden, Executive Director  
kay@eslt.org





# Mule Deer on the Move

**W**ith winter fast approaching, mule deer are following their instincts and migrating to the lower winter ranges. Wildlife biologists' research has documented that migration patterns are learned behavior; a doe teaches her fawns, and that leads them to the places they can find food and shelter, generation after generation.

Their survival is increasingly under threat due to more extreme weather, wildfires, and development shrinking the habitat for these iconic mule deer and other animals like the pika and sage-grouse.

The Round Valley Mule Deer Herd, so named because it spends its time moving from the high Sierra meadows to the low valley floor in Round Valley, has decreased by at least one-third – and possibly by as much as 60% – since the 1980's.

"It's a concerning decline and one that generally mirrors the decline of mule deer populations throughout much of the western United States," notes Tim Taylor, Mono County wildlife biologist for California Department of Fish and Wildlife, "Part of this decline can be attributed to the loss and fragmentation of seasonal habitat by urban, commercial and recreational development as well as conflicts with increasing traffic. One of

the ways we can help to slow the decline our herds are facing is to conserve lands on the winter ranges and maintain and enhance wildlife corridors for migrating animals," explains Taylor, who has studied this and other herds in the area. "Maintaining habitat connectivity within wildlife movement corridors that link these seasonal ranges is vital to the survival of this iconic wildlife species."

Imagine a wagon wheel where the inner circle represents the valley winter range and the spokes represent the migration corridors connecting to the large circle of summer ranges in the mountains.

When those spokes become severed or conditions altered at either range, it spells trouble for the mule deer's survival. The winter range, the 'hub' of the wheel, is of significant concern to protect as it is estimated to be less than 5% of the size of the summer range and provides food

**It is migration time throughout the Eastern Sierra, so please be extra careful driving. The herds are moving across Highway 395 in Inyo and Mono Counties and driving a bit slower can help avoid accidents.**

and shelter for the majority of the herd in tough winter conditions.

Tim sees the positive impact of our community working together. He says, "ESLT is the key here because they work to preserve the mule deer's critical winter habitat and migration corridors. All the conservation work completed on the behalf of the deer benefits a host of other species, as well. Without protecting these lands, we could lose that – this iconic species of the West won't be available for us to view and enjoy."





# A Little Patch of Joy



Pete Pumphrey sits in an old wooden rocker he found at a yard sale overlooking the gardens in his backyard. Years ago, when he began the process of converting his yard into a pollinator garden, he needed the chair to rest after digging, moving rock, removing lawn, and planting the native plants from our area.

**"There is something joyful and deeply satisfying about being part of the web of life—and helping provide life to those who are vulnerable to development as well as the changing seasons."**

– *Pete Pumphrey,*  
*ESLT Member*

Now, as both the garden and Pete have “matured,” as he likes to say, there is less work and more purposeful sitting. Sometimes he reads, surrounded by the sounds of birds. Other times he talks to neighbors who stop to admire the flowers. Mostly, though, he says he loves to watch.

“I watch the comings and goings of birds and the unfolding of the seasons. I can see the bees and other pollinators at work by watching the flower stalks bobbing up and down. I close my eyes and

count my breaths listening for the sounds – there is a thing called bird meditation. I try to see how long I can remain still and not startle the quail feeding in front of me or the finches nesting,” reflects Pete.

Pete’s garden stretches far beyond its borders; to the oriole nests in the cottonwoods he can see in the distance; to wherever the Cooper’s hawk flies when it leaves its perch in the apple tree; to the alfalfa fields and the animals they nourish, and to wherever the tanagers go next after fueling up during migration.



As of this fall, there are 100 plus families with ESLT's certified East Side Pollinator Garden, and like Pete's, they provide a link between seasons, offering a haven for increasingly stressed bees, butterflies, and insects – as well as birds. If you'd like to create your own “patch of joy,” we are here to help. ESLT staff can assist with the design, plant choices, and planting techniques. Just give Marie a call – it's a great way to find peace and happiness in your backyard!



# Nationally Recognized, Because of You

**H**ave you wondered if local conservation gets the respect it deserves? Well, thanks to your tireless and generous support, the thousands of hours every year that volunteers contribute, the amazing ranching families who conserve their land, and the team approach to tackling all the details, funding, and logistics, we received the surprise of a lifetime.



