

SUMMER 2018

# Truckee Donner Land Trust

## Summer Arrives in the High Sierra

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Lower Carpenter Valley in the foreground. Castle Peak and Basin Peak behind. Frog Lake Cliff is below and left of Castle Peak. Photo Credit: Tom Lippert Photography

# Dear Friends,

The Truckee Donner Land Trust prides itself on being both opportunistic and risk averse in acquiring and conserving important landscapes. An endless combination of events and conditions can drive landowners to sell their property. Many of our acquisitions have been in the hands of a single family, in some cases for more than a century. In these instances, land holdings are passed down from generation to generation, creating an increasingly complicated estate plan ultimately requiring divestiture.

Giving credence to our work, there are several cases where legacy landowners have declined more lucrative offers keeping their property in conservation by working with the Land Trust. These landowners, like the Smiths at Frog Lake, and the Johnsons at Webber Lake, deserve our deep appreciation.

In announcing our latest project, Frog Lake and 2,200 adjacent acres, we are poised to take our role as guardian of precious lands for the region to an entirely new level. As such our need for support from you, our donors, volunteers and supporters has never been more critical. For all of these financial needs, the Land Trust relies on a combination of private and public funding. You, our donors, help us keep the lights on and

maintain our previous holdings at a level that restores and protects the natural resources and creates access for public recreation. Our capital campaigns rely on funds from private individuals like you, as well as State and Federal Grants.

In addition to direct financial contributions, you have the opportunity to support conservation in the Sierra by backing Prop 68 on the June ballot. Prop 68 directs tens of millions of dollars to conservation projects in the Sierra, and is our procurement-funding pipeline for the coming years.

2018 will arguably be the most dynamic year in the history of Truckee Donner Land Trust. With a growing number of acquisitions, restoration and forestry work, and improving recreational access to projects at hand, we are confident that the need for our work is more critical than ever. Fortunately, we are up for the task and look forward to continuing our service to the community and environment for years to come.

Warm regards,

Jeff Brown  
President/Board of Directors

Perry Norris  
Executive Director

*About the cover: Ice recedes from Frog Lake where there are really just two seasons, winter and summer. We are excited to announce Frog Lake as our newest campaign.*



A volunteer trail crew.

## It's All About Volunteers and Moving Dirt

**Summer time is trails time at the Land Trust, and this year is shaping up to be a busy one. In addition to annually maintaining more than 35 miles of trails with more than 250 wonderful volunteers, big plans are in the works for the Donner Lake Rim Trail, trails in Martis Valley and to improve trails at Black Wall, a popular crag for rock climbing.**

**Martis Valley:** The Land Trust and its partners, the Truckee Trails Foundation and Northstar California, are putting the finishing touches on the Elizabethtown Meadows Trail. This Trail is nearly three miles long and connects Waddle Ranch Preserve with the Northstar Drive signal on State Route 267. The trail is scenic, especially early season with verdant meadows, and in the fall with golden aspens.

A map is available on the Land Trust website under **Plan Your Visit.**

**Donner Lake Rim Trail:** The construction permits are nearly in place and the Tahoe Donner Association, the US Forest Service and the Land Trust have joined together to complete the entire northern section of the Donner Lake Rim Trail!

This segment of trail – a long time in the making – will

connect the current terminus of the trail at Glacier Way in Tahoe Donner with Northwoods Boulevard. From there it will be possible to access Donner Summit from Downtown Truckee, all on trails! Volunteers will construct the trail.

Progress continues on the south side of the Donner Lake Rim Trail as well, along Schallenberger Ridge up to Donner Pass. The proposed trail alignment will go through Federal and State permitting for the next two years. Construction will likely begin in 2019 or 2020.

**Trail Maintenance:** The Land Trust maintains more than 35 miles of trails. All of these trails, despite being constructed to the latest standards of sustainability, need annual maintenance. Even mild Sierra winters are tough on trails; blowdowns need to be removed and erosion must be mitigated. While not as glamorous as constructing a new trail, volunteers complete important work and have a great time.

**Black Wall:** Black Wall offers some of Donner Summit's best climbing, and a distinct alpine feel. Improvements to two existing climber-built "billy goat" trails and a new connection between the two trails will improve access for climbers and other users. For more information on Black Wall, please read the article on Page 30.

Please contact Kevin Starr at [Kevin@tdlandtrust.org](mailto:Kevin@tdlandtrust.org) if you would like to volunteer on any trail projects.



# The Campaign for Frog Lake

*Beach front at 7,600 feet! Photo credit: Terence Hundemer*

Building on decades of conservation work filling in the Sierra Nevada Checkerboard, the Truckee Donner Land Trust is pleased to announce one of its most exciting and ambitious campaigns to date – the acquisition of Frog Lake and adjacent lands, including Red Mountain and lands surrounding Lower Carpenter Valley.

**F**ramed by glacier-carved granite cliffs on one side and a historic lodge built by D.L. Bliss on the other – Frog Lake has a rugged, alpine feel unlike anything else in the Northern Sierra.

The Land Trust’s newest campaign combines Frog Lake with four Sierra Pacific Industries parcels that surround Lower Carpenter Valley, adding up to 3,000 acres north of Truckee and east of the Sierra Crest, providing remarkable opportunities for conservation and recreation. The goal for the campaign, including purchase price and funds for future management, is \$15 million.

“There is no other opportunity like Frog Lake in the

American West for conservation,” said Perry Norris, Executive Director of the Land Trust. “The opportunity to conserve this stunning lake is once in a lifetime.”

The opportunity is so fantastic that The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land will partner with the Land Trust, working together as part of The Northern Sierra Partnership.

