

Summary Findings and Analysis

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

prepared for
the Sierra-Cascade Land Trust Council



by
Hayes Marketing & Communications
September 2008

Summary Findings and Analysis: Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Background and Overview

This report is a summary of the findings and analysis of research conducted for the Sierra-Cascade Land Trust Council's (SCLTC's) Sierra Foothill Project. The research presented here relates to one component of the Sierra Foothill Project. The scope of this work was defined as: to research and identify the political, economic, and social conditions in the Foothill Region that affect prospects for effective landscape scale conservation in the Region, with a particular focus on factors and trends with present and near-term (next 3 – 5 years) impact.

This report includes the following:

- Description of the Sierra Foothill Project and the Foothill Conservation Plan, which will be the final product of the larger project (page 2)
- Overview of the research method (pages 3 – 5)
- Summary findings (pages 6 – 12)
- Findings at the sub-regional level (pages 12 – 19)
- Summary direction of trends: Positive (page 20), negative (page 21), and overall (page 22)
- Concluding comments (page 23)
- Findings for Washoe County, Nevada (survey responses from the Nevada Land Conservancy) (pages 24 -26)
- Appendices
 - Appendix A: References
 - Appendix B: Interview discussion guide
 - Appendix C: List of interviewees
 - Appendix D: Survey respondents and counties served in the Sierra-Cascade Region
 - Appendix E: Survey
 - Appendix F: Selected data for the Sierra-Cascade Region

Context: Sierra Foothill Project and Foothill Conservation Plan

The over-arching purpose of the Sierra Foothill Project is to create a Foothill Conservation Plan that identifies missing linkages of conserved land and that will assist local land trusts in prioritizing land conservation and acquisition efforts in the Region.

SCLTC envisions that the Plan will:

- 1) Help land trusts prioritize increased land and water conservation efforts and
- 2) Provide the basis for a funding initiative to focus foundation attention on the critical need for increased land conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region.

Beyond this, it is expected that, once the data is summarized and integrated, there will emerge a wider perspective that will provide a basis for implementing comprehensive conservation programs that address the many complex and competing conservation opportunities in the Sierra Foothill Region. It is also anticipated that the Plan will encourage larger-scale, collaborative conservation projects between neighboring land trusts.

Summary Findings and Analysis:
***Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation
in the Sierra Foothill Region***

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Research Method

Review of documentation and discussion with SCLTC staff

The project research was conducted in phases beginning with discussions with SCLTC staff and review of a wide variety of existing information (reports, websites, and other sources). Throughout the course of the project, new information sources were identified and reviewed. Appendix A has a list of the primary references.

Key stakeholder interviews

The preliminary research provided input to the design of a discussion guide (see Appendix B) that was used in conducting phone interviews lasting approximately 30 – 40 minutes with key stakeholders who were identified in conjunction with SCLTC. Appendix C contains the list of interviewees.

Survey of SCLTC's land trust members

The interviews provided a sound qualitative overview of trends impacting land conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region but, given the small sample size, we decided to expand the research to include an online survey of all land trust members of SCLTC. The survey allowed us the opportunity to delve more deeply into the findings of the interviews. By surveying this broader sample, we were also able to learn about variations in trends and factors impacting land conservation within the various sub-regions of the Sierra Foothill Region¹.

Similar to the interviews, the survey purpose was to learn the opinions and insights—in this case, of land trusts—regarding present and possible future trends that may impact land conservation—either to support it or to pose barriers to it—in the region in the next 3 – 5 years.

While the project focus, and the focus of this report, is on the Sierra Foothill Region (Foothill Region), by including all SCLTC members, the survey captured information on the entire Sierra-Cascade Region (S-C Region), asking respondents to focus their responses on the counties where they work. Thus, we were also able to contrast trends and factors not only between sub-regions in the Foothill Region, but also between the Foothill Region and the non-Foothill Region.²

All SCLTC member land trusts were sent the link to the online survey. All but one SCLTC member land trust responded yielding a 95% response rate. Thus, 18 out of the 19 member land trusts are represented in the survey findings. Appendix D has the list of land trust respondents. Please see Appendix E for the complete survey, which was administered using SurveyMonkey.

Survey respondents were asked about the following types of trends and factors:

- Demographic
- Economic
- Social

¹ The Plan will focus on lands from between approximately 500 to 3,000 foot elevation, a band that primarily includes oak savanna, foothill hardwood woodlands, and foothill chaparral.

² Because of the California focus of this project, we excluded responses from the Nevada Land Conservancy, an SCLTC member land trust that serves Washoe County in the state of Nevada, from the summary responses presented here. That is, their responses are not included in the non-Foothill Region group. However, we present their responses in a separate section at the end of this report (pages 24 – 26). As part of the broader Sierra-Cascade Region, Washoe County is dealing first-hand with many of the same development challenges and trends as counties in the Sierra Foothill Region.

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

- Political
- Other: A catchall category to capture any trends or factors that may impact land conservation that were not identified in the above categories.

For each category, respondents were asked if there are trends/factors in the areas they serve that may impact land conservation in the next 3 – 5 years. If they responded “yes,” they were asked to describe the trends/factors and how these would impact support for land conservation (increase, decrease, no change)³.

Respondents were also asked about⁴:

- Trends in specific sources of support for land conservation: specifically, support from the public and from policy makers and decision makers.
- What they consider to be the top three trends/factors that may have the greatest positive impact on land conservation in their service areas in the next 3 – 5 years.
- Trends/factors that may have a negative impact on land conservation in their service areas in the next 3 – 5 years.
- Whether, overall, the positive trends/factors (i.e., those serving to support land conservation) will outweigh the negative ones, the negative ones will outweigh the positive ones, or the positive and negative trends/factors will balance each other out.

Defining Sierra Foothill Counties and Land Trusts: A Caveat

In order to analyze the survey responses and assess variations across sub-regions, we grouped land trusts to sub-regions based on the counties in which they focus their efforts. To identify sub-regions, we drew on a variety of sources including reports published by the Sierra Nevada Alliance (SNA) and by the Sierra Business Council (SBC).⁵

Drawing on these sources, and taking into consideration the counties that each land trust focuses on, we developed a general grouping for counties and land trusts that allows for these variations to be identified. In developing these groupings, a variety of factors were weighed including: 1) counties often include both foothill and non-foothill areas (that is, both lower and higher elevations), 2) several of the counties under review span both the Sierra-Cascade region and the Central Valley, 3) land trusts may address a larger geographic area, but focus on one or more particular portions (or counties) within this area, and 4) land trust service areas may overlap.

This yielded two categories of land trusts: those serving the Foothill Region and those serving the rest of the Sierra-Cascade Region. Within the former area, we categorized land trusts into four sub-regions, based on the primary areas (counties) they serve. The table on the following page delineates the sub-regions and counties, and the land trusts that serve these areas.

³ Most questions also included a “not sure / don’t know” response option.

⁴ There was some unavoidable redundancy in the questions, which allowed us to assure comprehensive responses, as well as to gauge the strength of the impact of negative and positive trends/factors.

