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## **BAY AREA RANCHER TO RECEIVE LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD**

Sacramento, Calif. – December 5, 2011 – Sand County Foundation, the California Farm Bureau Federation and Sustainable Conservation are pleased to name Bay Area rancher Tim Koopmann as the 2011 recipient of the Leopold Conservation Award in California.

The sixth annual Leopold Conservation Award for California will be presented December 5 at the California Farm Bureau Federation's Annual Meeting in Sparks, Nev.

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

"Tim Koopmann's commitment to the health of the land and wildlife in his family's care is exemplary, but he has also made extraordinary improvements in water quality that benefit those on and off of his ranch," said Brent Haglund, Sand County Foundation president. "In addition, he has taken steps to help ensure that his land and land ethic will continue to thrive for future generations."

Tim Koopmann is a third-generation rancher who owns and operates an 850-acre cow-calf operation within the San Francisco Bay Area in Sunol. The Koopmann Ranch is an agricultural gem surrounded by urban development.

Koopmann's effective management practices have improved the soil and wildlife populations on his land, and his dedication to the enhancement of water quality on and off of his ranch is truly exceptional. As a Watershed Resource Specialist for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), Koopmann manages over 40,000 acres of watershed lands. His talent for building partnerships to tackle environmental issues has produced significant results. For instance, he formed a team of 15 public agencies and agricultural organizations to develop a comprehensive watershed management and monitoring plan that has been recognized in California and internationally. Also, the Koopmanns have played an integral role in the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition, which was developed at their ranch in 2005. The Coalition brings together environmentalists, ranchers and resource professionals from state and federal agencies to advocate for the preservation of working ranches.

Faced with encroaching development and the reality of selling or sub-dividing his ranch, Koopmann placed two conservation easements on his family's ranch. He conserved a naturally occurring pond and the surrounding 31 acres of grassland

in perpetuity for the California tiger salamander. Koopmann also conserved 107 acres in perpetuity to slow the encroachment of an adjacent golf course. These easements allowed him and his family to pay their estate tax bill and, most importantly, allow them to continue their work on the preservation of the land and other natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

Along with Koopmann, the 2011 Leopold Conservation Award had two other finalists:

- \* Bill Lyons, Jr. – Modesto
- \* Burroughs family – Denair

#### Bill Lyons, Jr.

Bill Lyons, Jr. 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, Lyons 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 percent of the global Cackling Goose population passes through the Lyons family's property during its winter migration from Alaska to California's Central Valley. Thanks to the family's efforts, which included selling 2,000 acres to the refuge, the goose was taken off of the endangered species list in 2006.

#### Burroughs family

For third-generation farmers Ward and Rosie Burroughs, whose postcard-perfect 4,400-acre farm is located just east of Modesto, the fate of sustainable farming lies in the present – and the future. That's why they've involved their three children and their grandchildren in a holistic farming operation.

Following the lead of their son, Zeb, and daughter-in-law, Meridith, the Burroughs established California Cloverleaf Farms, which is a certified organic dairy that raises its nearly 500 cows 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, they say.

To cut greenhouse gases even more, the Burroughs' middle child, Benina, installed five high-tech solar arrays that provide 80 percent of the power needed

to irrigate the organic almond orchards she farms.

The Leopold Conservation Award in California is supported in part with generous contributions from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation; the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation; The Nature Conservancy; California Audubon; and Farm Credit.

In 2011, Sand County Foundation is presenting Leopold Conservation Awards in California, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming. The awards are presented to recognize extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation on the land of exemplary private landowners; inspire other landowners in their own communities through these examples; showcase conservation leaders in the agricultural community to people outside of agriculture; and build bridges among several private and public sectors in support of private land conservation.

For more information, please visit [www.leopoldconservationaward.org](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. The Foundation'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. [www.sandcounty.net](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 wildlife 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. [www.suscon.org](http://www.suscon.org)

#### 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. [www.cfbf.com](http://www.cfbf.com)

*Photos of the Koopmanns and other finalists are available upon request.*

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