

# REFLECTIONS

EL RIO REYES CONSERVATION TRUST NEWSLETTER

## Our Tools for Conservation

FALL ISSUE 2013

Think about the Kings River area and its surrounding lands. There are many changes happening and land conversion is evident everywhere. Conversion due to mining activities, ranchette development, and other development pressures are seeping throughout the riverbottom. But there is a growing consensus among landowners, residents, recreationists, farmers and ranchers that protection of our remaining agricultural and riparian land resources is critical to safeguarding the Kings River landscape for future generations.

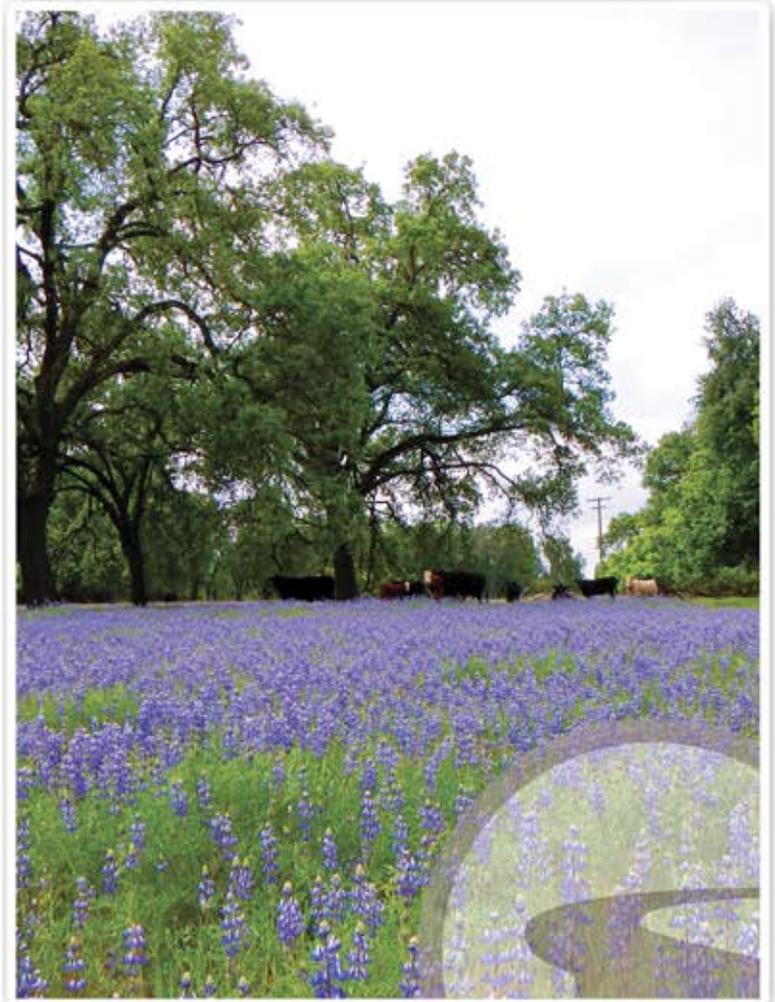
*Land conservation in the West is showing up in headlines across California and throughout the nation and it has reached the Kings River!*

In California alone, there are over 70 land trusts that are active members of the California Council of Land Trusts (as is El Rio Reyes) working to conserve California's landscape in one way or another. Their priorities have a dramatic range, stretching from those who want to save open space, those that seek preservation of public trails and access, and those searching for specific habitat to preserve, from oaks to vernal pools or eagles.

There is only one land trust in the Kings River area that exists specifically for the stewards of the working farms and ranches that support these and other habitat resources that this pristine river valley is known for. The El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust was initiated by local residents with a passion for conserving the lands of the Kings River and from community members with the expertise to see it done, and fortitude to garner the resources to assist landowners who want to permanently protect their property from development.