⁵ We also considered the sub-regional designations of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, but determined that—for our purposes—these were not as applicable to distinctions within the Sierra Foothill region as those of SNA and SBC.

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Table 1: Sub-regions of Sierra-Cascade Region				
Foothill Region				Non-Foothill
North Central Foothill Sub-Region	South Central Foothill Sub-Region	North Foothill Sub-Region	South Foothill Sub-Region	North & East Non-Foothill Sub-Regions
Land Trusts Serving these Sub-regions				
American River Conservancy	Mother Lode Land Trust	Shasta Land Trust	Sequoia Riverlands Trust	Feather River Land Trust (<i>north</i>)
Nevada County Land Trust	Sierra Foothill Conservancy	American Land Conservancy		Lassen Land & Trails Trust (<i>north</i>)
Placer Land Trust	Tuolumne County Land Trust			Mountain Meadows Conservancy (<i>north</i>)
Truckee Donner Land Trust				Eastern Sierra Land Trust (<i>east</i>)
Counties in Sub-region⁶				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● El Dorado ● Nevada ● Placer ● Sierra ● Yuba 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amador ● Calaveras ● Fresno ● Madera ● Mariposa ● Tuolumne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Butte ● Shasta ● Tehama 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kern ● Tulare 	North: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lassen ● Modoc ● Plumas East: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alpine ● Inyo ● Mono

With this division, we examined the responses to the survey by Foothill Region in the aggregate and non-Foothill Region, and also within each sub-region of the Foothill Region.

In addition to the above land trusts, three of the survey respondents have broad geographic coverage throughout the region. These are: the California Rangeland Trust (CRT), the Pacific Forest Trust (PFT), and the Trust for Public Land (TPL).⁷ Because of our focus on the Foothill Region as a whole and our request that respondents identify any differences within the areas they serve in the Sierra-Cascade region, we considered the responses of these three respondents as part of the Foothill Region analysis, unless they specifically addressed trends/factors in the non-foothill area in their responses.

Based on the categorization used in Table 1 (above), we drew on information from other sources to further isolate variations within the sub-regions. We discuss these in the *Detailed Findings* section below.

⁶ Land trusts working within a given sub-region may serve only one of the listed counties; they do not necessarily serve the entire sub-region. See Appendix D for a list of SCLTC land trust members who responded to the survey and the counties they serve in the California portion of the Sierra-Cascade region.

⁷ In addition, the Nevada Land Conservancy, located in the state of Nevada and serving Washoe County, responded to the survey. Because this service area does not fall in the Sierra Foothill Region, as defined above, and is not within the boundaries of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, we did not include their responses in the non-Foothill Region grouping. However, we summarize their responses in a later section of this report. The trends in Washoe County enlightened our understanding of similar trends that are occurring in the Sierra Foothill Region and that impact land conservation efforts.

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Summary Findings

While the interviews and survey sought to identify and categorize trends/factors into four main areas—demographic, economic, political, and social—these are somewhat arbitrary categories. For purposes of analysis we discuss the trends by category, while noting the interrelationships among them.

We draw on the four categories of trends/factors as a basic framework for discussing the survey findings. For each of the four categories, respondents were asked whether there are any trends and/or factors in the counties where they work that may impact land conservation—either by supporting it or by posing barriers to it—in the next 3 – 5 years. Respondents who answered “yes” were asked whether the impacts would be to increase support for land conservation, decrease support, or a combination: some leading to increased support, some to decreased support. The table below displays the findings:

Type of Trend	Are there trends/factors in the counties where your land trust works that may impact land conservation in the next 3 – 5 years? ⁸ (N = 17)			If “yes”: How might these trends/factors impact land conservation efforts in the next 3 – 5 years in the counties where your land trust works?			
	Yes	No	Not sure / Don't know	Increase	Decrease	Combination	Not sure / Don't know
Social	76%	12%	12%	69%	0%	31%	0%
Political	65%	12%	24%	36%	9%	45%	9%
Economic	100%	0%	0%	29%	6%	59%	6%
Demographic	76%	12%	12%	31%	0%	69%	0%

Survey respondents indicated that, of the trends evaluated, social trends will have the most positive impact on land conservation efforts.

Given the timing of the survey, there is a fair degree of uncertainty about political trends. The impact of political trends will be clearer after the November elections. However, there is increased support in general for land conservation at the local level (see *Social Trends* below) and this is leading to increased support within the political realm (e.g., County Boards of Supervisors), although this varies by county and community.

All survey respondents believe that economic trends will impact land conservation. Less than one-third believes the impact will be to support land conservation. In some areas, the impact is expected to be negative, while in most it is anticipated that the impact will be mixed. For example, several respondents commented that the downturn in the economy may slow the speed of new development (a positive impact), but will reduce donations to land trusts.

Most areas of the region are experiencing demographic trends that will impact land conservation. These trends generally relate to population growth. The impact is expected to be mixed and to vary by sub-region/county.

Social trends will have the greatest positive impact on land conservation.

The impact of the trends depends on their interaction with other trends. To the extent that people within demographic segments (e.g., age groups) share beliefs and attitudes and behave similarly, social trends are impacted by demographic trends.

Social trends and economic trends influence political trends.

Adding to the complexity, there are variations within sub-regions.

⁸ Percentages may not add to exactly 100% due to rounding; they may add to 99% or 101%

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Below we discuss the trends in each area and their impact in more depth.

Social trends

Social trends refer to trends in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Here our focus is on trends in beliefs and attitudes about land conservation, and in behaviors that support or detract from it.

Overall, the social trends noted by survey respondents and interviewees alike favor support for land conservation. These trends are among the most favorable of those studied in terms of the impact they will have on land conservation. In general, residents of the Sierra-Cascade Region are becoming more aware of the benefits of land conservation, which results in increased support for land conservation. **More than any other factor, the support of the public—residents and visitors alike—will drive land conservation in the Sierra-Cascade region.**

The social trends are closely tied to other trends, especially trends in the economy and to some degree to demographic trends. To the extent that people within specific demographic segments (e.g., those in specific age or income groups) behave in similar ways or share specific belief systems, we can use demographic data to infer social trends. (See the section on demographic trends below.)

The social trends are also driven by information. As the message of the benefits of land conservation is communicated more broadly and consistently repeated, the public's awareness and understanding of its benefits and value is increased.

Effective communication has played a major role in raising public awareness of the benefits of land conservation.

It is important to note that, in many cases, land conservation may be the beneficiary of these social trends, but not the explicit end in itself. For example, as the drivers of the Sierra-Cascade economy have shifted from extraction industries (such as, mining) to tourism, people experience the direct economic benefits of maintaining natural areas. Support for land conservation may be driven to a large extent by its economic benefits. When this is the case, the strength of this support may vary, based on changes in the economy.

The primary social trends include:

- **Concern over climate change** has increased awareness of the benefits of land conservation and, particularly, of working forests. This concern has grown as people have more information about climate change, as well as more first-hand experience with the impacts of it (such as, the earlier annual melting of the snow pack).
- **The increased incidence of forest fires has led to greater awareness of the risks associated with poorly planned development** that encroaches on forested areas. This has led to increased support for “smart development,” which focuses on reducing rural sprawl through infill development and similar strategies.

