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# THE Bridge

## LETTER FROM THE Executive Director

### CELEBRATING CALIFORNIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEROES

There's a lot of talk in Washington these days about the environment. And, the talk isn't good.

To balance federal budgets, our elected officials continue to put vital conservation programs on the chopping block, including those benefitting California. Programs that encourage farmers to restore streams for the sake of people and fish, conserve precious fresh water and enhance critical habitat for species on the brink, among other noteworthy impacts.



With cutbacks in federal and even state funding, Sustainable Conservation's work with forward-thinking landowners to steward California's environment in ways that make economic sense is more important than ever. Because more than half of all land in the state is privately owned, how these folks manage their properties has dramatic, lasting effects on the planet and people.

That's why I'm pleased to introduce you to three environmental heroes of mine. They're all finalists for the 2011 California Leopold Conservation Award, which Sustainable Conservation helped launch and has co-sponsored annually since 2006. The award – dedicated to the spirit of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold (author of *A Sand County Almanac*) – celebrates the extraordinary efforts of pioneering farmers and ranchers to protect and restore the natural resources under their care.

These finalists – and others like them – serve as front-line defenders of our air, water, wildlife and climate, even in tough economic times. They also demonstrate the power of Sustainable Conservation's approach ... that a healthy environment can, and should, go hand in hand with a healthy bottom line.

Join me in celebrating the Leopold Conservation Award finalists' remarkable achievements in making sound stewardship “business as usual.” They're all winners to us.

Best Regards,

Ashley Boren  
Executive Director

SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION

IS PLEASED TO PRESENT

THE FINALISTS FOR THE

# 2011 California Leopold Conservation Award



Launched in 2006, the California Leopold Conservation Award celebrates innovative farmers and ranchers – and their families – who manage their land in exemplary, sustainable ways. This year's finalists prove the power of Sustainable Conservation's approach to solving California's most pressing issues ... that protecting the environment can be good for business.

**Sand County Foundation, Sustainable Conservation and the California Farm Bureau Federation are proud co-sponsors of the 2011 California Leopold Conservation Award.**



Bill Lyons, Jr. uses his farm just outside of Modesto to grow an unconventional crop: migratory birds.



Mape's and  
Dos Rios Ranch

## A REFUGE FOR WILDLIFE

**BILL LYONS, JR., MAPE'S AND DOS RIOS RANCH – MODESTO** “I learned my deep respect for nature from my late father ... especially for the waterfowl that have called our property home long before we called it home,” explained Bill Lyons, Jr. during a recent visit to his family’s adjoining farms tucked between the San Joaquin, Tuolumne and Stanislaus rivers a short drive west of Modesto.

Bill oversees his family’s 8,000-acre Mape’s Ranch and 1,600-acre Dos Rios Ranch, first purchased by Bill’s great uncle nearly a century ago. They grow traditional crops like wheat, oats and tomatoes. They also grow something unconventional: wildlife.

For more than three decades, Bill has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to voluntarily restore 500 acres of wetlands that border the neighboring San Joaquin National Wildlife Refuge to benefit a variety of migratory birds, including the formerly endangered Aleutian Cackling Goose.

Approximately 90% of the global Cackling Goose population passes through Bill’s property during its winter migration from Alaska to California’s Central Valley. Thanks to Bill and his family’s efforts, which included selling 2,000 acres to the refuge, the goose was taken off the Endangered Species List in 2006.

“I love showing how farming and wildlife can live in harmony,” Bill explains. “It’s a relationship we need more of these days.”

Ward and Rosie Burroughs pose with the future of sustainable farming, son-in-law Heriberto (left), daughter Benina and granddaughter Mariana.



## BURROUGHS FAMILY, BURROUGHS RANCH

**- DENAIR** For third-generation farmers Ward and Rosie Burroughs, whose postcard-perfect farm fans out over 4,400 acres just a stone's throw east of Modesto, the fate of sustainable farming lies in the present *and* the future. That's why they've involved their three grown children, and even their children's children, in a farming operation that's anything but conventional.