Old growth Jeffrey pine forests, the watersheds that feed the rare spring-fed fens of Carpenter Valley and remote, pristine habitat are all significant resource values well worth preserving. And the potential connections by trail to other Land Trust properties and destinations like Independence Lake, Carpenter Ridge, Castle Peak and the Pacific Crest Trail,

along with the historic lodge that could potentially be used for overnight visitors, summer and winter, make the recreational opportunities second to none.

“At an elevation of 7,600 feet, Frog Lake feels more like 9,000 feet in Kings Canyon National Park,” said Dave Sutton of The Trust for Public Land.

Like so many of the Land Trust’s strategic acquisitions, the ownership of Frog Lake dates back to the Sierra Nevada Checkerboard – where every-other square mile of property gifted to the trans-continental railroad ended up privately owned – the rest in US Forest Service hands.

This particular checker square has been owned by the current owners – the Smith Family – since the 1930s, when their father, Felix Smith Sr., acquired Frog Lake from the railroad. Felix Smith, the family recounts, wandered up and down the Sierra looking for a family compound on a lake. In the subsequent summers, he built a rustic lodge on the lake’s eastern shore from hand-cut granite on the property.

The Smiths are strong conservationists. Telling of their commitment, Frog Lake is remarkably pristine and reflects the light footprint the family has on the land.

“Frog Lake seems timeless; it’s probably exactly today as it was 75 years ago,” Jeff Brown, Land Trust board president, said.

This campaign will assuredly be a significant undertaking over the next two years – but the prize of preserving these remarkable landscapes will be historic.

“We’re really excited about the access opportunities these properties create – linking together such great places with new and existing trails,” said John Svahn, Stewardship Director.

## Conservation Values

The old-growth forests and the numerous species that depend on them, the critical watersheds protecting resources like Carpenter Valley, and the connections to other open space and potential wilderness areas make this acquisition a tremendous opportunity for meaningful conservation in the region.

*(top right) Penstemon above the true blue water of Frog Lake.*

*(bottom right) A lazy summer day with Frog Lake Cliff behind. The Warren Lake trail parallels the ridgeline to the west. Photo credit: Terence Hundemer*

## You Are Needed

Presevation of this landscape will not happen without your support. The acquisition of these 3,000 acres will a require significant community fundraising effort over the next two years. To find out how to contribute to this historic effort, go to [tdlandtrust.org](http://tdlandtrust.org) and click “How to Help.” Or please call **(530) 582-4711**. Staff are always eager to discuss new projects.



# New Backcountry Huts for Truckee?

Beyond the conservation and recreation gains this 3,000-acre acquisition affords, the lodge at Frog Lake could become the centerpiece in a grand vision for the Truckee Donner Land Trust and Sierra Nevada Partnership – a backcountry hut system east of the Sierra Crest.

Dotting other mountain ranges – from the Swiss Alps to Oregon’s Willows – networks of huts open up wintertime access to wild landscapes by providing safe, comfortable accommodations for skiers, snowboarders and other winter adventurers.

Linking together a series of huts that could open up multi-day expeditions or overnight out-and-back trips would create an entirely new recreational opportunity in the Northern Sierra – potentially adding to the Sierra Club’s already popular four huts in the region.

“It will take significant funding and the stars will have to align just right, but this is a really exciting prospect,” Perry Norris said. “When it comes to huts in the Sierra, we have a very limited offering compared to the Rockies or Canada.”

Currently, local Sierra Club huts are booked solid, months in advance, showing strong demand for huts. New huts would open up skiable terrain not easily accessible by day trips.



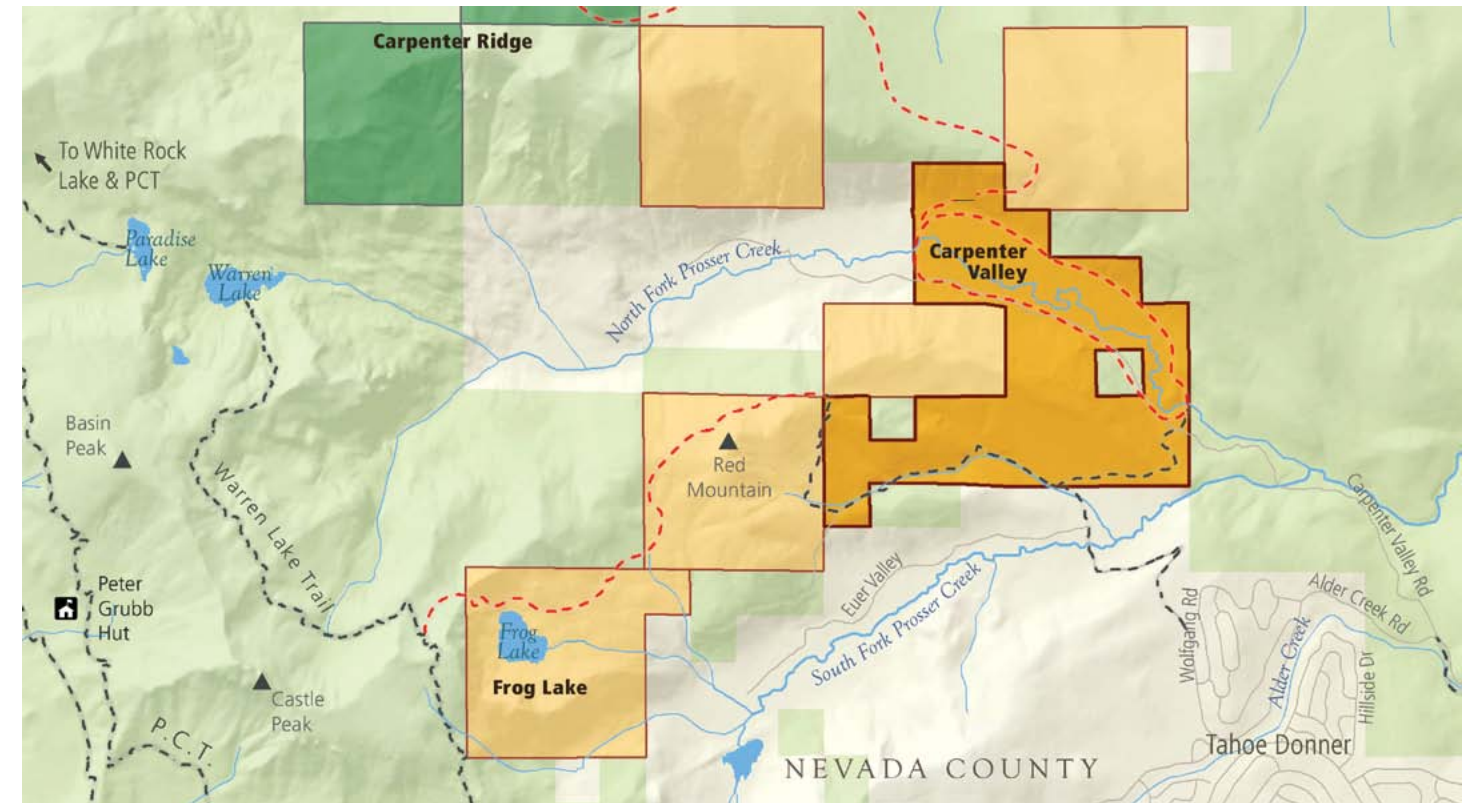
The Land Trust’s own Kevin Starr in corn heaven, May skiing above a frozen Frog Lake. Photo credit: Bill Stevenson

