

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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October 16, 2012

Mr. Jim Branham, Executive Officer
Mr. Bob Kingman, Mt. Lassen Area Manager
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Ste. 205
Auburn CA 95603

**RE: Support - "Gerle Range and Meadow Restoration Project" Proposal
Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Program**

Gentlemen,

The County of El Dorado Board of Supervisors supports the "Gerle Range and Meadow Restoration Project" Proposal submitted by the Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation District for consideration under the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Program.

The Gerle Range and Meadow Restoration Project (Project) is located on the Georgetown Divide of the central Sierra Nevada Mountains. As early as the mid-to-late 1800's families have used this land for summer grazing. The family constructed a cabin and various outbuildings on the property in the late 1920's and lived there during the summer months until the first frost. The agricultural and grazing rights were used and rented out to other local cattlemen through the 1990's.

High Sierra Range lands are part of a working landscape, managed to balance a multitude of economic, social, and ecological benefits. Specifically, rangelands with incorporated meadows provide multiple ecosystem benefits, including maintaining landscape hydrologic functioning, and supporting distinct plant communities important to both wildlife habitat and domestic cattle grazing. These ranching operations traditionally have depended on government-owned allotments that allowed ranching operations during dry summer months when annual grasslands enter the inadequate dry forage period. Accessibility of these public-owned allotments has diminished. Due to their intrinsic residential value, foothill ranches are highly susceptible to urban development. For these reasons, some suggest that the broad-scale reductions in public grazing permits would greatly impact the viability of foothill ranches, forcing owners to sell lands to developers, which would have negative regional socio-economic and ecological implications. The proposed Gerle Range and Meadow Restoration Project will implement restoration activities on a private ranch to allow grazing operations to resume.

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The proposed Project utilizes broadly accepted measures to effectively manage these grazing lands that support grazing operations and sustain meadow health and function. The Project area is located within the Eldorado National Forest on private property, sub-irrigated by both Dellar Creek and Barts Creek, which then drain into Gerle Creek, a tributary to the South Fork American River.

Much has been learned about sustainable grazing practices in recent decades, and with appropriate monitoring and adaptive management, these lands can support local ranches into the future. Healthy meadows, with intact hydrology and appropriate grazing systems, can offer reliable, increased forage for local ranches, thereby helping to support the local agrarian economy.

The Board of Supervisors thanks you for accepting the Gerle Range and Meadow Restoration Project Proposal for funding consideration under the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Proposition 84 Grant Program.

Sincerely,

John R. Knight, Chair
Board of Supervisors
County of El Dorado