

Yuba Land Conservation Easements

BYLT-01

I. Project Sponsor Contact Information

Lead Agency/Organization	Bear Yuba Land Trust
Name of Primary Contact(s)	Marty Coleman-Hunt
Mailing Address	12183 Auburn Road
Email Address	marty@bylt.org
Phone	(530) 272-5994 ext. 202
Project Partners/Collaborators	SYRCL, private landowners

II. General Project Information

Project Title	Yuba Land Conservation Easements
Project Total Budget	\$5,000,000
Project Funding Match	\$1,250,000 in land value (25%) or more
Project Funding Request	\$3,750,000
Can a detailed cost estimate be provided upon request?	Yes, depending on timing. Actual cost is based on appraised value at the time of funding.
Project Location:	Various
Latitude	
Longitude	
Could you provide a map of the project location including boundaries upon request?	Yes
County	Yuba
City/Community	Dobbins and Smartsville
Watershed/subwatershed	Yuba
Groundwater Basin	Fractured Hard Rock Aquifer
Project Type	Acquisitions

III. Project Description

This project encompasses the purchase of up to four conservation easements on private land located on the Yuba River with a goal to permanently protect and maintain critical watershed land and natural resources. Each of the target properties are of substantial size, encompassing several miles of Yuba River shoreline in Yuba County. The effort seeks to limit urban development on high value river-front real estate to maintain water quality, to protect migratory corridors, and to conserve a diverse oak woodland natural habitat.

Because of improved transportation corridors, close proximity to a growing population area, and high-desirability of river-front property, this region is under development pressure. Urban development results in the adverse impacts of water quality degradation. The negative effects of road and structure construction, septic and well installation, unnatural runoff from hardscape materials and non-native plantings will be stopped forever, with these conservation easements.

This intact, healthy, oak woodland serves several beneficial ecological functions including reducing soil erosion. The riparian zone provides critical habitat for a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic species while also contributing to water quality by filtering excessive nutrients and other pollutants before the water reaches the river. Land conservation will improve and ensure the healthy functioning of these natural systems.

The flexibility of each conservation easement will protect property containing wildlife habitat, while an easement on a farm might allow continued farming. The easements may apply to all or a portion of the properties, and may or may not require public access, depending on land use and landowner desires.

Land and water management activities as defined in the conservation easements will include the removal of invasive and noxious weeds and the management of toxic runoff from a large abandoned mine site. Cattle grazing objectives would encourage biodiversity, reduce invasive plants, and reduce fire danger. Annual easement monitoring will ensure that land management is meeting objectives.

IV. Project Rationale/Issues Statement

The project addresses the following identified regional issues:

1. Water Quality Contamination/Agricultural Run-off: Maintain and improve water quality by mitigating for urban runoff – provide a legal prohibition from development in a sensitive habitat; manage agricultural run-off by utilizing land management best practices; ensure the healthy functioning of natural systems that filter excessive nutrients and other pollutants before they reach the river.
2. Sediment Management: Manage sedimentation and implement erosion control to prevent contamination – land conservation to protect an intact, healthy, oak woodland and utilize land management best practices.
3. Invasive Species: Identify and manage for invasive species and their impacts on watershed health through land stewardship – land and water management activities in conservation easements will include the removal of invasive and noxious weeds. Cattle grazing objectives would encourage biodiversity, reduce both invasive plants and fire danger. Annual easement monitoring will ensure that land management is meeting agreed-upon objectives.
4. Land Conservation: Address the connection between land-use planning and water; Enhance recreational opportunities; Protect working landscapes – This project will limit urban development on high value river-front real estate to maintain water quality, to protect migratory corridors, to conserve a diverse oak woodland natural habitat, protect agricultural land and allow for recreational development (e.g. hunting, fishing, hiking) as landowners permit.
5. Legacy Mining Toxins: Address the physical and chemical hazards of abandoned mine lands (AMLs) with a focus on watershed-scale remediation from the most toxic mine tailings – One target property for a conservation easement is on a large abandoned mine site.

V. Goals/Objectives/Performance Metrics

<p>Goals Addressed by the Project</p> <p>Goal 2: Protect, restore and enhance water quality for water users and in support of healthy watersheds</p> <p>Goal 3: Preserve and restore watershed health and promote environmental stewardship</p> <p>Goal 4: Enhance regional economic development by supporting recreational opportunities and sustainable agriculture</p>	<p>Conservation easements are used to limit urban development on high value river-front real estate permanently, to maintain intact, healthy, oak woodlands and allow it to serve several beneficial ecological functions that lead to enhanced water quality.</p> <p>Land and water management activities as defined in the conservation easements will encourage bio-diversity, reduce invasive plants, and reduce fire danger. Annual easement monitoring will ensure that land management is meeting objectives.</p> <p>Conservation easements on agricultural land will support continued and permanent cattle ranching. The easements may or may not require public access, depending on land use and landowner desires.</p>
<p>Objectives Addressed by Project</p> <p>2.1 Protect and improve water quality by mitigating for urban, agricultural and wildland (sediment) run-off</p> <p>3.2 Identify and manage for aquatic and terrestrial invasive species and their impact on water supply infrastructure and watershed health</p> <p>3.5 Promote watershed-level remediation of legacy mining toxins</p> <p>4.3 Create river corridor linkages while enhancing migration corridors for plants and animals</p> <p>4.5 Protect and restore working landscapes, particularly ranch/ag lands, and the watershed benefits</p>	<p>The legal prohibition from development in a sensitive habitat will mitigate urban development in the city core. Agricultural run-off will be dealt with through defined and monitored best management practices.</p> <p>Land and water management activities within conservation easements will include the removal of invasive and noxious weeds. Cattle grazing objectives would encourage biodiversity, reduce invasive plants. Annual easement monitoring will ensure that land management is meeting agreed-upon objectives.</p> <p>One property targeted for a conservation easement and land management plan and implementation is an abandoned mine site.</p> <p>The target properties for conservation are of substantial size, encompassing several miles of Yuba River shoreline in Yuba County. The effort seeks to protect migratory corridors and a diverse oak woodland natural habitat.</p> <p>The private land that is targeted includes agricultural/ranch lands in a region that is under development pressure. If these properties are not conserved, they will be developed into housing.</p>