Prosser Creek is by fed by snowmelt from Frog Lake and the peaks surrounding Carpenter and Euer Valleys, becoming one of the major tributaries to the Truckee River. Water captured from Sierra storms provides drinking water for 65 percent of the Californians. Protecting the headwaters of Sierra rivers, such as Prosser Creek and the Truckee River, is a key part of ensuring California and Nevada have sufficient water supplies. According to The Nature Conservancy, preserving open space and preventing further residential development on forest properties on the upper reaches of watershed is one of the most economical methods of protecting water quality and quantity.

Because of the remote terrain and care of the land by the Smith Family, the riparian areas, pocket meadows and mature forests provide excellent habitat for Sierra flora and fauna. Dense forests of red fir cover sheltered areas that retain snow for much of the year, and thickets of mountain mahogany, currants and gooseberry thrive in the exposed areas. In between, mature mixed-conifer forests abound. Black Bear, mountain lions and bobcats are all present, as is the Loyalton-Truckee deer herd, which utilizes Euer and Carpenter Valleys for foraging and fawning.

“The biggest Jeffrey pines I’ve ever seen are at Frog Lake,” Svahn said.

The acquisition provides an opportunity for restoration of the headwater forests. While Frog Lake does not need forestry work with its late-seral forests, other parts of the acquisition were used for industrial timber production and are in need of restoration. The Land Trust and its partners anticipate removing old eroding skid trails as a way to further decrease runoff and protect water quality in these key watersheds that feed the Truckee River.



The current acquisition is in light orange and the earlier Lower Carpenter Valley and Crabtree Canyon in dark orange. All together the Land Trust and its partners have protected more than 20,000 acres north of I-80.



The “main house” at Frog Lake built in the 1930s. Photo credit: Terence Hundemer



Part of the acquisition, a healthy and mature red fir forest on Carpenter Ridge above Independence Lake.

Protection of this landscape maintains the connectivity of large areas of undeveloped habitat along the northern segment of the Sierra Front. Acquisition of the ridges surrounding Frog Lake, Carpenter and Euer Valleys ensures habitat and open space connectivity between the Castle Peak Roadless Area, the Sagehen Basin, Independence Lake and Henness Pass. Protecting areas of contiguous habitat allows for both horizontal and vertical migration of species – important in mitigating the Sierra’s changing climate.

## Recreation and Access

Building on existing trails like the Warren Lake Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail, the Land Trust envisions connections to Frog Lake, Red Mountain, Lower Carpenter Valley and north all the way to Independence Lake. From Independence Lake, trails linking to Mt. Lola and the Pacific Crest Trail are on the horizon.

All those connections add up to nearly endless recreation opportunities, opening up seldom-seen wild areas and mountain vistas to the public for the first time.



# Restoring Van Norden Meadow

BY RACHEL HUTCHINSON  
South Yuba River Citizens  
League, River Scientist

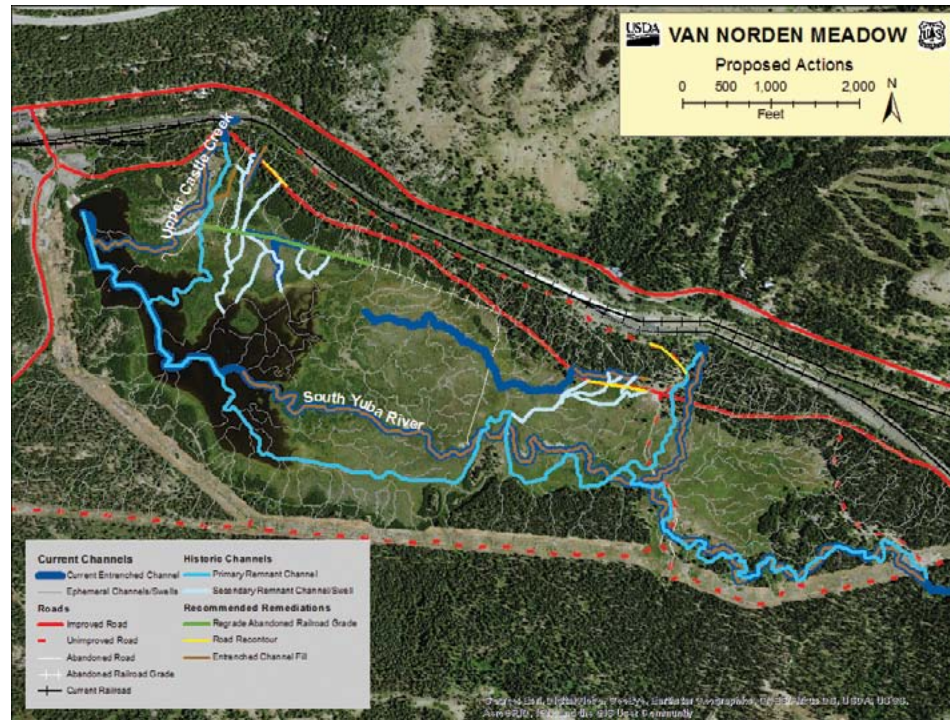
The headwater reaches of the Sierra Nevada are some of our most prized places. They're also some of the most sensitive to human impacts and a changing climate, making their protection critical.