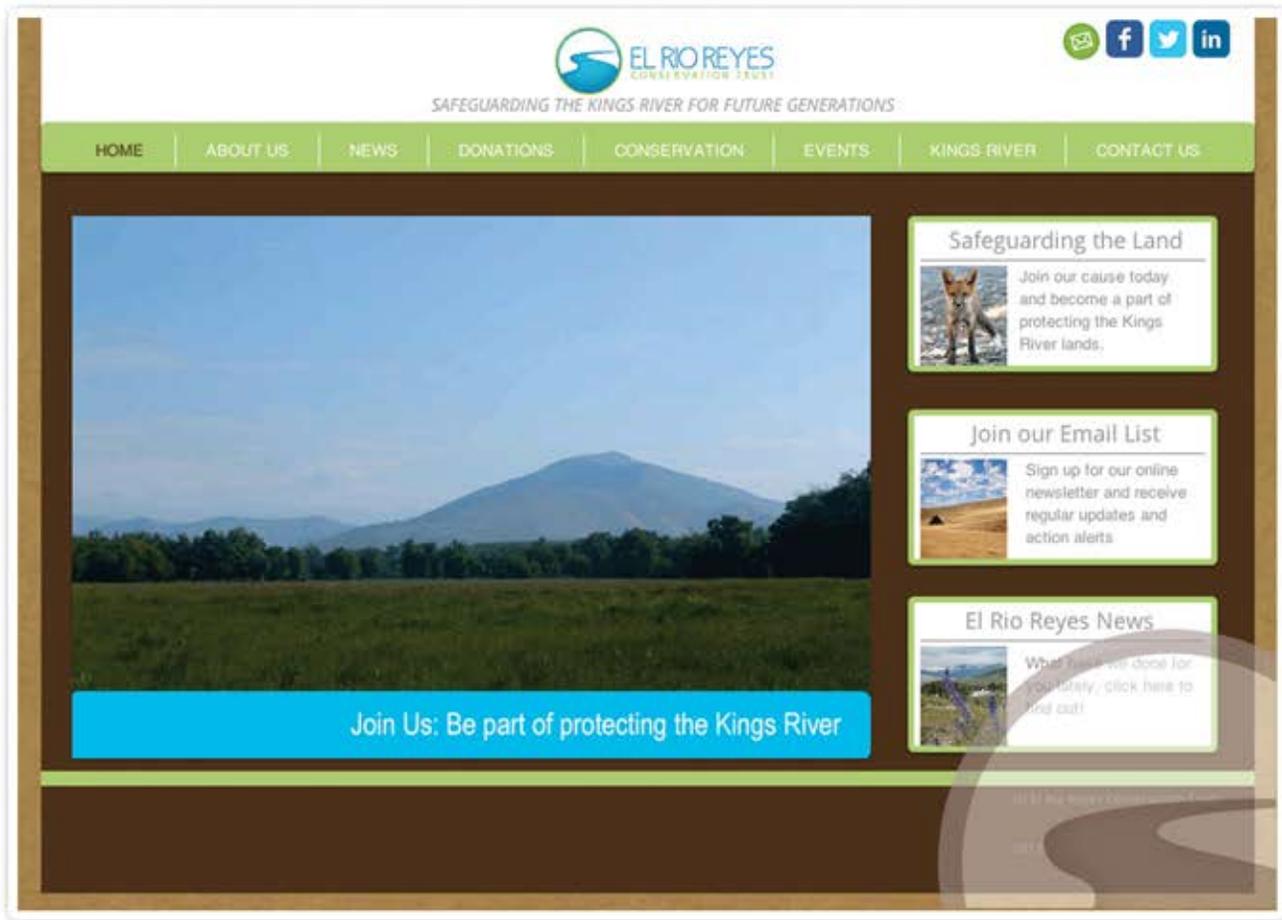
The El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust was established in 1999 to ensure that landowners in the Sanger riverbottom would have an alternative to selling their land for development or other uses through conservation easements.

El Rio Reyes mission is to safeguard the Kings River for future generations.



They work to spread the message about the benefits of conserving the agricultural lands along the river and how private landowner stewardship supports many other environmental benefits of a riparian landscape.

Daily, El Rio Reyes works to develop relationships with those living, working, and making decisions about the Kings River. These include landowners, agency personnel, city and county leaders, developers, the general public, and private donors. The goal is to teach interested parties about the tool of conservation easements with the endeavor of ultimately garnering the support and funds needed to close existing and potential easement projects.



## It's HERE - Visit our NEW Website

After much work, dedication from volunteers and supporters... and with much anticipation, we are proud to launch our new website at [www.elrioreyestrust.org](http://www.elrioreyestrust.org) – the same address, but a new and dynamic site!

On our new website you can learn in detail how we can use the tool of conservation easements to protect land in the Kings River region, support family agricultural businesses, and mitigate the impacts of land conversion along the Kings.

One of the features we are most excited about is the offering of support options for those who want to be a more integral part of protecting the Kings River valley. These options include how to volunteer for our board of directors or committees, donating to the permanent conservation of the landscape, becoming a member, or contributing expert advice and services.

Your support ensures protection of our agricultural and recreational land and water resources, while promising that our next generation of stewards can stay on the land.