This year, we received the prestigious U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management 2018 National Conservation Leadership Partner of the Year award. The award recognizes the innovative, cooperative approach ESLT has demonstrated in our work with our partners to protect the Bi-State greater sage-grouse.

These birds are unique to the California/Nevada border region and have been in significant decline over the past several decades. Our goal, as it is in all of our work, is to bring people together to find the

common ground on which we can make conservation a reality.

That means working together with scientists, conservationists, ranchers, nonprofits, local businesses, state and local officials, and public land managers – all with the common goal of preventing the destruction of sage-grouse habitat.

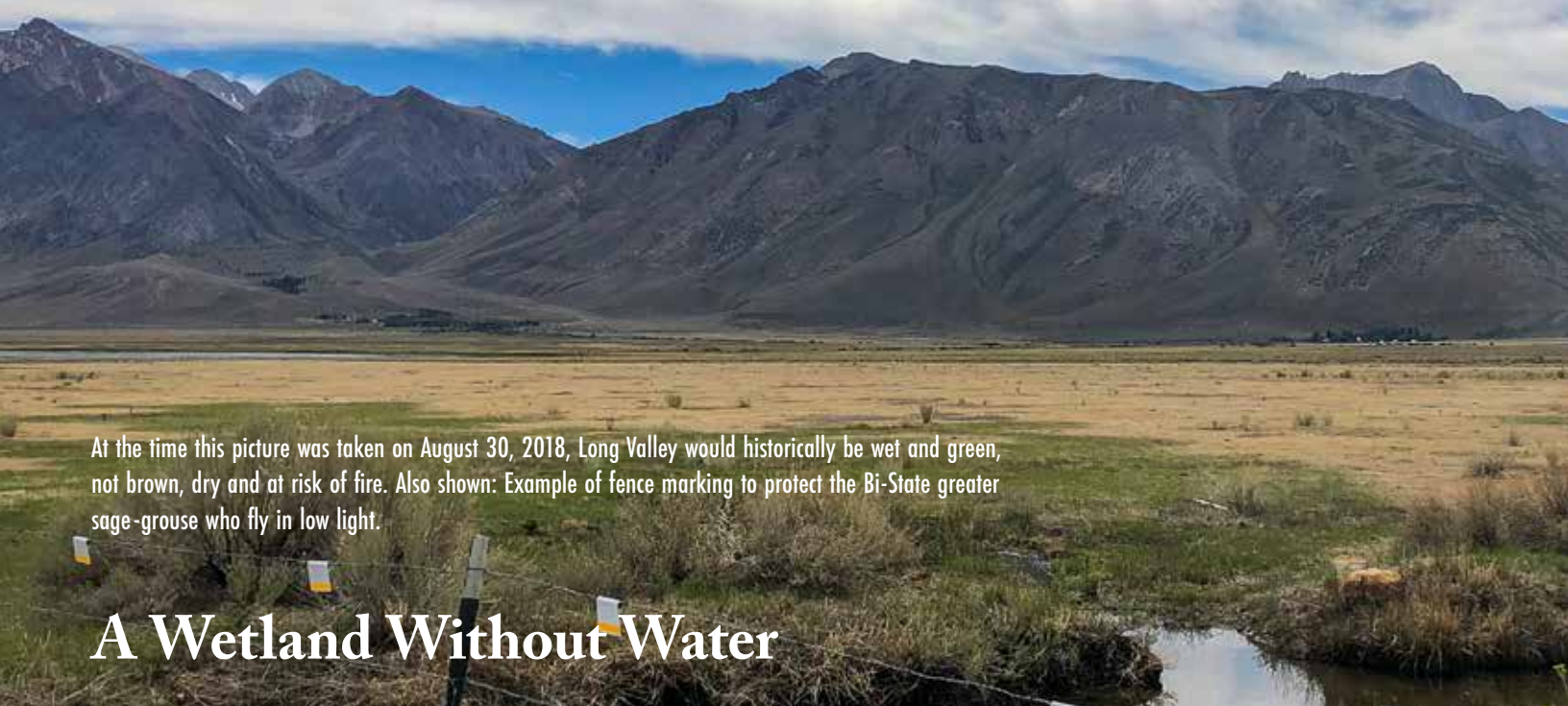
This approach is not for the faint of heart. It takes time. A lot of time. Now, with this partnership approach and increasing community support, nearly 15,000 acres of critical ranchland and sage-grouse habitat have been conserved so far.