Researchers who study rivers and streams place a lot of importance on promoting what is referred to as "headwater resiliency," which basically means protecting, evaluating and restoring our headwater watersheds so they can function to the best of their ability as we move into an uncertain water and climate future.

Will we see less snow? Will we see more drastic annual changes – drought one year, record-breaking snow the next? The sensitive ecosystems at the very top of our watersheds need to be ready for changes – the species that depend on them for their survival have nowhere else to go. They've already evolved to live at the top.

Meadows are often at the top of our watersheds. The impacts that meadows have sustained over the last 150-200 years are largely human-caused. People love meadows – they were widely used by Native Americans, acted as a rest stop for early European settlers and have sustained our growth in modern-day California with ranching, timber harvesting, gold mining and reservoir building.

It is estimated that 60 percent of California's meadows are considered degraded – meaning one or more of the following: deeply incised stream channels due to years of erosion, altered



A map showing natural and altered water courses in Van Norden Meadow. Map courtesy: USFS

surface water and groundwater, evidence of soil compaction and vegetation loss or conversion due to heavy use, intrusion by invasive species and encroaching conifers.

A badly degraded meadow can still be beautiful. Van Norden Meadow, at the headwaters of the South Yuba River, is a beautiful meadow, but it is losing its ability to function. If we leave this ecosystem alone, we will allow it to continue the cycle of degradation. A lowered stream channel, lowered water table, reduced vegetative cover, invasive species and encroaching forest – all eventually result in a wholesale change to the ecosystem.

Restoring Van Norden Meadow is expected to benefit many different aspects of the local ecosystem. By filling eroded stream channels and gullies, and removing invasive species, we will reduce flood flows, improve the

connectivity of the floodplain with the stream channel, improve water quality, restore habitat for birds, fish and toads, and increase carbon sequestration.

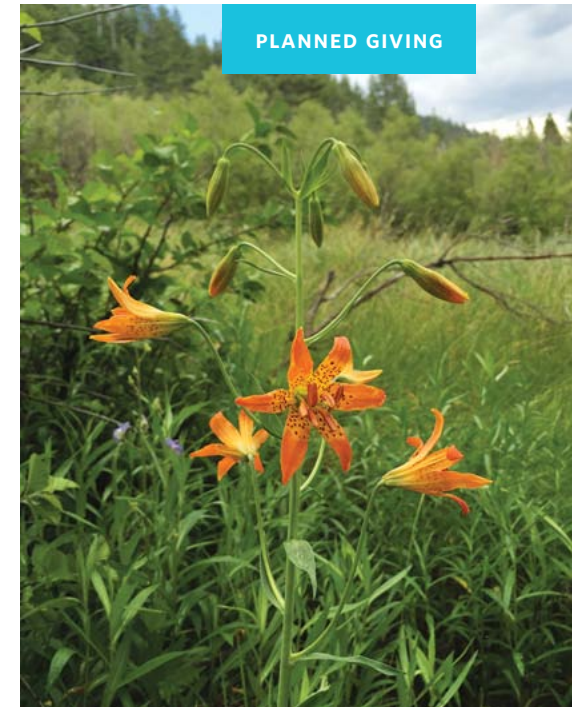
Van Norden Meadow is made up of a diverse array of habitats, including stream and riparian habitats, sedge beds, drier upland areas formed by glacial deposits and low-lying wetlands. These habitats support a diverse array of species. SYRCL is working with researchers from UC Davis, University of Nevada, Reno, Mont Claire University, Point Blue and elsewhere to understand the current status of Van Norden Meadow and how restoration will impact water quality, wildlife and carbon sequestration.

If you want to stay informed about the restoration project, please visit [www.yubariver.org](http://www.yubariver.org) or email [rachel@yubariver.org](mailto:rachel@yubariver.org) to be placed on the Van Norden Stakeholder List for updates, public meetings and field tours.



## Keeping It Forever Wild

Larkspur. Photo credit: Rich Reid



Sierra Tiger Lily. Photo credit: David Edelson

Truckee Donner Land Trust donors – that's you, our newsletter readers – are an inspiring and diverse group of people with deep ties to the Truckee Donner area. Members of the Land Trust's "Forever Wild Society," forward thinking donors who include the Land Trust in their estate planning, ensure the Land Trust will be around for the long haul and can care for the tens of thousands of acres it has protected for generations to come. We're here for the long haul, and, as they say, perpetuity is a very long time.

**Meet Judy Mayorga:** Judy's love for the Sierra blossomed as a child while spending time at her parents' summer cabin at the south end of Lake Tahoe. She and her late husband, Bill, pursued their professional careers in the East Bay, but moved to Truckee in their retirement, building their home with stunning views of Frog Lake Cliff.

