



**TRUCKEE ▲ DONNER
LAND TRUST**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 23, 2007

**Contact: Perry Norris, Truckee Donner Land Trust
530-582-4711 or 530-412-2438**

Land Trust Agrees to \$23.5M for Waddle Ranch

The fate of Waddle Ranch has been decided with the announcement that two conservation groups have agreed to buy the 1,462 acres in Martis Valley for a total price of \$23.5 million.

The Trust for Public Land and Truckee Donner Land Trust must raise \$2 million more by Oct. 31 to complete the purchase of the former cattle ranch that was the subject of a fierce battle over proposed development.

If successful, the acquisition “will be a 21st century conservation victory,” said Executive Director Perry Norris of the Truckee Donner Land Trust while walking the land Thursday morning.

Martis Valley was slated for five golf courses and as many as 6,000 condominiums and townhomes as approved in the Martis Valley Community Plan. The likely acquisition of Waddle Ranch, 1,462 acres of land located north of Highway 267, will set an important precedent for land conservation in Martis Valley because of the lawsuits filed the last few years over future development of the area, said David Sutton, director of The Trust for Public Land Sierra Nevada program.

The land trust is negotiating with the Pritzker family of the Hyatt hotel chain, who have owned the parcel for more than 40 years.

Both land trusts have signed an agreement to purchase Waddle Ranch. The groups have launched a private capital campaign to raise the \$2.5 million in additional funds needed to meet the negotiated selling price.

A private foundation has jump-started the fundraising drive with a gift of \$500,000.

The Truckee Tahoe Airport District already contributed \$2 million to the land trust last November, an amount equaled by a Sierra Nevada Cascade

Conservation grant, to assist with the purchase of the property. The undeveloped parcel is of interest to the airport board because of its proximity to the existing airport runway, said Dave Gotschall, airport general manager last November.

With the acquisition of Waddle Ranch, “everyone is on board,” Sutton said. “It’s a phrase used way too much — ‘It’s a win-win situation.’”

Open space is a kind of enrichment we assume will just continue, said Joanne Roubique, Truckee district ranger. She described the pending purchase of Waddle Ranch as one example of a forward-thinking approach to conservation.

Waddle Ranch is important to protect because of its wildlife and natural habitats, said Sara Taddo, the land trust’s land conservation director. The forest on the property is healthy, comparable to that of Tahoe National Forest. The east fork of Martis Creek runs through the flatlands of the valley year-round, Taddo said. Only “pirate mountain biking trails” — illegal trails — and a two-mile unpaved road that ends at Dry Lake exists on the parcel, she added.

Mallards, Canada geese and mergansers flocked to the shores of Dry Lake on Thursday morning. Taddo said cougars, black bears and deer also migrate through the area. Protection of Waddle Ranch will contribute to the creation of a 10-mile open space corridor for wildlife migration.

Last fall, Norris said he saw a bald eagle nesting in one of the Jeffrey pine trees.

While there are no official plans yet, Norris said the land trust will assume responsibility for the construction and maintenance of trails in Waddle Ranch to assure public access. The land trust will manage the land to create miles of cross-country ski trails and hiking and biking trails with access to the Tahoe National Forest, Martis Creek Lake National Recreation Area and the Mount Rose Wilderness Area.

Truckee Tahoe Airport District will hold the land title in its name; however, the land trust will hold a conservation easement on the property.

If protected, Waddle Ranch will be an example on how the development community and the conservation community can solve problems in the future, Sutton said.

“In the end, if you want to save Martis Valley, you have to buy it,” Norris said.