**"Receiving this award underscores the heart of our work – how important it is to find common ground and develop long-term conservation solutions that work for everyone."**

*– Kay Ogden,  
ESLT Executive Director*



© BLM Staff



At the time this picture was taken on August 30, 2018, Long Valley would historically be wet and green, not brown, dry and at risk of fire. Also shown: Example of fence marking to protect the Bi-State greater sage-grouse who fly in low light.

## A Wetland Without Water

With climate change bringing droughts, a longer and more dangerous fire season, and increased rain-on-snow flooding events, a sustainable water supply is an increased challenge for all of us – humans and wildlife. How we approach this complex challenge is a statement about our values as a society.

This past spring, our local ranching community was informed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) that water provided with their paid land leases would be drastically reduced by nearly 80%, effective immediately.

This action eliminated 70-plus years of water management practices on over 6,000 acres in Long Valley and Little Round Valley, with the stated purpose of increasing the amount of water that would be exported from the Eastern Sierra and delivered to the City of Los Angeles.

The impact of LADWP's decision, perhaps unlawful, has been far-reaching: federal and state wildlife agencies had to step in to analyze if the at-risk Bi-State greater sage-grouse were being negatively impacted; local ranchers who rely on their Mono County leases had to revise their business plans

due to reduced summer forage and scramble to figure out how to feed and water their cattle; fire responders needed to be ready due to increased fire danger as the verdant meadow dried out and turned brown; homeowners and local residents became deeply concerned; and the Mono County Board of Supervisors (now joined by the Sierra Club) filed suit against the City of Los Angeles.

This is not just about drying up a functional meadow system that provides important habitat for many species, it's also about the destruction of highly productive agricultural lands that contribute toward the \$51M annual income from agriculture in Mono County alone. And of course, there are the additional fears about increased fires, floods, dust, and invasive weeds such as cheatgrass.

### Our Role

As a member and supporter, you likely know that ESLT has been involved in preserving sage-grouse habitat by permanently preserving ranch lands from development – these managed ranchlands are important habitat for sage-grouse.

Our volunteers protect these and other habitats to benefit the sage-grouse and other species, and together we have brought millions of dollars of state and federal funding to the effort. We are concerned that the dewatering of the meadows will negatively affect sage-grouse habitat and other important meadow ecosystems, and threaten the vitality of the ranching community in Mono County and the Eastern Sierra region.

ESLT is involved in several ways, with the most critical being a part of a federal and state wildlife agency





## WAYS YOU CAN HELP:

- Stay informed. Visit the Mono County website for updates: <http://bit.ly/monosupes>
- Send a letter to Mayor Garcetti: <http://bit.ly/mayorgarcetti>
- Conserve water with tips at: <http://bit.ly/conservewatertips>
- Read the LA Times article by Louis Sahagun, September 24, 2018: <http://bit.ly/latimes092418>
- Your continued support of ESLT keeps us an active part of the solution.

working group in Sacramento that includes the Bi-State Local Area Working Group and LADWP. This group's focus is analyzing how LADWP's actions may determine the negative outcome of the potential listing of the Bi-State greater sage-grouse – we believe that local conservation actions, including conservation easements and on-the-ground restoration projects, provide needed protection instead of imposed regulations at this time.

As part of a conservation coalition that includes other nonprofit organizations and Mono County, we help inform and educate our community and visitors about this

important concern; and on-the-ground with local representation from Audubon, wildlife and land managers, and LADWP. And, along with other concerned individuals and organizations, ESLT submitted a comment letter for LADWP's Draft Environmental Impact Report regarding the Mono County Ranch Lease Renewal Project.