Social trends leading to increased support for land conservation include growing:

- ▶ **Concern over:**
 - **Climate change**
 - **Wildfires and forest fires**
 - **Water supply and quality**
- ▶ **Support for:**
 - **Smart development**
 - **Buying products from local farms and ranches**
- ▶ **Recognition of the importance of the region's rural heritage and its economic**

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

- **The support for smart development is also driven by the high costs of sprawling developments** that require costly infrastructure to be built to sustain them. The net result is greater support for well-planned development, which includes provisions for maintaining accessible natural areas.
- A variety of factors, including those listed above, are leading to **increased concern over the supply and quality of water in the region**. This concern drives direct support for land conservation, as well as indirect support. An example of the latter is the increase in requirements that development occur only where the existing infrastructure can support the projected demands on the water supply.
- **A recent poll in Placer and Nevada Counties**, conducted by Sierra Business Council (SBC), **found that 80% of the population surveyed considers itself “environmentalists.” This represented an increase over the past.** One interviewee commented that this was especially noteworthy because of the prior negative connotation of the term “environmentalist” in the Sierra Nevada region⁹. In the past, people were not so willing to label themselves as environmentalists.

These concerns are leading to changes in how people perceive their relationship with nature. There is an increasing awareness of the region’s dependence on nature and the need to take care of it.
- **There is a growing awareness of the increasing importance of recreation and tourism to the regional economy**; this translates into support for conserving natural areas.
- Due to a variety of factors including the rising cost of fuel, which leads to higher costs of food shipped into the region, **there is increased demand for locally grown food**. There has been significant growth in farmers’ markets and community-supported agriculture. This leads to support for maintaining local working farms and ranches.
- The population of the region is growing. The rural lifestyle that characterizes much of the region is a primary reason that many have for settling here. **The desire to retain this lifestyle lends support to land conservation.** (See *Demographic Trends*, below.)
- **There is a growing concern that children do not have sufficient exposure to nature.** This concern is most pronounced in more urbanized areas of the state where barriers to access to natural areas are greater than is the case in most of the Sierra-Cascade Region. However, this concern is being voiced to some extent in the Sierra-Cascade region. It is evident in the popularity of programs that seek to engage children and youth in nature, such as the Feather River Land Trust’s Learning Landscapes Program, which seeks to preserve lands near all schools in Plumas County for the purpose of nature education. This program will be expanded in the coming years.
- The past 5 – 10 years have witnessed an increased sense in communities throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region of their being part of a cohesive *regional* community. **There has been an increase in collaborative efforts to maintain the region’s identity, which is integrally associated with its natural resources and natural areas.** The increase in the number of land trusts, the creation of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), the formation of the Sierra-Cascade Land Trust Council (SCLTC), and the growth of regional organizations such as the Sierra Nevada

There is a growing sense of identity as a region. With this, there has been a growth in support of, and collaborative efforts among, entities that share an interest in preserving the region’s heritage.

⁹ Many other organizations, including the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, use the term “Sierra Nevada” instead of “Sierra-Cascade.” We use the two interchangeably in this report, giving preference to “Sierra-Cascade.”

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Alliance (SNA) and the Sierra Business Council (SBC) attest to this growing regional consciousness. In turn, through their work, these entities have contributed to strengthening the region's identity.

- The Sierra-Cascade Region is known for being relatively conservative. In the land conservation arena this has played out in a strong commitment to private property rights. In the past, land trusts have been challenged to overcome misperceptions regarding their work. As private, nonprofit, community-based entities, land trusts work with willing landowners. With the growth of the land trust movement and the increased number of private landowners who have worked on land acquisition or easement projects with land trusts and who have experienced the win-win outcomes, these misperceptions have been reduced in magnitude.

As the land trust movement has grown, the intersection between the outcomes of land conservation and the strongly held values of residents of the region has become clear. Continued communication and education regarding these outcomes will lead to increased support.

These **landowners are strong proponents of land trusts and their stories are helping to persuade others of the benefits of land conservation.** Continued communication and education regarding these outcomes will lead to increased support.

Further evidence of the strength of the social trends is found in the responses of survey participants to the question: "Overall, in the next 3 – 5 years, do you anticipate that the public's support of land conservation in the Sierra-Cascade region counties where your land trust works will increase/decrease/stay the same?" The large majority of respondents (14 out of 17) responded "increase." None believe public support will decrease. One responded "stay the same" and two stated "don't know / not sure."

The large majority of survey respondents believes that public support for land conservation will increase in the next 3 – 5 years.

Political trends

Survey respondents and interviewees varied in their perceptions of the impact of political trends. Among the positive trends is the **support for land conservation that is growing at the local level.** This is evidenced in the outcomes of planning efforts occurring at the city and county levels in some areas. Community leaders are expressing their support. **The economy of the Sierra-Cascade region is increasingly dependent on two inter-related industries: tourism and recreation, both of which rely upon maintaining the rural character of the region and its natural areas.**

These planning efforts also represent a growing propensity for collaboration among various interest groups in the Sierra-Cascade region. This is prompted by several factors, the most influential of which are the growing sense of being a regional community with a shared destiny and the increasing importance being placed on the regional economy. **The awareness that this economy is increasingly dependent on the region's natural resources and natural areas has generated support for land conservation.**

There is a growing sense of the Sierra-Cascade region being a unified community and an increasing awareness of the importance of the region's natural areas to its economic vitality.

As stated in the Sierra Business Council's 2007 *State of the Sierra* report: "the tremendous natural resources of the region have long been an economic and social draw and the underpinning of the Sierra Nevada economy." The awareness and understanding of this reality is growing and is reflected in efforts to maintain natural areas. These initiatives vary by sub-region. Examples include the *Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program* in Placer County and Mariposa County's recently adopted

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

General Plan, which was commended by many throughout the region for its protection of natural areas. A press release, entitled “*Ranchers, Environmentalists Welcome Plan to Protect Ranchland in Sierra Foothills*,” issued by a coalition of organizations involved in the planning process states: “*After an arduous, five-year process, a new Mariposa County General Plan, adopted today, achieves what the county’s citizens prize most: protection of the county’s rural character by preserving its beautiful and productive farmland and natural landscapes.*”¹⁰

In Shasta County, the *Shasta Forward, Healthy Shasta* program is “a local partnership to promote healthy and active living among north state residents.”¹¹ It arose out of “concern over increasing rates of childhood obesity and chronic diseases such as type II diabetes.” The partners include several public agencies: the City of Redding, the Shasta County Public Health Department, and First 5 Shasta. As defined by the website, the ingredients that make up “healthy communities” include village centers, affordable housing, centrally-located schools, public space, green space, and alternative transportation. All are factors that are largely influenced by political and social trends.

See the *Detailed Findings* section below for more on these trends at the sub-regional level.