## Extra! Extra! READ ALL About us!

We would also like to introduce our new E-Reflections, an online version of our newsletter Reflections. Get our monthly news and updates online by signing up through our website.

You will receive regular e-communications from us regarding our conservation efforts, how your support is helping, action alerts, and what's happening on the land.

**Sign-up today at [www.elrioreyestrust.org](http://www.elrioreyestrust.org).**

## Facebook: Connect to the Conversation

Find us on facebook or like us from our website so you can join the conversation about conservation of the Kings. We also post pictures, news updates, and meeting notices. Get involved!



## Friends Working in the Riverbottom

There are other noteworthy organizations and groups working in the riverbottom in advocacy or protection-type activities – some of these are the Kings River Conservancy, Friends of the Kings River, and Friends of Jesse Morrow Mountain. All these groups do good and meaningful work – and we support them, but none of them work specifically to keep private ag land owners on the land maintaining it at their own expense in perpetuity. Your support and membership with El Rio Reyes is the only way to ensure that permanent protection of the riverbottom happens while keeping land in private hands – thriving and productive.

## What's an Easement Worth?

The value of a conservation easement is the difference in the appraisal value of the land at its highest and best use and the agricultural use. The difference between these two values is the dollar value of the easement. In a purchased easement project, this difference is paid to the landowner in return for legally agreeing to never develop or convert the property – like their gift to future generations. These funds can be used at the discretion of the landowner but often go into helping sustain the agricultural operation already there.

## If an Easement is Purchased, who Pays the Value to the Landowner?

Funding for easements can come from a number of sources, but it often comes from a combination of public and private sources as well as landowner contributions. Federal and state agencies can be grant makers on projects that fall within their scope of funding for farmland, oak woodlands, species, or other habitat for example. Private funding from foundations and most importantly members and donors to El Rio Reyes is critical to complete a project.

An investment today in the conservation of Kings River lands ensures that our children and grandchildren will love, know, and care for this home as we do today.

### LEARN MORE!

Please visit El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust's website at [www.elrioreyestrust.org](http://www.elrioreyestrust.org), where you can read more about our work, the critical need to support our mission today, and how you can become part of this cause. Under our "Conservation" section you can get specific details on conservation easements and the steps involved in a transaction. For anything else please call us at (559) 355-7983 or email us at [info@elrioreyestrust.org](mailto:info@elrioreyestrust.org).

## What is a Conservation Easement?

Basically, conservation easements are voluntary restrictions on the use of privately-owned land. They are generally designed to be appropriate to the specific circumstances and concerns of both the landowner and the easement holder (El Rio Reyes). Easements can be utilized for various purposes such as to protect a family's viable farm or ranch operation, preserve viewsheds or riparian habitat, or provide mitigation for another project (development or other).



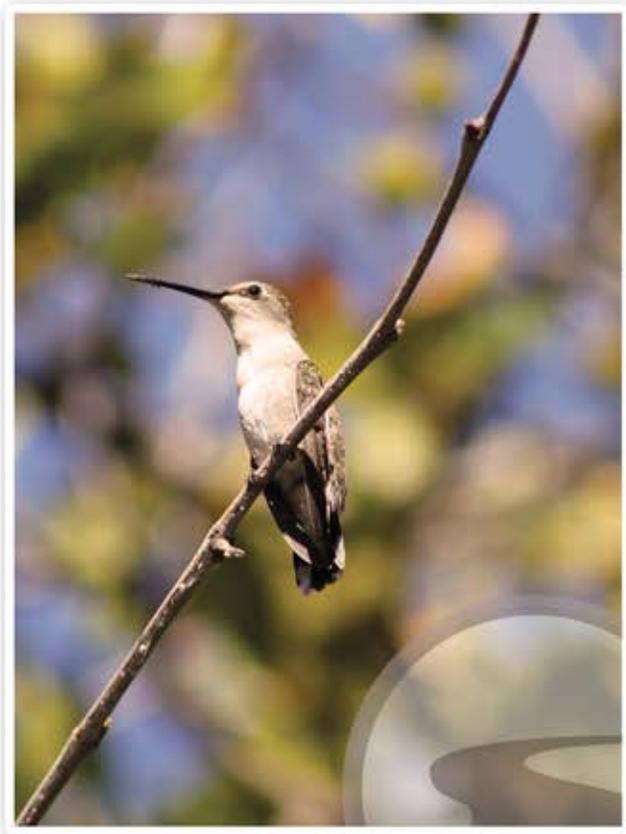


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## Our Mission

SAFEGUARDING THE KINGS RIVER  
AND ITS LAND  
FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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