

# Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date October 20, 2011



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## **Governor Brown Signs SB 436 – California Rangeland Trust Approved to Hold Mitigation Easements Required Under CA Endangered Species Act**

*Sacramento* – The California Rangeland Trust is pleased to announce that Governor Jerry Brown signed into law SB 436 (Kehoe-D), which allows approved parties, including land trusts like the Rangeland Trust, to hold mitigation conservation easements and associated endowments on projects required under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). The passage of this bill ends the long-standing uncertainty over endowments for such mitigation easements.

The California Rangeland Trust has been accredited by the California Department of Fish and Game, one of only eight entities statewide, for meeting stringent financial and operational requirements to hold such easements and endowments under CESA. This bill was supported by the California Council of Land Trusts and the California Rangeland Trust among others as a way to end the log-jam of the California Department of Fish and Game's permit process for mitigation projects. SB 436 provides greater flexibility in determining the holder of conservation easements and endowments while creating specific criteria for the endowment holder.

"This legislation offers new opportunities and allows us to keep existing possibilities available for ranching families, irrigation districts, and the development community through mitigation easements," said Steve McDonald, Chairman of the board for the Rangeland Trust. "In this economy, keeping opportunities open will go a long way to keep ranchers ranching while respecting the land and the endangered species."

The Rangeland Trust currently holds mitigation easements on over 1,900 acres throughout California, and is working to close several other mitigation conservation easements that have been on hold awaiting the resolution of SB 436.

"The California Rangeland Trust is perfectly poised and ready to hold mitigation conservation easements and their associated endowments in perpetuity," said CEO Nita Vail. "This legislation accomplishes what we have been working so hard for over the last year. The same organization that is responsible for holding the conservation easement must also be the steward of the endowment."

Over two-thirds of species federally listed as "endangered" or "threatened" utilize habitat provided by private rangelands. California Rangeland Trust has conserved over 240,000 acres of private rangeland across the state protecting the habitat of species such as Swainsons hawk, San Joaquin kit fox, California tiger salamander, red-legged frog, and fairy shrimp. Also conserved are vernal pools, which when managed with grazing practices, provide critical habitat for many species. Ranchers are the stewards of the valuable rangeland that provides the habitat and protection for biodiversity.

Science increasingly has proven that the responsible management of our state's rangelands by ranchers and cattle grazing is not only compatible with, but necessary for, the successful protection of plant and animal species.

"Our directors and staff are ranchers and experienced conservation professionals who can meet the needs of those desiring mitigation easements to offset the impacts of these types of projects. We are prepared and ready to do these projects," said McDonald.

The California Rangeland Trust is nationally accredited by the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission.

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For more information on mitigation easements and rangelands, please contact Michael Delbar, chief operating officer, at the California Rangeland Trust, 916.444.2096.

The California Rangeland Trust ([www.rangelandtrust.org](http://www.rangelandtrust.org)) is a statewide nonprofit organization created to conserve the open space, natural habitat and stewardship provided by California's ranches and is nationally accredited through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The Rangeland Trust holds conservation easements on working ranches covering 240,000 acres throughout California.