Similar to the survey question about public support for land conservation, the survey asked about public / elected officials’ support of land conservation. The specific question was: “Overall, in the next 3 – 5 years, do you anticipate that public / elected officials’ support of land conservation in the Sierra-Cascade region counties where your land trust works will increase/decrease/stay the same?” **Although a majority (53% or 9 respondents) stated that public / elected officials’ support of land conservation will increase, there is less certainty here** than there is regarding the public’s support with 29% (5) responding “not sure / don’t know.”

Economic trends

Survey respondents and interviewees all commented on the current downturn in the economy and its impact on the region. This has both positive impact and negative impact on land conservation. Overall, the downturn has put a damper on development activities (a positive impact), but it has also reduced financial donations to land trusts, as people have less discretionary income (a negative impact).

The slowdown in the economy has brought to light the importance of tourism and recreation to the region’s economy, which has increased awareness of the value of natural areas. Further, **through their ongoing communications and efforts to educate the public, organizations such as the Sierra Business Council have increased residents’ awareness of the close relationship between the Sierra-Cascade Region’s natural resources and its economic prosperity.** As a recent report states: “SBC explicitly rejects the notion that Sierra communities must choose between economic and environmental

“...we view environmental quality as key to the Sierra Nevada’s economic prosperity, and natural resource conservation as essential to building regional wealth.”

(Source: Sierra Business Council’s 2007 *State of the Sierra* report.)

¹⁰ The plan was also commended by the Sierra Nevada Alliance as “a major step forward for sustainable land use planning” and “the most protective of any county in the Sierra and among the best in the state.” (www.sierranevadaalliance.org)

¹¹ Source: <http://www.healthyshasta.org>

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

health...we view environmental quality as key to the Sierra Nevada's economic prosperity, and natural resource conservation as essential to building regional wealth." An increasing number of businesses and residents of the region share this opinion.

While we don't have statistics to bear this out, **a common perception is that economic concerns, including the impact of high fuel costs, have resulted in people vacationing closer to home.** This bodes well for the Sierra-Cascade region, as it is a favorite vacation-destination for many Californians, as well as residents of neighboring states. As one respondent stated: "The tourism economy holds up well with increased fuel prices, being close to the Bay Area."

Outside of these overarching impacts, the impact of economic trends varies by situation. For example, in a recessionary economy some landowners may be more inclined to put a conservation easement on their land to lower their tax burden and support their efforts to keep their land productive. Another landowner may find the economic challenges associated with maintaining a working ranch or farm during a recessionary economy too great and decide to sell their land to a developer.

There are economic trends not directly related to the slow economy, but rather specific to the region, which bode well for land conservation. These include the **increased demand for local products, including agricultural products.** This is further bolstered by "buy local" campaigns celebrating the region's "Heritage Economy."

The slow economy and the concern over climate change (see *Social Trends*, above) **may combine to cause landowners to seek to conserve their land in order to reap its resource value for carbon sequestration.** While this may lead to land conservation, this is a new area replete with many unknowns. For example, it is not clear how "carbon credits" will be valued in the long-run. Further, this may increase the financial value of land and create barriers for land trusts in acquiring land or conservation easements. If so, the long-term protection of the land will not be guaranteed.

Demographic trends

The Sierra-Cascade region has experienced significant population growth in the past decade. As shown in the table in Appendix F, the population of the Sierra region¹² grew by 16% between 1990 and 2000. The bulk of the population and also the majority of the population growth were in the 16 counties that are classified as "Foothill Region" counties, based on our definition in Table 1 (above). The two foothill areas with the largest population are the North Central Foothill sub-region and South Central Foothill sub-region. These are the areas within the Sierra-Cascade region with the greatest population density (population per square mile), and are areas projected to experience significant population growth.

Although 76% of survey respondents stated that there are demographic trends in the counties their land trust serves that will impact land conservation in the near-term, **the impact of these trends is the least clear-cut of the four areas studied.** Overall, the impact is expected to be mixed, with some demographic trends leading to increased support for land conservation and others leading to less support. The demographic trends, however, are closely tied to the social and economic

The most significant demographic trend is population growth. While the degree of impact is varied, the direction is not. It will increase development pressures.

Demographic trends are closely tied to social and economic trends, and have less direct impact on support for land conservation, as compared with the other trends.

¹² This definition is based on the boundaries used for the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP). The source of the data is the Sierra Nevada Alliance's report: *Planning for the Future: A Sierra Nevada Land Use Index*; June 2005.

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

trends; for this reason they carry less direct weight than do other trends in terms of their potential impact on land conservation.

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

One impact is clear. Population growth creates significant pressures for development in the Sierra-Cascade Region and particularly in the Sierra Foothill Region. Perhaps because these areas are seeing the most change related to growth, they also evidence notable support for land conservation as these communities strive to maintain the rural lifestyle that draws so many people to these areas.

The population trends have a complex impact on land conservation. **A sizable portion of the in-migrants are retirees**, many of whom are wealthy by local standards, often having sold their more expensive urban or suburban homes to purchase a “ranchette”-style home in the country. **This demand produces more development and “rural sprawl.” On the other hand, retirees tend to represent a significant portion of many land trusts’ members, volunteers, and donors.**

Among the in-migrants are also many younger families, especially in the North Central Foothills and also to some extent in the South Central Foothills. In general, these young families are not wealthy. They migrate to these areas for jobs and also to escape urban settings and raise their children in a rural environment. **These in-migrants tend to be more likely to have values aligned with land conservation, but they lack the financial means to support the work of land trusts.** Among the majority of in-migrants to these areas there is a desire to retain the rural lifestyle that was one of their primary reasons for settling here.

The majority of recent in-migrants and long-term residents alike want to retain the rural lifestyle of the area.

The following section provides an analysis of trends in the Foothill Region at the sub-regional level.

Findings for the Foothill Region by Sub-region

In this section, we seek to draw out distinctions in trends within the various sub-regions within the Sierra Foothill Region. We use the definition of these sub-regions, as outlined in Table 1 above. Table 3 on the following page summarizes key trends and factors within each sub-region and reveals variations in these trends. For purposes of comparison, the non-Foothill Region areas are included.

Supplementing the social, political, economic, and demographic trends, Table 3 includes a column for “Other” types of trends. This column presents information drawn from other documents, in addition to that from the survey and interview findings. The former include the Sierra Nevada Alliance’s report referenced above (*Land Use Index*). Specifically, we examined the trends in total farmland, land in farms, and Williamson Act acreage, as documented in the *Land Use Index* report. This information, although not entirely current, provides some indication of trends to preserve working farms and ranches at the sub-regional level. Where available, the information on General Plan Updates, county-wide habitat mapping, and habitat conservation plans, has been updated based on information accessed as of September 21, 2008 from the county’s Planning Department website. Information on countywide mapping of habitat and existence of habitat conservation plans, also from the *Land Use Index* document, gives an indication of the county’s interest in land conservation. The detailed information is found in Appendix F. Information highlighted in yellow represents that gleaned from the counties’ websites as of 9/21/08. Note that both Shasta and Modoc counties were not included in the *Land Use Index* report.