The Mayorgas have been long-time supporters and volunteers for the Land Trust, and Judy served on the Land Trust Board 1996-2002. They were particularly instrumental in early phases of the Donner Lake Rim Trail construction, organizing volunteer groups and hosting barbecues for hungry volunteer trail workers. A dedicated hiker, Judy has been an active member of the Tahoe Trail Trekkers local chapter.



Judy joined Land Trust staff for a tour of Carpenter Valley's wildflower display, June 2016. Photo credit: Janet Zipser Zipkin

The Mayorgas' love for the Truckee Donner area led to their decision to make a gift to the Land Trust in their will. Judy feels strongly that she, personally, wants to be the decision maker about her legacy. A firm believer in giving local, Judy desires that her legacy gifts help protect and preserve the community and land she has loved so much for decades.

The Land Trust is planning a late summer get-together of Forever Wild Society members. If you have made a bequest to the Land Trust, thank you! Please contact Development Director Kathy Englar at [kathy@tdlandtrust.org](mailto:kathy@tdlandtrust.org) to make sure we include you in this special event.



# Caring for Lower Carpenter Valley

The North Fork of Prosser Creek runs through Carpenter Valley. Photo credit: Elizabeth Carmel, The Carmel Gallery

The Truckee Donner Land Trust acquired Lower Carpenter Valley, hailed as the “secret garden of the Sierra,” in 2017. This year, we’re working to open this incredible property to the public in a way that protects its sensitive ecology.

“Recreation must be compatible with the Valley’s delicate resources,” said John Svahn, associate director of the Land Trust.

Working with The Nature Conservancy and Tahoe Donner Association, the Land Trust is developing plans for new trails, a trailhead, interpretive signage, a bridge across the North Fork of Prosser Creek, benches and picnic tables. Construction should begin in 2019, lasting into 2020.

The trails will include numerous elevated puncheon sections designed to allow visitors to enjoy the meadow without impacting water flow and meadow function, and without muddying their boots. The bridge across

the North Fork of Prosser Creek will access a future picnic area and provide future connectivity with the network of trails on adjacent US Forest Service land. At the western end of the property, a proposed elevated platform would provide views of the Sierra Crest and lower valley.

Once all of this is in place, the property can be opened to the public for unguided access – likely in 2020. Until then, the Land Trust provides multiple docent-led hikes each week in the summer and fall for those interested in visiting. Find out more about those hikes and how to sign up on page 11.

The Land Trust is also planning to construct a yurt in the valley for winter travelers to use. Located roughly three miles from the nearest trailhead on a snow-covered road, the yurt will be the perfect distance for a family overnight trip to enjoy the serenity of Lower Carpenter Valley in the winter.



Rein Orchid in Carpenter Valley.



Our partners at The Nature Conservancy have a number of game cameras in Lower Carpenter Valley producing stunning images.

NEW, IMPROVED AND KID FRIENDLY

## Announcing Another Season of Super Cool Land Trust Outings!



Join us for a fun hike this summer. Scientist Brian Hastings explains meadow hydrology in Carpenter Valley.

The Truckee Donner Land Trust’s docent-led hike program is expanding, offering more than 50 hikes, trail runs and bike rides on 11 of the Land Trust’s most spectacular properties.

These free outings are the perfect way to get to know the stunning landscapes you helped to protect, meet other lovers of the outdoors, and gain an understanding of the geology, the flora and the fauna of these places.

“Our docents are hardworking, knowledgeable and know the properties like the back of their hand,” said Linda Slattery, administrator at the Land Trust. “Their unique expertise and passions reveal layers to each property that you might otherwise miss – whether it’s tiny flowers or towering sugar pines.”

Our 45 docents team up in groups of four to lead outings with groups of no more than 25, ensuring a great experience without a big crowd. Each brings his or her own unique knowledge to the outing. While they’re dedicated, experienced and take their work seriously, they also have a lot of fun.

The Land Trust is also introducing several child-focused outings, but all hikes are family friendly. This summer’s hikes will explore Carpenter Valley, Royal Gorge, Lacey Meadows, Mount Lola, Donner Summit Canyon, Elizabethtown Meadows, Perazzo Meadows, Truckee River Canyon, Castle Valley and the Donner Rim Trail.

To see a complete calendar and to sign up for a hike, go to [tdlandtrust.org/2018-summer-hiking-series](http://tdlandtrust.org/2018-summer-hiking-series).



# Pay It Forward

Maintaining the network of trails across the Land Trust's numerous properties is a time-consuming undertaking, and we need your help. If you're out hiking, running, biking or on horseback and see a downed tree or trail damage that needs to be addressed, please contact Stewardship Coordinator Kevin Starr at [kevin@tdlandtrust.org](mailto:kevin@tdlandtrust.org). We appreciate your passion for these wonderful places.



"Sierra mist" on the Donner Lake Rim trail.

## Docent Hikes & Trail Days 2018 Schedule

### TRAIL WORK DAYS

- June 23
- July 28
- August 18
- September 8
- October 6

### DOCENT HIKE LOCATIONS

- Carpenter Valley
- Royal Gorge Rim Trail Point Mariah
- Lacey Meadows
- Mt. Lola
- Donner Summit Canyon
- Elizabethtown Meadow
- Perazzo Meadows
- Truckee River Canyon
- Castle Valley
- Glacier Way to Drifter Hut
- Royal Gorge Rim Trail

*For a complete schedule, hike description and to register for any of the 40+ hikes this summer, go to [tdlandtrust.org/2018-summer-hiking-series](http://tdlandtrust.org/2018-summer-hiking-series)*



Volunteers moving a dirt bag on the Walter and Esther Hewlett Rim Trail, Royal Gorge.



(left) Constructing a log-stringer bridge on the Walter and Esther Hewlett Rim Trail. (right) Voila, the finished product.



