

## President's Report *by Tony Taylor*

As winter changes into spring, the work and progress of our land trust seems to accelerate with every passing season.



First, I want to announce our newest Board member, Orrin Sage, who joined us in February. Orrin holds a Ph.D. in geology and has worked as an agricultural and environmental consultant for 37 years. He is a principal with Sage Associates, specializing in working with land trust organizations and land owners to craft conservation easements. Orrin plays a key role on our Lands Committee and will be a vital part of our Board of Directors. Welcome Orrin!

Other excitement includes our work with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) to permanently protect from development a portion of the City's land in this region. We recently met with representatives from LADWP, Mono, and Inyo Counties and the Mono Lake Committee where clear plans were laid on how to move forward on this incredibly important project.

Finally, a note about the nationwide land trust movement. A December 14 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* began with the line "Look out development sprawl, the land trusts are coming." Quoting data about land trust work supplied by the national Land Trust Alliance, the article states that, between 2000 and 2005:

- Private land set aside for conservation increased from

## Wildlife Conservation Board Funds ESLT Project

*by Karen Ferrell-Ingram*

The California Wildlife Conservation Board, the premier sponsor of projects to benefit wildlife and natural habitats in California, met in February and voted to fund an ESLT proposal to purchase a conservation easement. One of many exciting projects throughout the state to be funded that day, the ESLT land conservation project focuses on maintaining a significant but narrow wildlife migration corridor in southern Mono County.

Diverse and abundant plant life found on the newly funded project site supports many species of wildlife that depend on this migration corridor to reach the high elevations of the Sierra Nevada every year. Though the migration corridor bottlenecks to about one mile wide at the foot of Wheeler Ridge, approximately 2200 mule deer, followed by an unknown number of mountain lions and innumerable bird and mammal species, travel this perilous route twice a year.

The ESLT, with support from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), the California Deer Association, California Department of Fish and Game, a willing landowner, and our generous members, is very pleased to put together a project that has such great benefit to so many wildlife species. We are working on several other proposals with the WCB and expect that this is just the beginning of a productive partnership that will continue to protect critical habitats in the Eastern Sierra. The WCB is directly funded by state bond propositions, such as the recent Prop. 84, so the WCB's recent support reinforces our belief that the natural health of the Eastern Sierra is of benefit to the people of the entire state of California. ■



*Mule ears (Wyethia mollis) blooming at the foot of Wheeler Ridge. Photo by Stephen Ingram.*

- 24 million acres to 37 million acres, a 54% increase;

- Local and state land trusts (like the ESLT) increased their protected lands from 6 million acres to 11.9 million acres, a 98% increase; and

- The number of land trust organizations increased by a third to

1,667—one of those new organizations was the ESLT!

As always, thank you for your interest in and support of the ESLT. We and our many colleague organizations couldn't do our work without the support of people like you. ■

## ON THE WILD SIDE

# Sagebrush scrub: Blanket of the Great Basin

by Tammy Branston

Sage grouse, pygmy rabbits, mule deer, bighorn sheep, sagebrush lizards, and many other animals depend on sagebrush scrub for their survival. This high desert plant community provides food and shelter for numerous birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects, and serves as crucial habitat for wildflowers and rare plants. Sagebrush gave Native Americans a source of tea that was used for treating ailments ranging from bronchitis to rheumatism. Today, human residents and visitors to the Eastern Sierra benefit from the aromatherapy and open space “visual therapy” that sagebrush scrub can provide.

Sagebrush scrub covers vast areas of the Great Basin, the high desert whose western edge lies in the rain shadow of the Eastern Sierra Nevada. Other associated plants include rabbitbrush, bitterbrush, saltbush, and cotton-thorn. Plants of the sagebrush scrub community have evolved several adaptations to survive the dry climate, such as small, hairy leaves to limit water loss, thorns to deter browsing animals, and long taproots to reach ground water. Although sagebrush is highly nutritious, it contains coumarin, a volatile oil compound that imparts a bitter taste and prevents leaves from being fully digested by many herbivores. Mule deer devour sagebrush but avoid this effect by belching the compound as they chew their cud.