We note that the data is county-level data. In many cases the “Sierra” portion of the county is smaller (and sometimes significantly smaller) than the county’s total acreage. For these areas, the data does not necessarily represent what occurred in the Sierra portion. We use this information solely for purposes of gauging general support in the area for conservation of farmland and working farms and ranches.

Summary Findings and Analysis:
Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Sub-region	Counties	Table 3: Trends by Type and Sub-region				Other
		Social	Political	Economic	Demographic	See Appendix F for more info.
North Central Foothills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● El Dorado ● Nevada ● Placer ● Sierra ● Yuba 	<p>Increased support for land conservation due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased awareness of and concern about climate change ● Increased understanding of the role of forests in carbon sequestration ● Increased concern about human health and its dependence on environmental health ● Concern over forest fires and the impact on water and air quality; drought; flooding (due to loss of land cover to absorb water); and erosion ● Awareness of the negative impact of invasive weeds and exotic plants ● Desire to have more public access to natural areas (e.g., trails) 	<p>There is uncertainty about the political trends and their impact. Much depends on the outcome of the upcoming elections. Sierra, Nevada, and Placer Counties have candidates who are new to conservation. The economic downturn, coupled with generally conservative county governments, may push counties to promote development in an effort to increase tax revenue.</p>	<p>The slowdown in the economy has mixed impacts.</p> <p>On one hand, it leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduced financial support (donations) for land trusts <p>On the other hand, it has positive impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased support for local products and greater demand for locally-grown food ● Development is slowing; interest in smart growth is increasing. ● Increased cost of fuel leads people to vacation close to home, which supports the tourism and recreation industries ● Increased awareness of the economic benefits of land conservation, especially in relation to climate change 	<p>(Also see Appendix F.)</p> <p>This is the most densely populated sub-region.</p> <p>There has been significant population growth, which is expected to continue.</p> <p>The growth tends to be in the more established areas and is comprised of more younger people and young families than in the past.</p> <p>These in-migrants tend to be more educated and more conservation-minded, compared to the population in general. This may lead to more support for land conservation.</p> <p>The growth also increases the demand for development. The new in-migrants may be more supportive of “smart growth” development strategies.</p>	<p>There was a 4% decline in farmland in these counties in the period 1992 – 2002, but a small increase in land in farms.</p> <p>Williamson Act acreage decreased 24%, most likely due to development pressures stemming from the large population growth. This was the largest decline of any sub-region.</p> <p>The declines were greatest in Placer County, followed by El Dorado County.</p> <p>Of all counties in the Sierra-Cascade region, Placer County was the only one with a Habitat Conservation Plan, although Yuba County reported having one “in process.”</p> <p>Sierra County and Placer County both had countywide habitat mapping, and Yuba County reported having this “in process.”</p> <p>With the exception of El Dorado County, the county general plans are in need of updating, offering an opportunity for incorporating goals related to land conservation.</p>

Summary Findings and Analysis:
Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Sub-region	Counties	Table 3: Trends by Type and Sub-region				Other See Appendix F for more info.
		Social	Political	Economic	Demographic	
South Central Foothills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amador ● Calaveras ● Fresno ● Madera ● Mariposa ● Tuolumne 	<p>Increased support for land conservation.</p> <p>“People live here because it is rural and they are beginning to fight to keep it that way.” (a survey respondent)</p> <p>Growth in support for “buying local.”</p> <p>People are becoming more concerned about local water quality and supply, loss of habitat, wildfires, climate change, and the local food supply. This is expected to lead to increased support for open space protection.</p> <p>In Mariposa County there is increased desire to support the local heritage economy; land conservation is considered key to the tourist industry.</p> <p>As one respondent said, “there is growing awareness of the environment and the need to change the direction of our consumption and land use practices.”</p>	<p>Some county boards of supervisors are not supportive. In these counties, though, there is a movement among local citizens to hold the county government accountable. There is opportunity to have impact through the county general plan process.</p> <p>Mariposa County’s government is supportive; it recently passed a very conservation-friendly general plan. Both the political agenda and the community at large in Mariposa support efforts to preserve the rural way of life.</p> <p>Some areas of this sub-region, such as Tuolumne, are more conservative and may not support land conservation. There is concern that land conservation may diminish profits or the tax base.</p>	<p>The downturn in the economy decreases contributions to land trusts and compromises their capacity.</p> <p>On the flip side, there is greater emphasis on strengthening the local heritage economy. Tourism is an important component of this economy.</p> <p>In Mariposa County, in particular, there is realization of the relationship between protecting the land and drawing tourists to the area.</p> <p>“The impact of the economy is an unknown. If things get too bad, there will be a shift away from discretionary to essential needs.” (a survey respondent)</p> <p>The potential of gaining revenue from carbon credits may drive support for land conservation.</p>	<p>(Also see Appendix F.) This sub-region has experienced high rates of pop. growth, which will continue.</p> <p>The growth is mixed—including both young families and retirees. Overall, these in-migrants are more supportive of land conservation than were previous in-migrants.</p> <p>There is a push to increase the size of rural towns to accommodate growth, but there is also support for smart growth.</p> <p>Mariposa County’s retiree pop. is growing, but younger population segments are growing, too, due to UC Merced. This may lead to research partnerships related to land conservation.</p> <p>Older landowners are retiring. Some want to preserve their land; some consider selling to developers.</p>	<p>There was little change in total farmland, but a slight increase overall in land in farms. The latter masks decreases in Amador County and Madera County, which were countered by increases in land in farms in the other counties.</p> <p>Williamson Act acreage stayed pretty constant, with the exception of Mariposa County, which experienced a 23% increase. The latter is consistent with Mariposa County’s emphasis on preserving its rural heritage and heritage economy.</p> <p>Tuolumne County currently lacks a strong land trust, but efforts are underway to build capacity.</p>

Summary Findings and Analysis:
Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Sub-region	Counties	Table 3: Trends by Type and Sub-region				Other
		Social	Political	Economic	Demographic	See Appendix F for more info.
North Foothills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Butte ● Shasta* ● Tehama <p>* Much of the information presented in the first four columns focuses on Shasta County.</p>	<p>In Shasta County there is increased support for land conservation related to increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concern about climate change ● Concern about forest fires ● Support for smart growth ● Desire for maintaining parks and trails ● Understanding of the relationship between human health and environmental health <p>Evidence of this support is found in collaborative efforts such as <i>Shasta Forward, Healthy Shasta</i> and <i>Citizens for Smart Growth</i>. The local Builders' Exchange is promoting eco-friendly housing. An open space plan will be developed, offering an opportunity to incorporate land conservation goals.</p>	<p>Shasta County, and particularly the Redding area, has growing political support for land conservation.</p>	<p>The downturn in the economy is decreasing contributions to land trusts.</p> <p>However, there is growth in farmer's markets, stimulated by an increased demand for locally-grown food. This increases the profitability of certain crops.</p> <p>The real estate market is declining, which slows development.</p> <p>In Shasta County, the tourism industry may be negatively affected by the slow economy.</p>	<p>(Also see Appendix F.)</p> <p>The population is growing. This growth includes both young families and retirees. These in-migrants are escaping urban sprawl and don't want to see it here. This will increase support for land conservation.</p>	<p>Data for Shasta County were not available (that is, they are not included in the <i>Land Use Index</i> report).</p> <p>There were decreases in land in farms in both Butte County and Tehama County. Butte County lost some Williamson Act acreage (6%).</p> <p>Of the three counties, support for land conservation seems to be greatest in Shasta County where public support is growing.</p> <p>A General Plan update is underway in Butte County (per website; 9/08).</p> <p>Development of the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (BRCP) is underway (per website; 9/08). The BRCP will be a combined NCCP and an HCP.</p> <p>Tehama County completed a plan update in 2008.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Shasta was not considered in the Sierra Nevada Region for purposes of the SNA <i>Land Use Index</i> report.</p>

