



STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL ANNOUNCES DONATION OF KENNEDY MEADOWS LANDS TO TUOLUMNE COUNTY

Conservation Values of Former PG&E Lands Gain Permanent Protection

San Mateo, Calif., December 4, 2013 – The Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) announces that a major milestone in its land conservation program has been achieved with the donation of PG&E-owned watershed lands at Kennedy Meadows to the County of Tuolumne. The lands' conservation values will be permanently protected by a conservation easement held by the Mother Lode Land Trust.

The Kennedy Meadows land transfer, finalized on November 20, 2013, is the first of many unique land transfers that will be completed to implement the Land Conservation Commitment of Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). The nonprofit Stewardship Council was created to implement this commitment through a stakeholder-driven Land Conservation Program designed to ensure 140,000 acres of California's pristine watershed lands—currently owned by PG&E—are permanently conserved for the public good.

The Kennedy Meadows "planning unit" is a 240-acre parcel located in the high Sierra Nevada, about 60 miles east of Sonora and 50 miles south of South Lake Tahoe. It is a popular destination for recreation enthusiasts and serves as a gateway to the Emigrant Wilderness.

As the culmination of a multi-year planning process—which included local public workshops, extensive stakeholder interactions, and a thorough process for the selection of the fee-title and conservation easement holders—the Kennedy Meadows planning unit was formally conveyed by PG&E to the County of Tuolumne in late November. A conservation easement was recorded at the same time, giving the Mother Lode Land Trust the responsibility to monitor the property to ensure the County manages the land consistent with the terms of the easement. Mother Lode will also have the right to enforce those terms when necessary.

"The Kennedy Meadows transaction represents years of work by the Stewardship Council board and staff, with valuable input from a wide variety of stakeholders, including local environmental organizations, Native Americans, state and regional regulatory entities, and other public agencies," says Art Baggett, president of the Stewardship Council board of directors. "This is the first of many important milestones that the Stewardship Council plans to achieve in carrying out its important mission of protecting and enhancing watershed lands and uses."

At 6,500 feet, Kennedy Meadows consists of beautiful high Sierra meadows, pine forests, and cottonwood stands. The Middle Fork Stanislaus River winds its way through this precious natural resource, which is treasured by both locals and visitors from far away. The privately operated Kennedy Meadows Resort and Pack Station is a popular vacation destination and an access point for those who want to pack into the Emigrant Wilderness and Northern Yosemite National Park. In operation since 1917, the pack station sees more than 20,000 visitors a year.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Executive Director Allene Zanger

PHONE: 650.372.9047

EMAIL: azanger@stewardshipcouncil.org



“The County of Tuolumne is pleased to be entrusted with this special place,” says Daniel Richardson, Deputy County Administrator for the County of Tuolumne. “It is with great care that the County will manage this amazing destination, working with the resort and pack station, the Mother Lode Land Trust, and the public to protect and enhance this unique landscape for the benefit of all, both now and in the future.”

As the conservation easement holder, Mother Lode Land Trust has more than two decades’ worth of experience managing other Sierra lands, holding easements in Amador, Calaveras, Alpine, and El Dorado counties. “We look forward to working with the County of Tuolumne to ensure that the conservation values and historic uses at Kennedy Meadows remain in perpetuity,” says Mother Lode Executive Director Ellie Routt.

Moving forward, the Stewardship Council is funding several studies and plans designed to help protect water quality and the many beneficial public values of the site. These studies will look at current recreational uses and potential enhancements, as well as address cultural resource protection and resource management. Tuolumne County will oversee this planning work and engage interested stakeholders in the process.

About the Stewardship Council

The Stewardship Council was established in 2004 as part of a settlement agreement between PG&E and the California Public Utilities Commission. The board of directors includes appointees from state and federal agencies, water districts, tribal and rural interests, forest and farm industry groups, conservation organizations, the California Public Utilities Commission, and PG&E. The Stewardship Council is charged with ensuring more than 140,000 acres of watershed lands located across the state are conserved and enhanced to provide a broad range of beneficial public values. To learn more about the organization and its work, visit www.stewardshipcouncil.org.

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