Despite its widespread occurrence from roughly 4000 to 7000 feet in Alpine, Mono, and Inyo counties, sagebrush scrub is under attack from wildfires, weed invasion, and sprawling development. The fragmentation occurring in sagebrush scrub is detrimental to the many wildlife species that need large expanses to hunt, nest, or raise their young. The ESLT works to protect this important plant community by partnering with landowners to limit sprawl and destruction of native plants. ■



Sagebrush scrub, with Mt. Tom and Wheeler Ridge in the background (Photo by Stephen Ingram)

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT Board Member Rick Kattelmann

by Stephen Ingram

The ESLT would not be the successful organization it has become without the help of its board members and other volunteers. Vice-president and founding board member, Rick Kattelmann, has served on the ESLT board since its inception in 2001. Rick’s work as a hydrologist who contributed to the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) in the mid 1990s helped generate local awareness of threats facing our region. Early on in Rick’s eight-year service on the Mono County Planning Commission, it became apparent that Mono County wanted and needed a local land trust to work with private landowners to

protect farms and ranches, watersheds, and other important habitats. Rick spearheaded the effort to form what has become the Eastern Sierra Land Trust.

When Rick is not trekking and photographing in the Himalaya or other mountain ranges of central Asia or South America (he is in Peru as this goes to press), he attends the majority of ESLT committee and board meetings. Rick’s insight, water resource expertise, dedication, and high tolerance for meetings make his work with us



Rick Kattelmann

*The mission of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust is to protect and enhance vital lands in the Eastern Sierra for their scenic, recreational, agricultural, historical, botanic and wildlife values.*

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invaluable. Board President Tony Taylor remarked that, “Whenever we are faced with a difficult situation, I can always depend on Rick to bring an important idea or insight to the deliberations. I often think in that situation, “Why didn’t I think of that?” But I didn’t and he did.”

Rick lives with his wife, Sally Gaines, in Sunny Slopes, and states that he is “on the verge of retirement.” Hopefully Rick is referring to his hydrological work and not his land trust work. Thanks, Rick! ■

# Making an Investment in the Eastern Sierra by Stephen Ingram

The ESLT would like to welcome **Cheryl Chipman**, the new “Investment Opportunities Coordinator,” in other circles possibly known as Development Coordinator. Cheryl has lived in Bishop for nearly five years and spends as much time as possible enjoying the outdoors while skiing, hiking, cycling or kayaking.



*Cheryl Chipman*

She is active with the Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and feels ESLT is a natural fit. Most recently, Cheryl has been the Water Program Coordinator for the Big Pine Paiute Tribe, and before coming to the east side she developed wetland and wildlife education programs for the Yolo Basin Foundation in Davis. Living in the Central Valley and San Francisco Bay area for many years

persuaded Cheryl to move back to a rural setting where there was plenty of clean air and water. “It was a rare day when you could see the Sierra from Davis, and that just wasn’t good enough. I’m glad there are still parts of California that are largely unchanged with a high quality of life. That’s why the ESLT is so important—if there weren’t groups like this working hard to preserve open landscapes, a lot of what is special here would be compromised.” We welcome Cheryl as part of the team!

**Katie Hergenrather** is our latest addition to the ESLT team. She started in January and will continue through December serving the ESLT as an AmeriCorps member through Sierra Nevada Alliance’s *Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Program* (SNAP). SNAP is a



*Katie Hergenrather*

new regional program that has established 19 service locations (of which ESLT is one) with nonprofit conservation groups throughout the Sierra Nevada.

While looking for a position as an Environmental Planner, Katie read of the opening at ESLT. Katie explained that she is “thrilled to serve with the ESLT because this is a unique opportunity to make a real difference by encouraging sustainable community development and agriculture. I have been hoping and dreaming of an experience that will make a good contribution to society and support my future goals. The icing on the cake is that it is located in one of the most beautiful places in the world!”