Summary Findings and Analysis:
Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Sub-region	Counties	Table 3: Trends by Type and Sub-region				Other See Appendix F for more info.
		Social	Political	Economic	Demographic	
South Foothills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kern ● Tulare 	<p>Trends in support for land conservation are mixed. Residents may become frustrated with government's lack of interest in land conservation (see <i>Political Trends</i>) and become the primary agents for change.</p> <p>Concern over climate change may increase support, including funding, for land conservation.</p>	<p>County government is not supportive of land planning or conservation. Blueprint is not being followed. Large rural new cities are being approved. However, this may motivate local residents' support of land conservation.</p>	<p>The slow economy will slow development, which allows more time for conservation work. However, it also decreases business donations to land trusts.</p>	<p>(Also see Appendix F.)</p> <p>This sub-region has a high population growth rate. Together with poor land planning, this trend presents a barrier to land conservation.</p>	<p>Kern County experienced a decline in land in farms, while Tulare County experienced an increase. Both counties experienced a decline in Williamson Act acreage.</p> <p>Kern County went through a General Plan Update in 2004, and Tulare had one underway in 2005.</p> <p>Tulare County has countywide mapping of habitat and conducted a background study for a habitat conservation plan, but did not have a plan.</p> <p>Kern County has a Habitat Conservation Plan for the metro Bakersfield area (not in the Sierra-Cascade region) and drafted a Kern County Valley Floor Conservation Plan, posted on its website (as of 9/08) and dated 12/06.</p>

Summary Findings and Analysis:
Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Sub-region	Counties	Table 3: Trends by Type and Sub-region				Other
		Social	Political	Economic	Demographic	See Appendix F for more info.
Non-Foothill Area	<p>North:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lassen ● Modoc ● Plumas <p>East:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alpine ● Inyo ● Mono 	<p>Trends vary.</p> <p>In the north, there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased desire to connect children and youth with nature ● Pressure for development, especially in Lassen County ● Increasing awareness of the value of forests and concern over forest fires ● Some frustration among residents with county government's lack of support for land conservation <p>In the east, no significant social trends were noted.</p>	<p>In the north, there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uncertainty over trends and their impact; however, residents are becoming frustrated with county supervisors, who are perceived as being unconnected to the community and making decisions without understanding or considering the long-range impacts on the environment ● Frustration being expressed by residents who are dissatisfied with local government's making decisions that support big business ● A lack of emphasis on smart growth ● Rezoning of timberlands for development <p>In the east, there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No significant political trends 	<p>In the north, the trends are mixed: Plumas County has increased demand for locally produced goods.</p> <p>In Lassen County development is on the horizon with plans for prison expansion, industrial wind farms, and a resort.</p> <p>In both Plumas and Lassen, zoning changes will allow for more development.</p> <p>There is decreased reliance on the timber industry and greater reliance on tourism. This leads to more housing development, but also stimulates a desire to protect natural resources.</p> <p>In the east, the slow economy, which will negatively impact the tourism industry, will reduce donations for land conservation.</p>	<p>(Also see Appendix F.)</p> <p>This is the smallest of the sub-regions, but the largest land area. This yields a low population density (population per square mile). The rate of population growth is lower than in the other sub-regions.</p> <p>Lassen has the largest population and will experience the greatest numeric growth. This will put pressure on development.</p> <p>In the east, Mono is attractive to people seeking second or third homes. The slow economy will depress growth in the housing market and in other types of development.</p>	<p>In the north:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lassen County experienced a small decline in land in farms, but an increase in Williamson Act acreage ● Plumas experienced a large increase (43%) in land in farms and a small increase in Williamson Act acreage <p>In the east:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mono experienced a large decrease (47%) in land in farms and Inyo experienced a moderate decrease (8%) ● Mono experienced an increase in Williamson Act acreage <p>Information was not available for the other counties in this sub-region (Alpine and Modoc).</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Modoc was not considered in the Sierra Nevada Region for purposes of the SNA <i>Land Use Index</i> report.</p>

Summary Findings and Analysis:
Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Sub-region	Counties	Table 3: Trends by Type and Sub-region				Other
		Social	Political	Economic	Demographic	
Sierra-Cascade region	Counties served by regional land trusts See Appendix B for listing of counties served by land trusts.	<p>There is increasing support for land conservation across the region. This is due to concerns about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change • Water quality and supply • Air quality • The incidence of wildfires • The health impacts of loss of natural and recreational areas • Loss of rangeland and forestland <p>There is a growing understanding of the value of land conservation to support local economies.</p>	<p>Barriers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to term limits elected officials have less connection to the land and less understanding of land conservation • Conservative officials oppose public acquisitions • Some communities are opposed to federal land ownership and management • Proposed legislation may to allow oil and gas exploration on public lands <p>Positive trends include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern over climate change and pressure to address the impacts • This may increase funding for land conservation • Conservative politicians may favor ranching and timber which may lead to support for working farms, ranches, and forests 	<p>The economic trends will have mixed impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The economy is slowing and this slows development, leading landowners to be more interested in conservation easements rather than selling their land. • The slow economy reduces contributions to land trusts. • While land acquisition costs may decrease, stewardship costs will increase. • Increasing demand for locally grown food. • The declining timber industry may lead to sale of timber tracts for development. • Concerns over climate change may lead to interest in maintaining forests for carbon sequestration. 	<p>(Also see Appendix F.)</p> <p>The population of the Sierra-Cascade region, especially those who are farmers and ranchers, is aging.</p> <p>Some feel pressures to sell their land. However, this population segment also wants to preserve the region's heritage and may seek to lease land, rather than sell.</p>	

Summary Findings and Analysis:
Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Sub-region	Counties	Table 3: Trends by Type and Sub-region				Other
		Social	Political	Economic	Demographic	

Top three trends that may have the greatest positive impact on land conservation efforts

Survey respondents were asked to select the top 3 trends or factors that may have the greatest positive impact on land conservation efforts in the next 3 – 5 years in the Sierra-Cascade Region counties served by their land trust. The lead-in to the response was: “Concern over...” Table 4 displays the responses, grouping respondents by sub-region. The “top 3” within each respondent grouping (highlighted columns) are in **red bold**.

