



August 22, 2008

A.G. Kawamura
Secretary
California Department of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814



Al Montna
President
State Board of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Kawamura and Mr. Montna:

The undersigned partners of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments on the California Agricultural Vision 2030.

The California Rangeland Conservation Coalition is an unprecedented group of California ranchers, environmental organizations and government agencies. Together, these partners are working to preserve private working landscapes, support the long-term viability of the ranching industry, and protect and enhance California rangeland for both legally protected and still-common species. This unique partnership encompasses the expertise of rangeland ecologists, managers and wildlife experts.

Our collective vision for the future of California rangelands includes vast tracts of private working ranches that are economically viable and environmentally sustainable. Looking back over the past twenty-five years, the biggest threat to rangelands has been the conversion to other uses. With tens of thousands of acres of rangeland being converted annually and California's population projected to continue increasing, we believe rangelands will remain under siege and the biggest challenge for the future of the ranching industry and the species that depend upon rangelands.

Rangelands provide a variety of benefits to society such as clean water, wildlife habitat, open space and recreational opportunities. A founding goal of the Rangeland Coalition is to educate the public about the benefits of grazing and ranching on rangelands. We hope that elected officials, agency staff and land use planners recognize California's working ranches include a rich and varied landscape which supports numerous imperiled species and many native plants. Furthermore, we hope the public will gain an appreciation that working ranches, and the species that rely on these habitats, largely persist today due to the positive and experienced grazing and other land stewardship practices of the ranchers that have owned and managed these lands and are committed to a healthy future for their working landscapes.

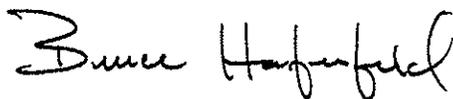
The Rangeland Coalition believes that the California Agricultural Vision should incorporate the principles outlined within the California Rangeland Resolution:

- Keep common species common on private working landscapes;
- Work to recover imperiled species and enhance habitat on rangelands while seeking to minimize regulations on private lands and streamline processes;
- Support the long-term viability of the ranching industry and its culture by providing economic, social and other incentives and by reducing burdens to proactive stewardship on private ranchlands;
- Increase private, state and federal funding, technical expertise and other assistance to continue and expand the ranching community's beneficial land stewardship practices that benefit sensitive species and are fully compatible with normal ranching practices;
- Encourage voluntary, collaborative and locally-led conservation that has proven to be very effective in maintaining and enhancing working landscapes; and
- Educate the public about the benefits of grazing and ranching in these rangelands.

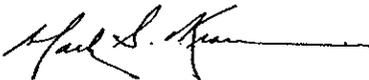
We greatly appreciate your leadership in creating a California Agricultural Vision and the opportunity to provide input to the process. If you have any questions please contact Tracy Schohr, Director of Rangeland Conservation, California Cattlemen's Association at (916) 444-0845 or at tschohr@calcattlemen.org.

Sincerely,

Partners to the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition



Bruce Hafenfeld
President
California Cattlemen's Association



Mark Kramer
Director, Federal Government Relations
California Chapter, The Nature Conservancy



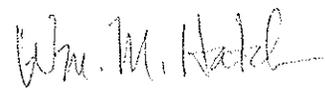
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Board Member
San Joaquin Valley Conservancy



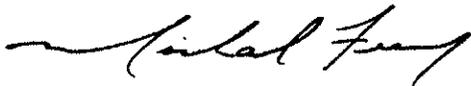
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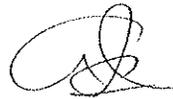
Ernest White
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Tehama County Resource Conservation District



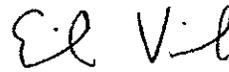
Judith Lamare, Ph.D.
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Friends of Swainson's Hawk



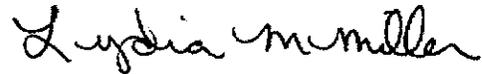
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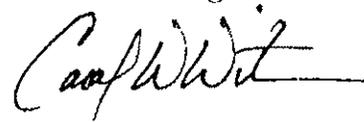
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Kim Delfino
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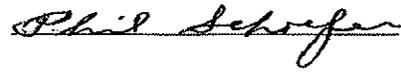
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East Merced Resource Conservation District



Phil Schoefer
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Western Shasta RCD



Randi B. Paris
Board President,
California Native Grasslands Association

Attachments:

- California Rangeland Resolution
- California Rangeland Conservation Coalition Focus Area Map

California Rangeland Resolution

The undersigned recognize the critical importance of California's privately owned rangelands, particularly that significant portion that encircles the Central Valley and includes the adjacent grasslands and oak woodlands, including the Sierra foothills and the interior coast ranges. These lands support important ecosystems and are the foundation for the ranching industry that owns them.

WHEREAS, these rangelands include a rich and varied landscape of grasslands, oak woodlands, vernal pools, riparian areas and wetlands, which support numerous imperiled species, many native plants once common in the Central Valley, and are home to the highest diversity and density of wintering raptors anywhere in North America;

WHEREAS, these rangelands are often located in California's fastest-growing counties and are at significant risk of conversion to development and other uses;

WHEREAS, these rangelands, and the species that rely on these habitats, largely persist today due to the positive and experienced grazing and other land stewardship practices of the ranchers that have owned and managed these lands and are committed to a healthy future for their working landscapes;

WHEREAS, these rangelands are a critical foundation of the economic and social fabric of California's ranching industry and rural communities, and will only continue to provide this important working landscape for California's plants, fish and wildlife if private rangelands remain in ranching;

THEREFORE, we declare that it is our goal to collaboratively work together to protect and enhance the rangeland landscape that encircles California's Central Valley and includes adjacent grasslands and oak woodlands by:

- Keeping common species common on private working landscapes;
- Working to recover imperiled species and enhancing habitat on rangelands while seeking to minimize regulations on private lands and streamline processes;
- Supporting the long-term viability of the ranching industry and its culture by providing economic, social and other incentives and by reducing burdens to proactive stewardship on private ranchlands;
- Increasing private, state and federal funding, technical expertise and other assistance to continue and expand the ranching community's beneficial land stewardship practices that benefit sensitive species and are fully compatible with normal ranching practices;
- Encouraging voluntary, collaborative and locally-led conservation that has proven to be very effective in maintaining and enhancing working landscapes;
- Educating the public about the benefits of grazing and ranching in these rangelands.

