

Finalists announced for Leopold award in California

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Sand County Foundation, the California Farm Bureau Federation, and Sustainable Conservation are proud to announce the finalists for the 2010 Leopold Conservation Award in California.

"The health of California's landscape is dependent on hard-working farmers and ranchers who are dedicated to ensuring that California's land, water and wildlife are in better shape than when they found them," said Dr. Brent Haglund, Sand County Foundation president. "Year after year, the high quality of nominees for the Leopold Conservation Award makes the selection process difficult but proves that California's natural resources are being cared for by innovative landowners who want to see them flourish for future generations."

After a distinguished panel of judges makes its selection this month, the fifth annual Leopold Conservation Award for California will be presented Dec. 6, 2010, at the California Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting in Monterey, CA.

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

The 2010 Award finalists include:

Tim Koopmann is a thirdgeneration rancher who owns and operates a cow/ calf operation on 850 acres of rangeland. He has been able to maintain the ranch in the face of increasing development due to conservation easements that were the first of their kind in Alameda County. Koopmann was instrumental in the creation and implementation of a pioneering approach to watershed management, which has improved water quality in the Alameda Creek watershed as well as San Francisco Bay. He has held several positions of leadership within agriculture and participated in numerous workshops and field tours to help with conservation outreach to other livestock producers. Koopmann's ranch was also the site of the development of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition.

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. Last year, he installed a solar power system to power the Montna Farms rice dryer.

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 agritourism, 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.

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 Audubon. — **WLJ**

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