**From:** Muriel Zeller [mailto:murielz@comcast.net]
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2013 12:58 PM
**To:** gpupdate
**Cc:** Rebecca L. Willis; Tom Infusino; Joyce Techel; Chris Wright; Debbie Ponte; Merita Callaway; Cliff Edson; Darren Spellman
**Subject:** Conservation Easement Overlay

To: Brenda Gillarde, General Plan Coordinator

From: Muriel Zeller, 2640 Stagecoach Drive, Valley Springs, CA 95252

Regarding: Conservation Easement Overlay for the General Plan Update Map

Dear Ms. Gillarde,

I am writing to suggest a conservation easement overlay be prepared for the general plan update map in order to identify all land in Calaveras County under the protection of a perpetual conservation easement.  While land protected by a conservation easement is generally also under a Williamson Act contract, not all Williamson Act land is protected by a perpetual easement.

Such an overlay would facilitate planning for the preservation of important eco-system services such as carbon sequestration, watershed protection, plant and wildlife habitat, and open space (including farmland, rangeland and forests).  An overlay would also identify the potential for connectivity between existing permanently protected lands including BLM and Forest Service land, and coincide with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Sierra Nevada Foothills Wildlife Connectivity Modeling Project, which is “using species-specific data to model connections between blocks of protected lands.”  Also, land that provides connection between existing protected acreage is often the best choice for mitigation purposes.

There are literally tens of thousands of acres in Calaveras County already under the protection of perpetual conservation easements held by agencies and organizations such as the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Rangeland Trust, and the Pacific Forest Trust.  There is a long-standing but quiet tradition of land preservation in Calaveras County, to which the attached article on easements in the Salt Spring Valley can attest.  Conservation easements benefit the public and the environment.  As the Nature Conservancy points out, conservation easements:

* Protect water quality
* Conserve wildlife habitat
* Preserve open space
* Preserve farmland, ranchland, timberland
* Maintain the character of rural communities
* Buffer public lands
* Maintain landscapes for tourism
* Require less in public services, generate more in local revenues
* Stretch public conservation dollars

It only makes sense to identify the exact number and location of our existing permanently protected acres.  That they will remain perpetually unchanged is an extremely important consideration for local land-use planning.  Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Muriel Zeller

cc: Rebecca Willis, Calaveras County Planning Director

Tom Infusino, Facilitator, Calaveras Planning Coalition

Joyce Techel, President, MyValleySprings.com

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

**From:** gpupdate

**Sent:** Thursday, May 30, 2013 2:49 PM

**To:** 'Muriel Zeller' ; gpupdate

**Cc:** Rebecca L. Willis ; Lori Norton ; Tom Infusino ; Joyce Techel ; Chris Wright ; Debbie Ponte ; Merita Callaway ; Cliff Edson ; Darren Spellman ; generalplan2035

**Subject:** RE: Conservation Easement Overlay

Hello Muriel,

We are researching that information and intend to have a map in the general plan that shows all parcels with a known recorded conservation easement. If you have any information on specific parcels with recorded easements that would be appreciated.

Cordially,

Brenda Gillarde

General Plan Coordinator

Calaveras County

891 Mountain Ranch Road

San Andreas, CA  95249

209.754.6394

**From:** Muriel Zeller

**Sent:** Saturday, June 01, 2013 9:06 AM

**To:** gpupdate

**Cc:** Rebecca L. Willis ; Lori Norton ; Tom Infusino ; Joyce Techel ; Chris Wright ; Debbie Ponte ; Merita Callaway ; Cliff Edson ; Darren Spellman ; generalplan2035

**Subject:** Re: Conservation Easement Overlay

Hi, Brenda.  Crystal Krause (crystal.krause@wildlife.ca.gov) at the state Department of Fish and Wildlife can likely help you identify all the easements held by Fish and Wildlife in Calaveras County, as she is currently compiling information on existing easements for the Sierra Nevada Foothills Wildlife Connectivity Modeling Project, although the Project is not looking at areas above 5,000 feet in elevation (see attachment).  I believe Campstool Ranch and Eagle Ridge Ranch, for example, which both have conservation easements held by Pacific Forest Trust and CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, respectively, are above 5000 feet, and there are others.

From what I know, it appears that the state Fish and Wildlife agency holds the bulk of the easements in Calaveras County, including those in Salt Spring Valley and those related to the Rail Road Flat Deer Herd.  But, as mentioned previously, there are easements held by the Pacific Forest Trust in addition to the California Rangeland Trust, Amador Land Trust, and East Bay Municipal Utility District.  The Sierra Nevada Conservancy currently lists an “active” grant of $1,000,000 to the Trust for Public Land for the acquisition of the Rodden Ranch conservation easement in Calaveras County.  I suggest you contact these agencies and organizations and inquire directly about the easements they hold in Calaveras County.  You might also try a public notice asking landowners to come forward and identify any protected lands they own.  Since perpetual conservation easements result in a decreased market value for the land, you might also ask the County Assessor who is enjoying the property tax benefits associated with conservation easements.

I am attaching a file with information on some specific easements that I have come across.  I do not vouch for the authenticity of the information, so you should verify it.  Thank you for providing a general plan map that shows all parcels with a known recorded conservation easement.  The fact that these lands will remain perpetually unchanged makes it essential to identify them.

Best Wishes,

Muriel Zeller

**From:** gpupdate

**Sent:** Monday, June 03, 2013 11:49 AM

**To:** 'Muriel Zeller' ; gpupdate

**Cc:** Rebecca L. Willis ; Lori Norton ; Tom Infusino ; Joyce Techel ; Chris Wright ; Debbie Ponte ; Merita Callaway ; Cliff Edson ; Darren Spellman ; generalplan2035 ; generalplan2035

**Subject:** RE: Conservation Easement Overlay

Thank you Muriel for the information. It will greatly assist us in our endeavor to map lands with recorded conservation easements.

Brenda Gillarde

General Plan Coordinator

Calaveras County

891 Mountain Ranch Road

San Andreas, CA  95249

209.754.6394