

Millar Ranch Oak Woodland Conservation Easement

June 22, 2010

Sierra Foothill Conservancy would like to announce its acquisition of a new 2,990 acre conservation easement in the foothills of Madera County. The Millar Ranch Oak Woodland Conservation Easement protects a significant portion of the headwaters of Fine Gold Creek. Fine Gold Creek is the largest low elevation creek flowing into the San Joaquin River in the Madera County foothills. Fine Gold Creek and its watershed have long been recognized as an important environmental resource. SFC's 718 acre Mary and Austin Ewell Preserve and our 600 acre Kennedy Table Conservation Easement are also in the Fine Gold watershed.

In addition to significant stands of blue oak woodland and mixed blue oak and interior live oak woodland the property has a small but important valley oak woodland and scattered populations of canyon oak and black oak. All of this made this property a perfect candidate for oak woodland protection funds from the Wildlife Conservation Board. The Ranch also has over 9 miles of Fine Gold Creek tributaries lined with undisturbed foothill riparian woodland and a lot of western pond turtles.



The Millar Ranch Oak Woodland Conservation Easement protects a significant portion of the headwaters of Fine Gold Creek.

As in every project of this size and complexity, there are a host of people and agencies SFC has to thank for their essential and timely help over the last three years. First of all we want to thank our partner the Trust for Public Land, first in the person of Robin Park who headed up the project for TPL in the beginning and then Erik Vink who took over when Robin left TPL. We owe a great debt to Bill Loudermilk, Jeff Single and the rest of the good people at the Central Region of the California Department of Fish and Game for their unwavering support of the protection of Fine Gold Creek over many years and to John Donnelly. We want to thank the Wildlife Conservation Board for funding the Millar Ranch easement and for helping to fund the Ewell Fine Gold Creek Preserve four years ago. The Millar Ranch project took so long that two WCB land agents retired during the process. Thank you to Brian Gibson for all of your help during the final stretch.

A big thank you goes to Madera County Supervisor Tom Wheeler and the Coarsegold RCD for their support from the early days of this project. Last, and most of all, we thank the Millar Brothers Pete, Greg, Mitch and Chris. No land trust could exist without landowners who want to see their land protected in perpetuity.

Making the Millar Ranch Conservation Easement even better is the fact that it is adjacent to the 1,000 acre Ecker Ranch easement held by the California Rangeland Trust. Together the two conservation easements make a total of 4,000 contiguous acres of protected land in a key area of Madera County.

The Millar Ranch easement brings Sierra Foothill Conservancy's total protected land to over 20,000 acres and today we celebrate what this means for land conservation in the central Sierra region. Thanks to all who have supported us over the last 14 years and we look forward to doing more good work with our partners in the future. With your help and support the next 20,000 acres won't take so long.