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Mono Basin Traditions Preserved

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Mono County landowner, Jan Simis, has permanently preserved her 135 acres for future generations. Her land, which sits at the very western edge of the Mono Basin, has now been preserved with a conservation easement, a voluntary binding land protection agreement between the landowner and Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT). Jan Simis retains ownership and management responsibilities for her land while designating how the land will be used now and in the future. "Jan's land is a keystone property in an incredibly beautiful and important area and we are very pleased to partner with a visionary landowner like her to ensure these special values continue," stated Karen Ferrell-Ingram, ESLT Executive Director.

Her property has a rich history, with evidence of human use spanning hundreds of years. It contains portions of the original Silvester and DeChambeau homesteads from the late 1800's, one of which has been maintained and restored and continues to serve as a residence on the property. The tradition of agriculture also continues, in the form of a small-scale farm and garden. Interestingly, the property was used as a base camp for the Mono Basin Research Group, while they were conducting the original Ecological Study of Mono Lake in 1976. Local lore has it that following completion of the study, the Mono Lake Committee organization was conceived around the embers of a campfire on this property. Many people have enjoyed the unique beauty and charm of 'Jan's Place' tucked against the base of the Sierra overlooking Mono Lake and the peaks beyond.

After many years of living on and caring for her unique property, Jan began to think about the future of her land. She stated that, "I have been lucky enough to know and love this land for over fifty years. The amazing views, plant life, and wild creatures combine in magical ways that thrill me everyday. And with the farm growing food for the community, there are so many good reasons to make sure this place is preserved forever."

The DeChambeau Creek Conservation Easement, named after the DeChambeau Creek, which runs through the property, is within the boundaries of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, and is surrounded by public lands. Bird species of local interest that use this preserve for nesting include Yellow Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Meadowlark, American Kestrel, and MacGillivray's Warbler. More than 150 species of birds have been identified on the property. Mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, coyotes, bobcats, skunk, gray fox, and long-tailed weasel use the property and the associated waterway as habitat and a corridor between adjacent public lands and the lake basin below.

ESLT works with willing landowners to preserve vital lands in the Eastern Sierra region for their scenic, agricultural, natural, recreational, historical, and watershed values. For more information about this and other conservation easements, visit ESLT's website at www.eslt.org.



135 acres along DeChambeau Creek, which drains into Mono Lake, were permanently preserved with a donated conservation easement by landowner Jan Simis. Photo by Aaron Johnson.