### Choices

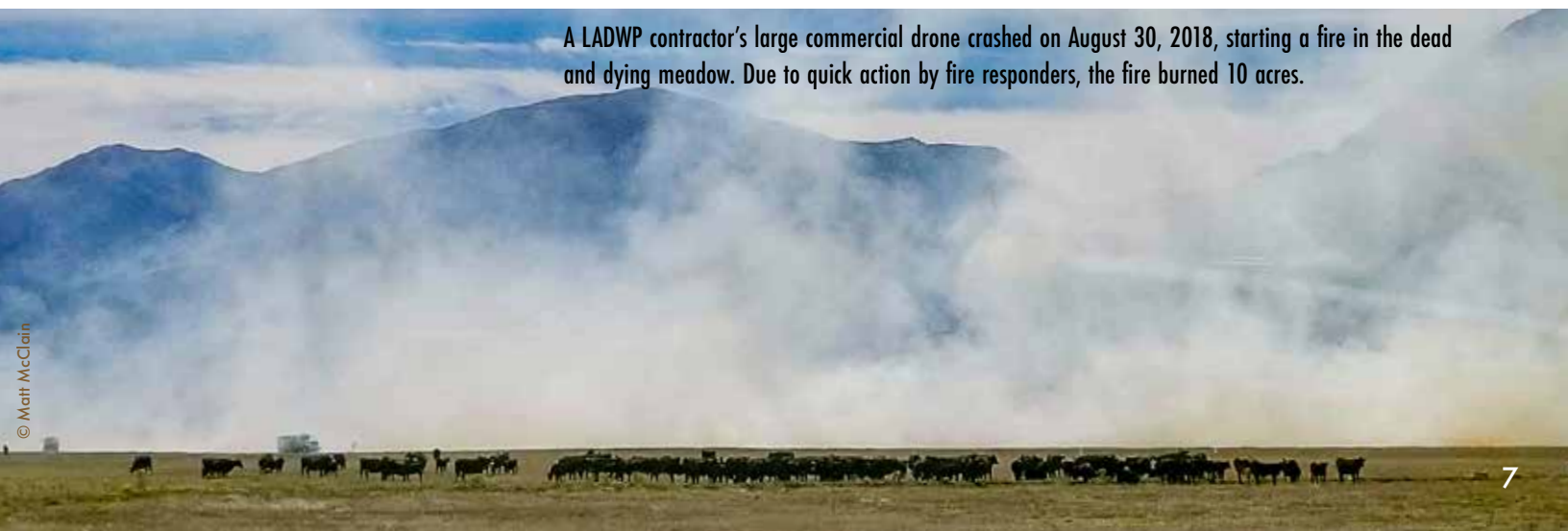
The decision to de-water Long Valley and Little Round Valley will have long-lasting and severe consequences. We are left wondering why now – what has precipitated the drastic decision to

put our communities in danger of increased fire and destroy 30% of the imperiled sage-grouse habitat?

ESLT believes that this is an important challenge, and one that by working together we can find creative and sustainable solutions that will allow local ranching to contribute to our local economy and food production, sustain and improve habitat for all the species that consider the meadow home, and make sure that no one in LA goes thirsty.

We believe that we can hold firm to our values and work together on complex issues such as this.

A LADWP contractor's large commercial drone crashed on August 30, 2018, starting a fire in the dead and dying meadow. Due to quick action by fire responders, the fire burned 10 acres.





# Join Your Friends and Neighbors

*Give conservation a boost  
and have a blast*

Thanks to all of our amazing, compassionate, and hard-working volunteers who brought conservation to life over the past year. From removing old fencing, boosting sage-grouse habitat, and water and highway cleanups, these important efforts keep the Eastern Sierra cleaner and safer for wildlife.

Would you like to be part of this community effort?

We'd love to have you, your family and friends join our team. It can take as little as a couple of hours or as many days as you'd like – we can find the perfect spot for you to make a difference.

No special training is required – we will coach you on the project at hand. If you'd like to brainstorm about what might be right for you, give Sara a call at (760) 873-4554 or email her at [sara@eslt.org](mailto:sara@eslt.org).

**“One of the most satisfying days I spent this year was helping to restore wildlife habitat by removing old barbwire and invasive plants. It was a great way to feel like I was making a positive contribution to our corner of the world.”**

*– Wally Woolfenden, ESLT Volunteer*



## Stewardship Project Highlights - 2018

Restored 30 acres of important wildlife habitat at Swall Meadows Preserve for mule deer and other wildlife living in the Round Fire burn area.