they provide	
What performance metrics will be used to demonstrate that objectives are being met? Wherever possible, provide a quantitative measurement reflecting successful project outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of acres of agricultural and wildlands preserved ▪ Increased water quality monitoring and sampling regimes through the Annual Monitoring Plan ▪ Measurable improvement in water quality starting with a Baseline Documentation Report in Year One, and permanently reported on an annual basis ▪ Number of collaborative land management and restoration plans developed with partner agencies ▪ Number of acres restored ▪ Acres of riparian habitat, oak woodland, agricultural land protected or restored ▪ Number of new recreational amenities created: miles of trails, river visitation sites

VI. Resource Management Strategies

Improve Water Quality	
Pollution Prevention	Management of pollution and agricultural run-off with an intact natural ecosystem
Practice Natural Resources Stewardship	
Agricultural Lands Stewardship	Through the collaboratively developed land management plan and the annual monitoring report
Ecosystem Restoration	Through the development of a Baseline Documentation Report the areas in need of restoration will be identified and strategies to address issues will be deployed.
Land Use Planning and Management	Mitigating for development in urban areas by setting aside sensitive and special habitat for permanent protection
Water-dependent Recreation	The permission of river visitation points and trails on private land
Watershed Management	Through the collaboratively developed land management plan and the annual monitoring report

VII. Statewide Priorities

Drought Preparedness

- Improve landscape and agricultural irrigation efficiencies

Climate Change Response Actions

- Adaptation to Climate Change: Establish migration corridors, re-establish river-floodplain, hydrologic continuity, re-introduce anadromous fish populations to upper watersheds, enhance and protect upper watershed forests and meadow systems

Expand Environmental Stewardship

- Expand environmental stewardship to protect and enhance the environment by improving watershed, floodplain, and instream functions and to sustain water and flood management ecosystems

Protect Surface and Groundwater Quality

- Protecting and restoring surface water and groundwater quality to safeguard public and environmental health and secure water supplies for beneficial uses

Ensure Equitable Distribution of Benefits

- Increase the participation of small and disadvantaged communities in the IRWM process

Climate Change Adaptation

The primary goal in purchasing these conservation easements is to protect and enhance water quality in the Yuba River. Intact, healthy, oak woodland serve several beneficial ecological functions important in addressing climate change, including reducing soil erosion and sustaining water quality. Through joint land management regional planning and best practices, landowners and agencies can reduce fire danger, enhance biodiversity, and ensure that there are no over-grazing, water pollution or erosion issues.

This particular riparian zone provides critical habitat for a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic species, resident and migrating. The target properties are contiguous to public lands and will allow for the creation of a conservation corridor for East-West species migration from the Sacramento Valley floor to the Sierra high-elevations.

Though the science is still quantifying the amount of oak woodland and/or native grasslands carbon sequestration it is promising that we will learn more over time about these benefits.

GHG Mitigation and Emissions Reduction

The project’s purpose is to acquire conservation easements and, therefore, the protection of these lands from development offsets potential GHG emissions associated with development. The project itself does not produce any GHG emissions.

VIII. Project Status and Schedule

Project Stage	Description of Activities in	Planned/Actual Start	Planned/Actual
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	Each Project Stage	Date	Completion Date
Planning	Targeted property identified		
Design	N/A		
Environmental Documentation (CEQA/NEPA)	Exempt		
Permitting	N/A		
Tribal Consultation (if not applicable, indicate by N/A)	Cultural and historical values will be determined through tribal consultation as a part of the acquisition process	Awaiting funding	
Construction/ Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain title report • Procure appraisal • Develop baseline documentation report • Purchase and Sale Agreement 	Awaiting Funding	Awaiting Funding

IX. Project Technical Feasibility

a. List the water planning documents that specifically identify this project.	
b. List the adopted planning documents the proposed project is consistent with (e.g., General Plans, UWMPs, GWMPs, Water Master Plans, Habitat Conservation Plans, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BYLT Strategic Conservation Plan, January 2014 • Yuba County General Plan, Land Use Element
c. List technical reports and studies supporting the feasibility of this project.	The Trust for Public Lands, <i>Yuba Foothills Biological Report</i> , 2009