We’re very fortunate to have Katie’s help and enthusiasm for the rest of 2007. ■

## Donations of Stocks Work Well for ESLT by Cheryl Chipman

Surprisingly enough, there may be an even better option than donating money to your favorite cause (hopefully it’s the ESLT!). Donating appreciated stocks or mutual funds can render tax advantages greater than cash. Benefits include: 1) avoiding federal and state tax on the capital gain, 2) receiving an income tax deduction of the full market value if you have held the assets more than one year, and 3) making a gift worth more than your original cost.

Here’s how it works: If you purchased stocks more than a year ago for an original value of \$1000, but now worth \$3000, you may deduct the entire \$3000 of the current value rather than the original cost of \$1000. You will save on both state and federal capital gains taxes, and the ESLT will benefit from a gift three times the amount that the gift cost you originally!

The ESLT has been the beneficiary of such a gift from members Sid and Betsey Tyler of Pasadena. The Tylers

generously donated stocks valued at more than \$50,000. Sid and Betsey have been loyal members of the ESLT for three years. The transmittal letter accompanying the gift included the following comments on their donation:

“...in admiration of the way in which the Trust has gotten off the ground so well in protecting at-risk ranching and scenic lands under your leadership. Our interest in the Trust also is driven by how much land has been swallowed up by housing and recreational development...on Colorado’s Western Slope, where my family owned a cattle-producing ranch several decades ago. So good hunting to preserve the same kinds of natural and ranching assets in the Eastern Sierra that should have been better protected in the Aspen area!”

We can probably all give examples similar to Sid’s of places we have loved in the past that have been developed for various uses. We

believe Sid is right—we have an opportunity here in the Eastern Sierra to preserve a very special place, and the opportunity may be a small window of time in which to work.

One added bonus of this gift is that it is “unrestricted” at the request of the Tylers—which means that the ESLT has total discretion about how the money can be spent. Grant funding is often restricted by grantors, and spending for necessary operating needs (such as office space, heat, or supplies) is not allowed.

We thank Sid and Betsey for their generous contribution to our efforts to conserve land in the Eastern Sierra.

If you would like more information regarding how to donate stock or mutual fund holdings to the ESLT, please call us and we will be happy to help! Before making a gift of stocks or securities, we recommend consulting with your financial planner or tax advisor. ■

# Support Flows in for Benton Hot Springs Valley by Karen Ferrell-Ingram

The ESLT has received two grants to assist with completion of the Benton Hot Springs Valley conservation easement project. Because our large easement acquisition grant from the Sierra Nevada-Cascade Conservation Grant Program (see *SierraScapes* Winter 2006) did not cover all of the necessary staff costs and project requirements, we were thrilled to receive support that would finance our work in these other areas.

The Defenders of Wildlife's Living Lands Project supports conservation efforts that protect biodiversity of important properties. Their grant will be funding the extensive baseline documentation that is required for this project, along with the landowner's long-term management plan for the grazing operations. The California Council of Land Trusts has awarded the ESLT a mini-grant to cover our easement transaction costs, which include legal counsel, staff time, and property appraisal. ■

## Webpage Makeover

Take a minute to look up our new webpage, created through many hours of hard work by volunteer Jo Bacon. The transformation came about in early February, and has many updated features. Among them are exciting new pictures of recreational uses in the Eastern Sierra, an easy to navigate Table of Contents, and an option for online donations via Groundspring, a third party that specializes in financial transfers for non-profits. The ESLT's Program Areas are outlined, and the Completed Projects page gives a brief description of each project completed to date. An added feature is a sign-up for email alerts of important news. Let us know how you like it! [www.easternsierralandtrust.org](http://www.easternsierralandtrust.org).



## Oops! We neglected to mention an important volunteer!

In our last newsletter, we tried to do something dangerous—publish a comprehensive list of the volunteers that are critical to our work. Unfortunately, we left someone out. Brian Cashore gave generously of his time and talents to help map and describe a large project area. His mapping skills helped us win a grant to permanently protect that large project area and we are very grateful to Brian and sincerely apologize for leaving him out the first time. Thank you, Brian! ■



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