



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2015

For More Information:

Kyle Cooper, Pacific Forest Trust, Communications Manager

kcooper@pacificforest.org, (415) 561-0700 x. 17

News Release

Historic Ranch Conserved to Protect State's Water Sources and a Family's Heritage

San Francisco, Calif. – On the slopes of Mt. Shasta in Northern California, the 3,468-acre historic Butte Creek Meadows ranch, owned by the Hart family for more than 150, years is now conserved forever, thanks to a working forest conservation easement granted to the Pacific Forest Trust (PFT). PFT was able to acquire the easement recently thanks to a generous gift from the landowners in addition to grant funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board's Forest Conservation Program and the California Natural Resource Agency's Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program.

The working forest conservation easement is a binding agreement between the Hart family and PFT that will permanently protect this beautiful property from break up and future development while keeping it in private ownership. The conservation easement helps sustain the family's outstanding management for timber, cattle, water, and wildlife. The ranch's conservation secures an important wildlife corridor between the Shasta-Trinity National Forest and the Klamath National Forest, and enhances habitat for imperiled animals such as the northern spotted owl and the Pacific fisher. The Harts' decision is an important gain for the economy and environment in Siskiyou County – which is at the heart of the Klamath-Cascade region that provides a majority of California's drinking water, is the center of the timber industry, and is home to one of the world's most diverse conifer forests.

Straddling the divide between the Klamath River and the Sacramento River Basins, the ranch includes headwaters of Butte Creek, which provides water important for drinking and agriculture, as well as for endangered salmon. The easement will conserve over 2,660 acres of diverse, healthy forest, 650 acres of rare wet meadow habitat, and a 4-mile stretch of Butte Creek in the Klamath Basin. As California continues into its fourth year of record-breaking drought, conserving the large, intact wet meadow system and spring-fed Butte Creek is exceedingly important. Wet meadows regulate the water table, reduce flooding incidents, and keep streams running throughout drier months by slowly releasing spring snowmelt.

Wet meadows are also one of the region's most diverse plant habitats, attracting an abundance of birds, small mammals, and insects. This property's twelve habitat types support 63 kinds of animals, including elk and native trout, as well as seven rare or threatened species.

John Donnelly of the Wildlife Conservation Board notes: “The conservation of Butte Creek Ranch not only sustains over 150 years of one family’s stewardship, it is a strategic investment to help wildlife adapt to climate change by permanently protecting this refuge and key corridor connecting the Shasta-Trinity and Klamath National Forests.”

The Harts were inspired to protect this land by recalling the sacrifices made by their ancestor, Louisa Hart, who journeyed by boat from New York and rode a mule across the Isthmus of Panama carrying her two diaper-clad sons to make Hart Ranch and Butte Creek Meadows her home. She stewarded the land with tenacity until her death at age 87. From Louisa Hart through six successive generations who have worked the property, the family members see the ranch as more than just a piece of land but rather a part of a larger landscape with important ecological, economic, and human benefits.

“We want Butte Creek Ranch to remain as it is and continue to improve it in perpetuity,” Susan Hart remarks. “A conservation easement makes it financially possible for us to continue good stewardship. This is our contribution to California’s forests and wildlife. You do it because it’s the right thing to do.”

“We work with landowners and communities to keep forests as forests for all of the public benefits they provide,” said Constance Best, Co-CEO of PFT. “We are honored to partner with the Hart family to conserve this extraordinary working ranch, wildlife haven, and source of such abundant water.”

#####

About Pacific Forest Trust

Since 1993, the Pacific Forest Trust has been dedicated to conserving and sustaining America’s vital, productive forest landscapes. Working with forest owners, communities and an array of partners, we advance innovative, incentive-based strategies to safeguard our nation’s diverse forests. In so doing, we’re ensuring forests continue to provide people everywhere — from rural communities to urban centers — with a wealth of benefits, including clean water, sustainably harvested wood, green jobs, wildlife habitat and a livable climate.

<http://pacificforest.org/>