



TRUCKEE ▲ DONNER  
LAND TRUST

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Martis Land in Public Hands**  
**\$23.5 million Waddle Ranch purchase close**  
**to making 1,400 acres open to public.**

The verdant meadows have faded to the dull brown of fall, but the streams still gurgle on Waddle Ranch, a 1,400-acre former cattle ranch in the Martis Valley and current real estate holding of a hotel tycoon's family.

The Truckee Donner Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land are seeking the final contributions needed to sign the deed to the property by Oct. 31 and open the land to the public.

"We've raised about \$2 million of the \$2.5 million goal," said Perry Norris, executive director of the Truckee Donner Land Trust.

The conservation partners — funded by a diverse collection of partners including Placer County, the Truckee Tahoe Airport District, the state's Wildlife Conservation Board and developer East West Partners — are within \$500,000 of reaching the \$23.5 million they need to close the deal.

"We're on the home stretch," said Norris.

**Waddle history**

Cattle roamed Waddle Ranch in the mid-1900s, when the valley was split only by a narrow dirt road.

"We called it the short cut that went over to Kings Beach," said Stefanie Olivieri, who grew up in the Truckee area.

Olivieri's father, Ignatius Firpo, would drop her and her brother off in Martis Valley on summer days to fish the fingers of Martis Creek, she said.

“There was nothing there but cattle, deer, bear and us with our fishing poles,” Olivieri said.

Olivieri remembered the spectacle of the cattle drives through Truckee, when horsemen and dogs cajoled the animals through the streets on their way to pasture in the valley.

Waddle Ranch served as grazing land for cattle that were butchered and sold in a downtown Auburn meat market until the 1960s

Then, as Northstar-at-Tahoe was building a ski resort on the other side of the valley, the land was bought by the Pritzker family, owners of the Hyatt hotel chain.

The Pritzkers, who purchased the land as part of a larger land buy, left the former ranch untouched. It served as a link between the undeveloped northeastern side of the Martis Valley and the wilderness buttresses of Mount Rose.

In 2003, Placer County supervisors approved the Martis Valley Community Plan, triggering a long legal fight between developers, the county and conservationists.

As the parties struggled over the future of the valley, the development potential of each property became apparent. Waddle Ranch, which is split between Nevada and Placer counties, has the potential to hold approximately 1,000 homes.

By 2005, the courts had ruled the county’s plan illegal, and developers began settling with Sierra Watch, the Mountain Area Preservation Foundation and other environmental groups — often offering conservation funding or reduced development plans in exchange for the right to build in the valley.

At that point, the Truckee Donner Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land began working on preserving the undeveloped northeastern side of the valley. Waddle Ranch is the first property to come under contract for public purchase on that side of the valley.

The outcome, conservationists hope, will be a valley that retains much of its natural, undeveloped beauty.

“If you took all of the Martis Valley and filled it up with houses, you would have a sprawl that would alter the character of Truckee,” said David Sutton of the Trust for Public Land.

### **The future**

Provided the land trust receives the funding to close the deal, Waddle Ranch will open to the public this fall. The public open space will offer hiking, mountain biking and recreation near Dry Lake, along mountain meadows and aspen-lined creeks — similar to the uses on the adjacent Martis Creek Wildlife Area.

“There’s already a pretty user-friendly trail system on the property,” Norris said.

Norris already has plans for a quick trip out to the property the morning after the purchase.

“The first thing I am going to do on November 1 is go out there and take down the ‘No Trespassing’ sign,” said Norris.