Moved tons of rocks to keep the meadow safe for wildlife at Green Creek Powerhouse Preserve.

Provided a boost for the sage-grouse by removing over 1,000 invading, small pinyon and juniper trees in Bridgeport Valley that were encroaching on their critical habitat.

Cleaned up trash from local Sierra Nevada waterways.

Kept our stretch of Highway 395 clear of litter.





## Connecting Kids with Nature

The lure of the phone is unmistakable. It's designed to draw you in, to trigger a sense of being left out and the need to keep it close at all time. That's part of its magic and its curse. And it's what we're grappling with as we ensure the next generation cares about wildlife, ranches, and the backcountry.

All over the country, land trusts like ours are recognizing that the future of conservation is only as strong as those who cherish it – and that the love of nature and wildlands starts with the young.

Research from Cornell University documented that the first 12 years of a child's life are important in setting the stage about how much compassion they will feel towards wildlife and animals.

Other research notes that teaching kids empathy for one another to combat bullying is also important for developing a sense of caring, to ensure the wellbeing of the lands and waters around them. That's why we are ramping up our partnerships with area schools and youth groups as well as offering free programs throughout the year.

### Nature Heals and Inspires

In a world where time seems to be speeding up and life racing by, there's growing concern about the mental and spiritual health of kids and families. Social media, the relentless news, a sense of disempowerment given the scale of what is at stake – that's all part of the reality of our current world, and the world of these kids. It's exhausting for them, and us.

Spending time, outdoors, sounds easy – but it's not for hardworking, busy families, where parents work long hours. We know that the healing power of nature and the out-of-doors, is critical to kids' health; research documents that rural kids benefit from regular interaction outside. It helps with concentration, reduces depression, and often reduces stress.

That's good news for kids and families alike. This year and last year, our Sunflower Kids program works with kids from our local elementary schools to get a break from technology and experience the wonders of nature. In the coming year, with your continued support, we'll be helping to give kids a greater nature boost – and conservation will be all the stronger for it, too.

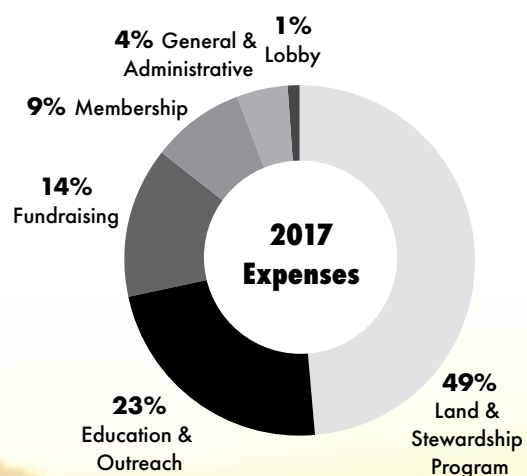
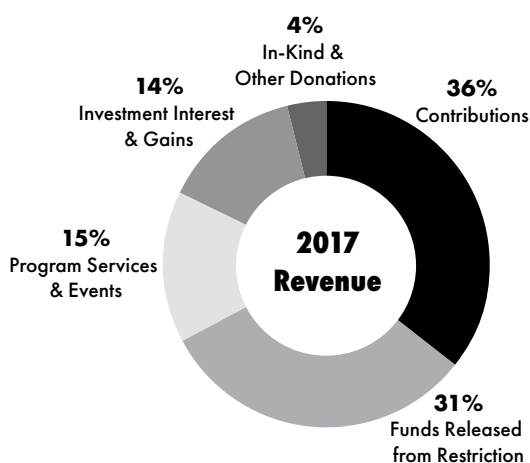




# 2017 Financial Summary

2017 was an extraordinary year for conservation: we partnered with local ranching families, restored wildlife habitat, increased community programs with kids and families, created more pollinator gardens and worked to restore and enhance important ponds and rivers.

None of that would have been possible without the extraordinary support of people like you. Thank you for leading the way, providing hope, and coming together to conserve and celebrate this place we all love. This year - 2018 - looks like it will also be terrific, and just in the nick of time as we face daunting challenges of development pressure, water shortages, and wildlife and ranch land in danger of being lost, forever.