ROYAL GORGE

## IT'S NOT JUST FOR NORDIC SKIING ANYMORE

# Get Out and Enjoy Royal Gorge ...

Care and management of Donner Summit's Royal Gorge, acquired by the Truckee Donner Land Trust in 2012, continues to be a high priority. The Land Trust, with assistance from scores of volunteers, is wrapping up what we're proud to say is a network of fun and awe-inspiring trails. You can spend an hour or days exploring Royal Gorge.

The Walter and Esther Hewlett Royal Gorge Rim Trail, completed last year, is a 13-mile meandering-loop trail taking in some of Royal Gorge's best views and deepest fir forests. Maps are available on the Land Trust's website.

The section proceeding north from Point Mariah is a local favorite.

"After climbing through a mixed-conifer forest interspersed with pocket meadows, the trail travels across the nose of a ridge, offering views of the entire upper North Fork of the American River from Mt. Lincoln to Granite Chief, from Snow Mountain to Royal Gorge. The view is spectacular," said Kevin Starr, stewardship coordinator and the architect of the new trail.

In 2018, kiosk maps will be updated and two dozen new directional signs will be installed on trails. Placer County plans to construct a portion of the Memorial Overland Emigrant Trail across Soda Springs Ridge. The trail, when complete, will stretch from Donner

Memorial State Park to Cisco Grove. The new trail segment will replace a fire road portion of the Royal Gorge Rim Trail with scenic single track.

Sugar Bowl and the Land Trust continue their partnership, managing lands and promoting recreation on Donner Summit with new trail connections and events. The trails on the Royal Gorge property now connect with Sugar Bowl's trail system, offering routes to the Pacific Crest Trail and Donner Lake.

Three running races, Ragnar, the Tahoe Sierra 100 and the Sierra Crest Ultra Run, as well as a mountain bike skills clinic, will take place on the Royal Gorge trail network in 2018.

In addition, Sugar Bowl and the Land Trust are also hosting REI's Climbfest. This event - expected to attract 200 participants - will feature climbing on Donner Summit, instructional clinics, films and catered dinners with local brews.

Beyond trail work, the Land Trust will also continue its longstanding commitment to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and to improve wildlife habitat. Forestry work will be focused in Serena Creek Canyon to the south of the Serene Lakes Subdivision, and will likely begin in the early fall. The Land Trust has spent nearly \$1 million on forestry work at Royal Gorge to date.



Equestrians enjoying Royal Gorge. Nearly all Land Trust trails are multi-use. Photo credit: Geoff Griffin



# Thank You to Our Donors

## \$100,000 and over

Wildlife Conservation Board  
California Natural Resources Agency  
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

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Sheri and Jack Overall Foundation  
Sky View Foundation  
Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation  
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Thomas and Cathy Van Berkem  
Kenneth and Megan Wright

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Paul Minault  
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Dudley and Philippa Nigg  
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Karen and Al Pace  
Stanley and Georgene Pasarell  
Toni and Dick Paterson  
Danny and Alison Peltz  
Bill and Molly Person  
Brad and Trish Piatt  
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Bill and Ginny Schultz  
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John and Sidney Scott  
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# Special Tribute Gifts

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## In memory of

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Emo Biagini  
Dave Brew  
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# Seeking a Permanent Fix at Donner Summit Canyon



(left) Erosion is a constant battle for trails.

(below) The view from the Kathy Polucha Kessler Memorial Picnic Area. Photo credit: Anne Chadwick

The Truckee Donner Land Trust acquired Donner Summit Canyon in 2011, preserving an incredible landscape at Truckee’s doorstep, filled with history, charm and supporting the biggest tributary to Donner Lake.

Hikers and cyclists enjoy this historic and popular route that follows the Dutch Flat/Donner Lake Wagon Road, passing under dramatic granite cliffs, accessing a scenic picnic area and exploring Native American petroglyphs.

“Every time I visit Summit Canyon I feel like I am in Yosemite. It’s pretty magical,” said long-time Land Trust supporter and Donner Summit resident, Tom Applebaum.

Erosion from the big winter run-off of 2016-17 significantly damaged the trail, making sections of the trail difficult. Partnering with Donner Memorial State Park, the Land Trust has plans to re-route a part of the trail and add a bridge over the annually eroding section. The repairs will cost more than \$50,000.

Most of the trail remains intact. A 1.5-mile hike to the Kathy Polucha Kessler Memorial Picnic Area is worth the trip alone. The hike offers terrific views of Donner Lake, the Yosemite-



like granite cliffs of Donner Peak and of Schallenberger Ridge above Donner Lake.

The trailhead is located along side Old Highway 40 west of Donner Lake, about one third of a mile from South Shore Drive. The roughly six-mile round trip gains 1,000 feet in elevation and is open to non-motorized users.



# Welcome Aboard ...



From left to right: Eric Isenhart, Ward Fansler (and puppy Tahoe), Linda Slattery and Greyson Howard. Ward returns to the Land Trust as Chief Financial Officer, Eric takes on the role of Special Projects Coordinator, Linda as the Land Trust's new Administrator and Greyson joins as the new Communications Director.



Donner Summit resident Jean Snuggs joins the Truckee Donner Land Trust Board of Directors.



Alpine buttercups in Lacey Meadows with Lacey Peak in the background.



The seemingly omnipresent larkspur.

## Remembering KV Van Lom



Keaven "KV" Van Lom passed away this spring in her beloved Sierra, where she spent much of her life. While KV lived in many places, including Europe and a time in Nashville writing country music, the Sierra was always home.

Most people knew KV's work with the Land Trust as the happy voice answering the phones and greeting visitors at the office. KV performed huge lifts behind the scenes as the Land Trust's Marketing and Communications Director, developing the annual newsletter, writing and coordinating press releases, managing the website and social media and otherwise making sure the Land Trust's day-to-day operations ran well. In 2014 she successfully helped shepherd the Land Trust through the process

of receiving national accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance for the first time.