Table 4 Trend / factor	North Central Foothills	South Central Foothills	North Foothills	South Foothills	Total Foothills	North non-Foothills	East non-Foothills	Total non-Foothills	Regional Land Trusts	Total
Climate change in general				1	1					1
Impact of climate change on biodiversity									1	1
Disruption to natural migration corridors	2				2	1		1	1	4
Poorly-planned development; increased support for better planning	3	2	1		6	3		3	3	12
Air quality	1			1	2		1	1		3
Water quality	2	1	1	1	5	1		1	1	7
Depletion of water supplies		2	1		3	1		1		4
Quality of food: increased demand for locally-grown food						1		1	1	2
Nature Deficit Disorder		1			1					1
Health impact of lack of exercise: increased demand for recreation	1				1					1
Impact of development on local economy (e.g., decreased tourism)	1	1	2		4	1	1	2	1	7
Inequities in access to open space	1				1	1	1	2		3
Other (comments written in by respondents)	Real estate market collapse & support for tax incentives	Fire danger Loss of tax revenues to support gov.	Living green movement Public awareness of climate change						Generational succession: need and opportunities for conservation	

Summary Findings and Analysis:
Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

		services								
--	--	----------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Top three trends that may have the greatest positive impact on land conservation efforts, continued

Summary

The trends with the greatest positive impact on land conservation are related to **concern over the negative outcomes of poorly planned development and a desire to avoid these impacts in the future. The public is becoming increasingly vocal in expressing this concern and supporting smart development.**

In some counties government officials are supportive of smart growth and recognize the importance of land conservation. In those counties where there is less support from public/elected officials, the public is becoming involved.

The public is concerned about poorly planned development and is increasingly voicing this concern.

The economic downturn and the increased sense of being a regional community are converging to create demand for local products and support for the Sierra-Cascade Region's heritage economy. **There is a growing awareness that this economy depends on maintaining the Sierra-Cascade Region's natural areas.** The Sierra-Cascade Region's increasing dependence on the tourism and outdoor recreation industries is contributing to this awareness.

Closely tied to poorly planned development is concern over the water supply and, particularly, the quality of the water supply. This contributes to support for land and water conservation and smart development.

These trends all translate into growing support for land conservation.

This space intentionally left blank.

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Trends / factors that may have negative impact on land conservation

Survey respondents were also asked whether there are any trends / factors that may have a negative impact on land conservation in the next 3 – 5 years in the Sierra-Cascade Region counties that they serve. If they answered “yes,” respondents were asked to identify these trends. Table 5 displays these responses.

Of the trends with negative impact, the downturn in the economy is the most significant.

Table 5: Trends that may have a negative impact on land conservation

Sub-region	Are there any trends that may have a negative impact?			If “yes,” what are these trends?
	Yes	No	Don't know	
North Central Foothills	3	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water delivery for new developments Lack of financial incentives Rapid development Slow economy
South Central Foothills	3			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor economy Economy may lead to reduction in monetary support to land trusts from members and donors The ability of leaders to agree on priorities and to work together to achieve progress
North Foothills	1		1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased development pressure. When economy turns around, many housing developments are poised to be built, including plans that have been approved, but haven't yet broken ground
South Foothills	1			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing demands Elected officials and policies that don't support land conservation New general plan Yohkol Valley (a plan to build a new town for 20-30,000 in Tulare County) Economically restrained giving
Total Foothill Region	8	1	1	
North non-Foothills	1		2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rezone of Timber Lands (TLZ) to zoning allowing development throughout the Sierra
East non-Foothills		1		
Total non-Foothill Region	1	1	2	
Regional Land Trusts	3			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of funding due to budget shortfalls and economic downturn throughout the state Development pressures Increased operating costs for ranchers & forestland owners Closure of mills Properties being left to children who no longer live in the area Lack of funding to complete transactions

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of public and/or elected official support for public land acquisitions• Lack of management funding for public or land trust stewards, which may prohibit additional acquisitions.
Total responses	12	2	3	

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Overriding impact of trends

Having gathered information on specific trends, we asked whether participants believe that the positive trends will outweigh the negative ones, the negative ones will outweigh the positive ones, or they will balance each other out. Table 6 displays the responses.

Sub-region (where land trust works)	Table 6: What will the overall impact of these trends be?			
	Positive trends will outweigh the negative	Negative trends will outweigh the positive	Positive trends will be balanced by the negative trends	Don't know / not sure
North Central Foothills	2			2
South Central Foothills	3			
North Foothills	2			
South Foothills				1
Total Foothill Region	7			3
North non-Foothills	1			2
East non-Foothills			1	
Total non-Foothill Region	1		1	2
Regional Land Trusts	2		1	
Total all	10		2	5

Summary

Overall, land trusts believe the trends will have a positive impact. However, there is a fair degree of uncertainty, with 5 of the respondents selecting “don’t know / not sure.”

Monitoring trends is an ongoing process. The findings of this project reveal **that there is strong and growing support for land conservation throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region.** There are many unknowns as to how these will pan out in the long run, and even in the next 3 – 5 years, which is a critical time frame for land conservation. **In the Sierra Foothill Region, in particular, support for land conservation is strong and is driven by the public, as well as by businesses and, in many cases, public and elected officials.** However, where the latter are not so supportive, the public is putting increased pressure on these officials to develop and implement policies and plans that are supportive of land conservation.

There is increased recognition of the Sierra-Cascade Region’s dependence on tourism and outdoor recreation industries and awareness that these industries depend on preserving the Region’s natural areas. This is a key factor driving land and water conservation in the Sierra-Cascade Region and particularly in the Sierra Foothill Region. The visible outcomes of poorly planned development motivate a strong desire among residents to prevent further rural sprawl from detracting from the Sierra-Cascade Region’s natural areas and environmental resources. Increasingly, the Sierra-Cascade Region is experiencing first-hand the impact of climate change—in the form of the earlier annual melting of the snow pack and the increased incidence of wildfires and forest fires. This is also a key factor motivating land and water conservation in the Sierra-Cascade Region.

While the Sierra-Cascade Region is increasingly identified as a unified community, it is a large land area and there are variations throughout the Region. While sub-regions provide a lens for identifying similarities in trends, even in these smaller areas, there are variations across counties. In order to prioritize land conservation projects in the Sierra Foothills Region, many factors need to be taken into consideration.

Concluding Comments

While not an explicit objective of this research project, the findings provide insight into how land trusts can cultivate increased support for land conservation.

The strongest trends in support of land conservation are in the “social trends” category. These reflect changing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to land conservation. These changes stem from increased understanding and awareness among the Sierra-Cascade Region’s residents of the value of land conservation to the region’s economy and to the overall health of the Region and of its residents. Residents have greater knowledge and appreciation of the benefits of land conservation in protecting water and air quality, mitigating the harmful effects of forest fires and wildfires, reducing costly and unattractive rural sprawl, maintaining the region’s rural heritage, and preserving the rural lifestyle. **This growing support for land conservation is due, in part, to the efforts of land trusts and their supporters in communicating these benefits and educating residents about them.**

Increased support is also evidenced among policy-makers and public officials, although to a lesser degree. However, where policy-makers and public officials are not supportive, the growing support among residents may outweigh this and may become the primary stimulus for changing policies. Among the evidence for this are the growing involvement of residents in county planning processes to support smart growth, the growing desire to support the Sierra-Cascade’s “Heritage Economy,” and the emphasis on maintaining the Region’s rural lifestyle.



