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## Conservation Award To Be Presented To CA Rancher

December 8, 2009

SACRAMENTO (AScribe Newswire) — Sand County Foundation, the California Farm Bureau Federation and Sustainable Conservation will present the 2009 Leopold Conservation Award in California to John Diener.

"John Diener's combination of a land ethic with novel approaches to agriculture and conservation is truly exemplary," said Dr. Brent Haglund, Sand County Foundation President. "He is an outstanding representative of the future of land, water, and wildlife conservation on private lands."

Diener's Red Rock Ranch consists of approximately 5,000 acres in Fresno County. He farms an array of high value row crops, using innovative approaches to land, water, and wildlife management. Among other achievements, Diener pioneered work on conservation tillage for his crops that reduces the number of tractor operations, dust emissions and diesel fuel. He is now coupling conservation tillage with water-efficient irrigation systems.

His efforts don't stop at his ranch's borders, however. Diener has led the charge in addressing saline drainage water management issues with the Westside Resource Conservation District, of which he is a charter member, that brings conservation and resource management services to landowners. Diener continues to work with several educational institutions and state and federal agencies to achieve a sustainable system for managing the salt load from irrigation drainage.

The other finalists for the 2009 award were:

- Bill and Kay Burrows - Red Bluff, Calif. (Tehama County)
- Howe Creek Ranch, Steve and Jill Hackett - Ferndale, Calif. (Humboldt County)
- Montna Farms, Alfred G. Montna - Yuba City, Calif. (Sutter County)

The fourth annual Leopold Conservation Award for California will be presented December 7, 2009 at the California Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting in Anaheim.

The \$10,000 award is named in honor of world-renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold. The Leopold Conservation Award is presented annually in seven states to private landowners who practice exemplary land stewardship and management.

A distinguished panel of experts selected Mr. Diener as the 2009 award recipient:

- Gayle Norman, State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Cornelius Gallagher, Senior Vice President, Bank of America
- Ben Higgins, State Director, USDA Rural Development
- Sopac (Soapy) Mulholland, Executive Director, Sequoia Riverlands Trust
- Tom Tomich, Director, Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program (SAREP), University of California - Davis

In California, the Leopold Conservation Award is presented by Sand County Foundation, California Farm Bureau Federation and Sustainable Conservation. The California award is supported in part with generous contributions from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, the Bradley Fund for the Environment, and The Nature Conservancy.

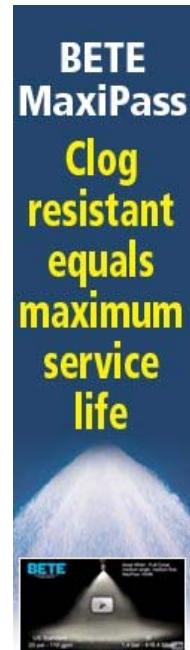
In 2009, Sand County Foundation will present Leopold Conservation Awards in California, Texas, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming and Utah. The awards are presented to: recognize extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation on the land of exemplary private landowners; inspire countless other landowners in their own communities through these examples; and showcase conservation leaders in the agricultural community to people outside of agriculture. For more information, please visit <http://www.leopoldconservationaward.org>.

### ABOUT SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

Sand County Foundation is a private, non-profit conservation group dedicated to working with private landowners to improve habitat on their land. Sand County's mission is to advance the use of ethical and scientifically sound land management practices and partnerships for the benefit of people and the ecological landscape. Sand County Foundation works with private landowners because the majority of the nation's fish, wildlife and natural resources are found on private lands. The organization backs local champions, invests in civil society and places incentives before regulation to create solutions that endure and grow. The organization encourages the exercise of private responsibility in the pursuit of improved land health as an essential alternative to many of the commonly used strategies in modern conservation. <http://www.sandcounty.net>

### ABOUT SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION

Sustainable Conservation believes protecting the environment can also be good for business. The organization's climate, air, water and biodiversity initiatives promote practical solutions that produce tangible, lasting benefits for California. Founded in 1993, Sustainable Conservation's effectiveness lies in building strong partnerships with business, agriculture and government - and establishing models for environmental and economic sustainability that can be replicated across California and beyond. <http://www.suscon.org>



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**ABOUT CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU**

The California Farm Bureau Federation is California's largest farm organization. It works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of 53 county Farm Bureaus throughout California, whose members include farm families and those who support the farming way of life.  
<http://www.cfbf.com>

**The 2009 Award finalists:****Bill and Kay Burrows** - Red Bluff, Calif. (Tehama County)

Bill and Kay Burrows employ Holistic Management techniques in the operation of their ranch. Their family works to improve the biodiversity on their land, increasing the productivity of the soil, plants, and animals. The Burrows run cattle, as well as meat goats and sheep for brush control. The family diversifies its operation through agri-tourism, including hosting hunting and fishing tours. Bill and Kay also engage in community outreach, hosting an annual "Stewardship Day" at the ranch where local residents, agencies and organizations are invited to their ranch to learn about sustainable resource management.

**Howe Creek Ranch, Steve and Jill Hackett** - Ferndale, Calif. (Humboldt County)

Steve and Jill Hackett have taken a proactive approach to integrating ecological sustainability into their 4,000 acres of forests and cattle pasturage, where the family has ranned and produced forest products for 95 years. Their forestry practices, cemented by a conservation easement, create corridors of mature forest and healthy watersheds that support salmon, spotted owls and other wildlife. Their work in developing the California Rangeland Water Quality Management Plan is credited with injecting incentives and cooperation into ranch planning and program implementation, and with engaging environmental groups, industry groups and federal and state government agencies effectively. The plan now involves more than 1 million acres of private California ranchland.

**Montna Farms, Alfred G. Montna** - Yuba City, Calif. (Sutter County)

Rice grower Al Montna has created extensive habitat for wildlife, particularly waterfowl, through his 2,500-acre farming operation. He also led the way in replacing the practice of burning rice stubble with environmentally safe alternatives and reducing pesticide run-off into the Sacramento River by 90 percent. Known for bringing people together, he has held leadership positions in numerous industry organizations and public policy boards, such as Northern California Water Association, California Bay-Delta Authority and State Board of Food and Agriculture. This year, he installed a solar power system to power the Montna Farms Rice Dryer.

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