KV's proudest achievement at the Land Trust was her work on the Webber Lake Hotel. Her passion for the protection of the Sierra's human history led her to research the fascinating story of Webber Lake. She met many Webber Lakes campers and often developed a friendship with them as they recounted stories of years past. The Historic Structures Report she developed will assist the Land Trust in completing future restorations on the hotel.

We will dearly miss her compassion, sense of humor, smile and deep love for the Sierra and its wildlife.

## A Shout-out to Our State Partners

The Truckee Donner Land Trust's state partners – the California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and its Wildlife Conservation Board, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and California Department of Parks and Recreation (California State Parks) – are key partners in cornerstone acquisitions like Carpenter Valley, Webber Lake, Royal Gorge, Waddle Ranch and the Donner Memorial State Park Expansion.

Tasked with preserving, restoring and protecting California's great natural resources, these agencies saw the value in these Land Trust projects and stepped up as major funders in their conservation. From the rare fens of Carpenter Valley to the deer habitat of Waddle Ranch, the alpine headwaters of Royal Gorge to Lacey Meadows at Webber Lake – these properties protect numerous unique and important resources.

The California Department of Fish

and Wildlife is charged with managing California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public, and its Wildlife Conservation Board prioritizes habitat for threatened and endangered species like the willow flycatcher, yellow-legged frog and Lahontan cutthroat trout on Land Trust properties.

The mission of the California Natural Resources Agency's mission is to restore, protect and manage the state's natural, historical and cultural resources for current and future generations.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy's land protection and restoration work across the Sierra and its watersheds, forests, habitat and iconic landscapes aligns perfectly with the work of the Land Trust.

And California State Parks provides for the health, inspiration and education

of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. This includes acquiring and managing lands to support the mission.

The Land Trust also works very closely with State Department of Water Resources, the Division of Safety of Dams, and Cal Fire, as well as Nevada, Placer and Sierra Counties, and the Town of Truckee.

These agencies and their dedicated staff are critical to protecting the Sierra and, closer to home, the Truckee-Donner Summit region.

Thank you, and we look forward to fruitful and collaborative partnerships in the future. Any success the Land Trust enjoys is owed in part to our partnership with these like-minded public agencies.



# Webber Lake Open for First Full Season this Summer

Lacey Meadow at Webber Lake always has a splendid display of colors. Photo credit: John Peltier

Less than an hour north of the hustle and bustle of Lake Tahoe, the serene Webber Lake Campground opened to the public for the first time in many years in 2017.

The lucky few who visited and camped last year were among the first to experience the 3,000-acre property's beautiful meadows and forests, paddle, swim and fish Webber Lake, and enjoy the peaceful campgrounds since the Land Trust purchased the property in 2012.

And with 10 additional campsites nestled into the forest on the lake's western shore, a new water system and new improved sanitary facilities in the works, the camping experience promises to be even better for summer 2018. Reservations can be made at [tdlandtrust.org](http://tdlandtrust.org).

Home to threatened

and endangered species, bird migration corridors and a lake stocked with fish, the property has been visited only by a select few as a private campground for generations. Calls from sandhill crane, coyote and other animals echo over the lake at dusk as sunset paints the surrounding peaks orange and purple, and at dawn as mist rises from the lake's crystal-clear water.



The Land Trust has worked hard to get the property into tip-top shape, renovating the previously private campground and implementing a fire mitigation and forestry program to make for a healthier, more fire-resistant ecosystem.

While few today are

*The Land Trust's mission at Webber Lake is to keep it a great place for families and friends to gather. Photo credit: Samantha Prather Photography*

familiar with the campground, lake and adjoining Lacey Meadows, it was once a mainstay on the overland route to California during the Gold Rush. The last hotel along the historic Henness Pass wagon train route still stands on the property, one of the oldest standing buildings in Northern California, dating back to 1860.

Dr. Gould Webber first stalked Webber Lake with fish in 1860, arguably the start of sport fishing in the Sierra Nevada. Since then it has become a premier destination for locals and visiting anglers.

There is a lot to do besides fishing. Kayaking and paddle boarding are popular. The lake warms by mid-summer to a comfortable temperature for swimming from sandy beaches. Opportunities for hiking, road and mountain biking are plentiful. A trail around the lake will be completed this year. The six-mile ride from the Lacey Meadows trailhead to Upper Lacey Meadow is an easy beginners ride.

Webber Lake is also home to one of the oldest standing buildings in Northern California, the Webber Lake Hotel. The hotel is the last remaining hotel on the once popular Henness Pass Road, an important thoroughfare

across the Sierra. The Hotel long ago ceased operating, but in the lobby, open to the public, there are interesting historical photographs of the Lake and generations of guests.

Joan and Ken Bretthauer, caretakers of the campground for two decades, will continue to manage the campground. Their in-depth knowledge of the area developed over many years has been instrumental in the Land Trust's ability to open the

property and campground to the public.

Webber Lake augments a strong conservation effort by the Land Trust in the Little Truckee headwaters area, building on Perazzo Creek and Meadows, Independence Lake, Henness Pass/SPI conservation easement and Lower Carpenter Valley – totaling nearly 17,000 acres in the heart of the Sierra Nevada Checkerboard.

This acquisition was made possible through the generous support of our donors and funding from state agencies including the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Natural Resources Agency. The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land and the Northern Sierra Partnership also partnered with the Land Trust on this acquisition.

## How to Make a Reservation

2018 will be the first full camping season open to the public, and reservations are recommended. Go to [tdlandtrust.org/webber-lakelacey-meadows](http://tdlandtrust.org/webber-lakelacey-meadows) to make reservations or to learn more.