In sum, of all the trends studied, the social trends lend the strongest support to land conservation. Social trends are also the main type of trend that land trusts can directly impact. This points to the importance of land trusts and their supporters, including private landowners, continuing their current efforts and taking an even larger role in educating residents regarding the value and benefits of land conservation.



Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Findings from Nevada Land Conservancy

Nevada Land Conservancy’s survey responses were excluded from the analysis above since the research project was focused on the Sierra Foothill Region. Nevada Land Conservancy (NVLC) serves Washoe County in the state of Nevada, an area that is outside of the Sierra Foothill Region. Washoe County also does not fall in the “non-Foothill Region” for purposes of the research project, as it is not within the service area of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. However, Washoe County is facing many of the same challenges as California counties in the Sierra-Cascade Region. Moreover, due to development in Reno and Sparks, Washoe County is dealing with development pressures that are very similar to those of the Sierra Foothill Counties. It is helpful to all SCLTC members to know how Washoe County is addressing these issues. Below we present the responses of NVLC to the survey questions.

Survey Question	NVLC Response
Are there any demographic trends and/or factors in the counties where your land trust works that may impact land conservation--either by supporting it or by posing barriers to it--in the next 3 - 5 years?	Not sure / don't know
Please describe the demographic trends and/or factors that may impact land conservation in the next 3 - 5 years in the counties where your land trust works.	The decline in the housing market is slowing the progress of proposed large housing developments. However, there is also an increase in proposed "leap-frog" developments that are not adjacent to city lands but are buffered by public lands (BLM, Forest Service). There is also a proposed ballot measure this fall that would require smart growth based on water availability as a limiting factor. The City of Reno recently completed an Open Space and Greenways plan, Washoe County recently updated their Regional Open Space Plan, and the City of Sparks is looking to also develop an open space plan.
How might these demographic trends/factors impact land conservation efforts?	Increase support for land conservation
Please tell us why you believe these demographic trends/factors may have this impact:	The grass-roots opposition to the proposed Spring Mountain development outside of Reno has been very vocal and increased awareness of the impacts to the surrounding public lands. There have been calls for the developer to consider selling the land for conservation. There is greater awareness of land conservation issues due to the municipal plans and the ballot measure, etc.
Are there any economic trends and/or factors in the counties where your land trust works that may impact land conservation--either by supporting it or by posing barriers to it--in the next 3 - 5 years?	Yes
Please describe the economic trends and/or factors that may impact land conservation in the next 3 - 5 years in the counties where your land trust works.	The decline in the housing market is slowing the progress of proposed large housing developments and also is influencing sellers to accept appraised values where previously they would hold out and look for more money. It's a buyer's market.
How might these economic trends/ factors impact land conservation efforts?	Increase support for land conservation

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

Please tell us why you believe these economic trends/factors may have this impact.	Because landowners are more willing to work with land trusts rather than holding out for perceived higher development dollars.
Are there any social trends and/or factors in the counties where your land trust works that may impact land conservation--either by supporting it or by posing barriers to it--in the next 3 - 5 years?	Yes
Please describe the social trends and/or factors that may impact land conservation in the next 3 - 5 years in the counties where your land trusts works.	Greater interest in preserving land for carbon sequestration (climate change); water quality / storage / allocation concerns; and also using public lands for renewable energy projects.
How might these social trends/factors impact land conservation efforts?	Combination: some may increase support, others may decrease support
Please tell us why you believe these social trends/factors may have this impact.	Climate change issues may increase the perceived need to preserve forests; water issues in Nevada are complex and dictate many land use trends; renewable energy, such as wind and solar farms may, by necessity, be placed on public lands or private lands with high resource values.
Are there any political trends and/or factors in the counties where your land trust works that may impact land conservation--either by supporting it or by posing barriers to it--in the next 3 - 5 years?	Yes
Please describe the political trends and/or factors that may impact land conservation in the next 3 - 5 years in the counties in which your land trust works.	There is an increase in proposed "leap-frog" developments that are not adjacent to city lands but are buffered by public lands (BLM, Forest Service). There is also a proposed ballot measure this fall that would require smart growth based on water availability as a limiting factor. The City of Reno recently completed an Open Space and Greenways plan, Washoe County recently updated their Regional Open Space Plan, and the City of Sparks is looking to also develop an open space plan. The Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority is touting our "adventure" resources which is renewing interest in preserving open areas, building trails, etc.
How might these political trends/factors impact land conservation efforts in the next 3-5 years in the counties in the Sierra-Cascade region in which your land trust works?	Combination: some may increase support, others may decrease support
Please tell us why you believe these political trends/factors may have this impact.	Public perception of leapfrog development is fairly negative which may spur smart growth planning.
Are there any other trends and/or factors in the counties where your land trust works that may impact land conservation in the next 3 - 5 years?	Yes
Please describe the other trends and/or factors (not mentioned above) that may impact land conservation in the next 3 - 5 years in the counties in which your land trust works.	Permeable surface requirements for storm water runoff and trails requirements for new developments. Increasing public impacts on urban interface lands (OHV use, illegal dumping).

Summary Findings and Analysis:

Trends and Factors with Potential to Impact Land Conservation in the Sierra Foothill Region

How might these other trends/factors impact land conservation efforts?	Increase support for land conservation
Please tell us why you believe these other trends/factors may have this impact.	These requirements and concerns raise the public's awareness of the value of natural resources.
From the list below, check the top three current or future trends or factors that may occur in the next 3-5 years in the geographic area where your land trust works that may have the greatest positive impact on land conservation efforts (i.e., that will support these efforts).	Depletion of water supplies Poorly-planned development, resulting in increased support for better planning -- e.g., "smart growth" initiatives (mixed use buildings, more dense urban cores with accessible open space) <i>Other</i> - Off-highway vehicle use and illegal dumping at the urban interface.
Overall, in the next 3 - 5 years, do you anticipate that the public's support of land conservation in the Sierra-Cascade region counties where your land trust works will: Increase / Decrease/ Stay the same / Don't know	Increase
Overall, in the next 3 - 5 years, do you anticipate that public / elected officials' support of land conservation in the Sierra-Cascade region counties where your land trust works will: Increase / Decrease / Stay the same / Don't know	Increase
Are there trends and/or factors in the counties where your land trust works that may have a negative impact on land conservation in the next 3 - 5 years?	Yes
What, if any, are the trends/factors that you believe may have the greatest negative impact on land conservation?	A downturn in the economy may mean fewer private dollars available to fund conservation efforts.
Overall, would you say that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The positive trends/factors will outweigh the negative ones ● The negative trends/factors will outweigh the positive ones ● The positive trends/factors will balance out the negative trends/factors ● Don't know / not sure 	The positive trends/factors will outweigh the negative ones