"Ward and I believe that it takes the creative thinking of the younger generations to run a viable farming business in an ever-changing world," Rosie explains. "That includes changes to our environment, things like less water to go around and a climate that's not as predictable."

Following the lead of their 30-something son, Zeb, and daughter-in-law, Meridith, the family

established California Cloverleaf Farms – a certified organic dairy that raises its nearly 500 cows as Mother Nature intended ... in lush pastures of native grasses. Grazing on tasty greens has many upsides: the health of their cows and quality of the milk go up, their dependence on costly commercial feed goes down and their carbon footprint shrinks.

To cut greenhouse gases even more, Ward and Rosie's middle child, Benina (pictured), installed five high-tech solar arrays that provide 80% of the power needed to irrigate the organic almond orchards she farms.

"Our investment in the future goes way beyond our property line," Ward adds. "For more than half a century, we've hosted farming students from around the world. Their passion gives us hope."

Tim Koopman (left) and his ranching family play a vital role in protecting open space in the Bay Area.



## OPEN-SPACE GUARDIAN

### TIM KOOPMAN, KOOPMAN RANCH –

**SUNOL** Love the East Bay's rolling hills and untouched landscapes? Thank Tim Koopman.

A third-generation rancher who runs cattle on his 850-acre property sandwiched between busy Highway 680 to the west (background), an 18-hole golf course to the north and homes everywhere else, Tim is a testament to the vital role ranchers play in safeguarding the Bay Area's remaining open space.

"Without the dedication of hard-working ranchers to keep their operations viable, McMansions would dot every hill in the Bay Area instead of oaks," Tim explains.

To preserve his ranch from the steady march of urban expansion, Tim established a conservation

easement on 150 acres of his property. It protects his land from being developed into housing tracts or shopping centers while allowing him to do what he does best, raise cattle. The easement was the first in Alameda County and serves as a model for protecting working lands throughout California.

In addition to benefitting the golden eagles, mountain lions and other critters that call his ranch home, the easement protects critical habitat for the endangered California tiger salamander – whose Bay Area territory has shrunk to just a quarter of its original size.

Tim also implemented a pioneering program that drastically improves the quality of Alameda Creek to aid the salamander, struggling fish and communities downstream in the San Francisco Bay.

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## USDA Awards Grant to Measure Nature's Benefits, Reward Landowners



PHOTO BY PAOLO VESCA

Sustainable Conservation, in partnership with several nonprofit, industry and government allies including Environmental Defense Fund and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, was awarded a \$372,000 Conservation Innovation Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to launch a pilot program that measures environmental benefits in California's Mokelumne River watershed.

The program will develop uniform standards and payment mechanisms that allow private utilities, government agencies, communities, foundations and nonprofits to pay landowners for managing their properties in ways that benefit the environment and people. The ultimate goal is to attract funding to pay farmers, ranchers and foresters to enhance nature's benefits like water purification, erosion control and wildlife habitat.

Sustainable Conservation Executive Director Ashley Boren notes, "Typically farmers and ranchers are paid to grow crops and raise livestock. But many of these individuals who manage their land responsibly provide important services that benefit nature and human well-being. We need to create ways to pay farmers and ranchers for these services."

## Business Partnerships Director Joins Team

Bob Adams recently joined Sustainable Conservation as our new Director of Business Partnerships. Bob will help the organization continue building successful alliances with California industries to promote our climate, air, water and wildlife efforts statewide.

Prior to joining us, Bob consulted and lectured internationally on sustainability, innovation and transformation for nearly 10 years. From 2003-2009, he led the Design for Sustainability initiative at IDEO, one of the world's leading design and innovation consultancies, where he is currently an IDEO Fellow.

Trained in mechanical engineering, product design and agronomy, Bob has focused on the integration of the design process with principles of sustainable development since 2001 when he joined The Natural Step and authored the formative white paper, "Sustainability for Designers."

Bob owns and operates a farm in California's Sacramento Valley where he produces heritage fruits and vegetables, grains and olive oil.