## How to Get There

**From Truckee:** Proceed north on Highway 89 North for 14 miles to Little Truckee Summit. Make a left on the paved road to Jackson Meadows Reservoir. In eight miles turn left and follow signs to Webber Lake. A map is available at [tdlandtrust.org](http://tdlandtrust.org).



The day use area at Webber Lake, complete with docks and a boat ramp. Photo credit: John Peltier



# Black Wall Trail Plans for Climbers and Hikers



Hansi Standteiner still getting after it on Donner Summit. Photo credit: Josh Horniak

Black Wall, acquired by the Truckee Donner Land Trust in 2015, is the largest rock formation on Donner Summit.

The large east-facing wall is the first rock formation you encounter on the right as you drive up Old Highway 40 from Donner Lake. The climbing is mostly “old school,” requiring climbers to set their own protection and anchors. It also is home to the longest climbs in the area, many established 1970s by local climbers – some grayer and rounder – who continue to climb on the Summit.

Over the last decade, climbing has surged in popularity.

“When I first started climbing on Donner Summit in the 1970s, you had the place to yourself. Now lines queue up at the bottom of more popular climbs,” said Gary Allen, a pioneer of many first ascents on Donner Summit.

For land managers, including the Land Trust, owner of Black Wall and other climbing and bouldering sites, this boom in popularity creates new challenges. While climbers have a legacy of embracing conservation – John Muir and David Brower were climbers – the sheer number of climbers has unavoidable impacts. The Access Fund reports that scores of

climbing areas on public and private lands have been closed in recent years due to impacts of climbers and other user groups.

“Local climbers, the Land Trust, and the US Forest Service are trying to stay ahead of the curve,” explains Allen. “With more climbers can come more trash, trampled vegetation, unsustainable trails, parking problems and other impacts.”

Climbers have taken the initiative at Donner Summit to make trails sustainable and lessen their footprint on the land.

The Access Fund’s Conservation Team plans three weeks of work in 2018, building new trails that will not only be user and environmentally friendly, but will be enticing for non-climbers as well. Adding a trail to the summit of Black Wall and connecting other established routes will vastly improve access.

The new trails will still be rugged and retain an alpine feel. Both the new trail and the improvements to the existing trails will incorporate sustainable design and construction standards. These trails will not only access climbing, but incredible views of surrounding rock formations and Donner Lake below.

Find out more at [tdlandtrust.org](http://tdlandtrust.org).

# Doing the Right and Only Thing with Van Norden Dam

More and more dams constructed across the country in the first half of the twentieth century are in disrepair to the peril of downstream communities. Moreover, mounting scientific evidence increasingly supports the removal of many of the nation’s dams. The Truckee Donner Land Trust is owner of one of those obsolete dead-beat dams on Donner Summit, constructed in the late 1800s.

The Truckee Donner Land Trust took ownership of the Van Norden Dam as part of the 3,000-acre Royal Gorge acquisition in 2012. While the purchase is a tremendous conservation win for Donner Summit and the region – extinguishing a potential 950-unit resort development – it came with a hazardous and illegal dam.

astronomically expensive and wouldn’t address the water rights issue.

The benefits of notching the dam go beyond safety and legal compliance, according to every conservation group in the Northern Sierra – including Mountain Area Preservation, Sierra Club, Sierra Watch, Truckee River Watershed Council, South Yuba River Citizen’s League, American Rivers, Point Blue Conservation Science and the Nature Conservancy.

Those benefits include restoration of Van Norden Meadow, as well as improved water quality and habitat downstream in the Yuba River.

“The Van Norden Dam impounds the South Yuba River and is altering the timing of flows. The water heats up in the

*Dams degrade water quality, block the movement of nutrients and sediment, destroy fish and wildlife habitats, damage coastal estuaries and in some cases rob surrounding forests of nitrogen. Reservoirs can also be significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions.*

*Put simply, many dams have high environmental costs that outweigh their value. Removing them is the only sensible answer. And taking them down can often make economic sense as well. The River Alliance of Wisconsin estimates that removing dams in that state is three to five times less expensive than repairing them.*

~ Yvon Chouinard

Founder, Patagonia  
environmentalist and mountaineer

The dam has been a hazard for downstream folks along the South Yuba River for nearly five decades. An inspection in 1971 noted leakage and deteriorated conditions of the dam core and embankments. A visible leak was also detected in 2011 – and a dam break analysis rated it as a dam of significant hazard. Ultimately, the State Division of Safety of Dams rated Van Norden Dam as out of compliance with safety regulations.

Beyond issues of safety, the California Department of Water Resources stated the dam was illegally impounding water in 2014 – as previous rights holder, Pacific Gas & Electric, took a portion of those rights to another reservoir, and abandoned the rest to be used by other downstream users.

In considering all options to rectify these issues – the clear and only path forward is modifying the dam’s spillway to no longer impound water, fixing both safety and water rights issues. Other alternatives – such as rebuilding or repairing the dam at the existing or at an intermediate height – are

shallow lake that forms and warmed outflow degrades habitat for sensitive species that rely on cold, natural flows. The small amount of man-made, open-water habitat that the reservoir once provided is duplicative of other nearby habitat. Notching the dam and restoring the meadow would provide significant public benefit in terms of increased natural meadow habitat, improved water quality, improved safety and reduced management costs,” according to American Rivers.

The Land Trust needs your support for its Van Norden Dam Spillway Modification Project through community engagement and/or letters of support. Public comment will close sometime around the end of June 2018. You can email letters of support to Nevada County: [planning@co.nevada.ca.us](mailto:planning@co.nevada.ca.us).

Let’s finish what we’ve started with the important preservation of Royal Gorge by making Van Norden safe for downstream users, improving the water quality in the South Yuba River and restoring habitat in both the meadow and river.



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Padding up Lacey Creek from Webber Lake. Photo credit: Keith Zenker