Unrestricted Revenue	2016	2017
Contributions (Individual, corporate, and foundations)	\$216,302	\$246,134
Program Services & Events	\$91,382	\$103,358
Investment Interest & Gains	\$25,552	\$95,415
In-Kind and Other Donations	\$24,682	\$25,790
Grant Funds Released from Restriction	\$146,081	\$216,485
<b>Unrestricted Revenue Total</b>	<b>\$503,999</b>	<b>\$687,182</b>

Expenses	2016	2017
Education & Outreach	\$125,775	\$124,375
Land & Stewardship Program	\$245,812	\$264,610
Membership	\$57,578	\$47,082
Fundraising	\$41,332	\$74,408
General & Administrative	\$37,839	\$25,008
Lobby		\$5,990
<b>Expense Total</b>	<b>\$508,336</b>	<b>\$541,473</b>

Change in Net Assets (Land and Easement Acquisition, Endowment)	2016	2017
Total Net Assets, end of year	\$3,850,936	\$3,983,097

Funds Awarded for Project Acquisition Only  
(RCPP - see [www.eslt.org/rcpp](http://www.eslt.org/rcpp) for more info) \$8,000,000

*Audited Financial Numbers*

990 available at [www.eslt.org](http://www.eslt.org)



# When What You Do Starts with a Dream

These are exciting times for the Eastern Sierra Land Trust! This year we laid the groundwork for more permanent protection of critical lands in our region, and we are currently working on several more projects that will add to the 15,000-plus acres we have protected since 2001.

It started off with a few conversations and a couple of far-away smiles. A couple of ranching families were wondering how they could protect their land. A few others talked about how their families had been here for over 100 years – that the land was part of who they are, the essence of their families' soul and identity.

Thinking forward forty years, one asked, "What can I do to make sure that no matter what happens to me, that my great grandparent's legacy of this ranch will still remain? It was their dream, and I want to make sure it stays that way."

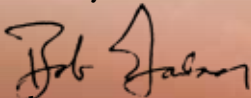
And then there were others who wanted to make sure that the cranes and deer who migrate through had places to rest and water to drink. "It's not that I'm anti-development," one rancher told me, "it's that I believe we have to find a balance with the lands we all love and the new development. Otherwise, this area will become just like any other area – non-descript, tired out, forgotten."

These families know, just like you do, how fragile this place is. That's why we're honored to work with you – and with them – to ensure that the special places here are protected. Sometimes that means a large, expansive, ranch. Other times it might be a small back-yard pollinator garden. Together, it's a community who cares – and that's really the power of this work and why it's so critical.

In the coming year, if all goes well and the funding comes through, we will be able to help more local families conserve their land and protect migration corridors and important wildlife habitat. And we are exploring how we can expand our amazing staff to achieve our goals and mission even more successfully. That's extraordinary. And the reality? None of that would happen if it weren't for the leadership of these families and the dedication of people like you. Thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, to ensure that the Eastern Sierra remains the vibrant, beautiful, and unique place it is. It's a partnership we treasure.

All of us on the ESLT Board appreciate your support and the many hours of service from our volunteers. We simply could not exist without these contributions. On behalf of our entire Board of Directors, I thank you for your support.

Happy Holidays!



Bob Gardner  
President, ESLT Board of Directors





## EASTERN SIERRA LAND TRUST

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## Crisp Clean Air and the Gift of Hope and Compassion

*What do you love about the Eastern Sierra? Is it the extraordinary views? The ranches? The wildlife and connecting kids to the land so that they, too, will care like you do?*

You can give a gift of hope by investing in the lands and waters you love in the Eastern Sierra. Conservation is about envisioning a better future, solving problems, coming together, and building a community who cares for generations – and you can help make that possible with a gift through your will or estate planning.

No amount is too small and your generosity and compassion will never be forgotten. If you have named ESLT in your will, please let us know so we can thank you and welcome you to our Legacy Circle.

If you know of others who love the Eastern Sierra, let them know there are additional ways to give, including designating a portion of IRA distributions if they are over 70 ½ years of age. For additional information about planned giving or creative ways to give, please email Kay Ogden at [kay@eslt.org](mailto:kay@eslt.org) or give her a call at (760) 873-4554.



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