

Cycle 9:

96

# Conway Ranch

Mono County, California



*Photo by Jim Stimson.*

A Request for Funding Through the  
Environmental Enhancement and  
Mitigation Program (EEMP)



Sponsored by Mono County

October 1998

**ENVIRONMENT, ENHANCEMENT AND MITIGATION PROGRAM APPLICATION**

(Enter Grant Project Information under Section A and Transportation Project Information under Section B.)

See reverse side for additional instructions.

PROGRAM CATEGORY (check one category, only, below)

- Highway Landscape and Urban Forestry  Resource Lands  Roadside Recreation

**A. GRANT PROJECT (Name)**  
Conway Ranch

**AMOUNT OF GRANT REQUEST** \$ 500,000  
**ESTIMATED TOTAL PROJECT COST** \$ 500,000  
(Grant, Donations, etc., excluding Transportation Project)

**GRANT APPLICANT (Agency — Address — ZIP code)**  
 LOCAL AGENCY  STATE AGENCY  FEDERAL AGENCY  NONPROFIT  
  
Mono County  
Energy Management Department  
P.O. Box 347  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

**GRANT PROJECT LOCATION**  
Highway 395 and Route 167  
Nearest Cross Street  
Mono Lee Vining  
County Nearest City  
5 4  
Senate District No. Assembly District No.

**Grant Applicant's Representative Authorized in Resolution** (Please indicate if address differs from that of Grant Applicant.)  
Dan Lyster Director 7100 619-924-5453  
Name Title Phone

**Person with day-to-day responsibility for project (if different from authorized representative)**  
Nelson Matthews Program Director, Trust for Public Land 415-495-5660  
Name Title Phone

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF GRANT PROJECT (scope, location, purpose — not to exceed 60 words)**  
The \$500,000 EEMP request will acquire approximately 175 acres of the Conway Ranch Property in Mono County. The Lands to be acquired include mule deer migration corridor as well as other important habitat and historic resources. Conway Ranch's public acquisition and protection as open space will ensure the maintenance of this critical resource and provide additional mitigation for the impacts resulting from construction projects on Highway 395.

**ACQUISITION**  
**ANTICIPATED CONSTRUCTION START AND COMPLETION DATES:** land will be acquired upon receipt of final  
**ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE FOR GRANT PROJECT (check proposed type and status)** (enclosed)

Type  Exempt  Negative Declaration  Categorical Exemption  Environmental Impact Report  
Status  Complete  In Progress  Not Started

Name of Lead Agency Mono County  
NOTE: Final environmental documents must be submitted to the CTC before it may approve project for funding.

**B. RELATED TRANSPORTATION PROJECT**  
9 Lee Vining/Conway Summit Mono Highway 395  
District City County Route Number/Name  
Conway Summit/Lee Vining  
Location  
Construction of additional lanes on two sections of Highway 395  
Description of Related Transportation Project  
Caltrans Construction completed 1993  
Name of Transportation Agency Date Construction Began or Scheduled  
HB-41 and HB-4 (approved FY 92-93)  
Name of Approved/Certified Capital Outlay Program for Related Transportation Project

I certify that the information contained in this project application form, including required attachments, is accurate and that I have read and understand the important information and agree to the assurances on the reverse of this form.

Signed Dan Lyster Date 9-30-98  
(Grant Applicant's Authorized Representative, as shown on the Resolution)

**Conway Ranch  
Mono County, California**

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### 3. ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT SUMMARY

#### a. Description of Project Scope, Location and Purpose, and Amount of Request

##### *Project Scope*

Mono County requests \$500,000 from the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) to continue its efforts to acquire and protect important habitat and historically significant lands contained on the 1,031-acre Conway Ranch property. If approved, this EEMP grant will result in the acquisition of approximately 175 acres and will fill a critical funding gap in the overall effort to acquire and protect Conway Ranch. This acquisition will provide mitigation beyond that required for two passing lane construction projects on State Highway 395 in Mono County.

This EEMP request is part of the larger effort to fund the acquisition of the entire Conway Ranch property. Over \$1.8 million in public and private funding has been secured towards the \$2.8 million acquisition price. Phase I of the project, which uses a previous EEMP grant of \$200,000, coupled with \$600,000 in grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Habitat Conservation Fund, and a donation of land value from the Trust for Public Land (TPL), totaling \$800,000, will result in the imminent acquisition and protection of 175 acres, portions of which had been prepared for development. Phase II, involving a \$500,000 purchase of land by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), is in process. An additional \$500,000 raised from several other public sources will be matched by \$500,000 in foundation grants secured by TPL. The \$500,000 EEMP request will acquire approximately 175 acres and contribute to the final phase and completion of the project.

##### *Location and Purpose*

Conway Ranch is the most prominent parcel of private land available for acquisition and protection in the Mono Basin. Mono Lake is three miles to the southeast, the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada a half mile to the west, and Conway Summit one mile to the north. The property provides a wide variety of valuable natural habitats, including a major migration route for the Mono Lake deer herd. Over 700 deer travel through or by the property annually. The ranch also provides habitat for pronghorn antelope, sage grouse, mountain lion, red-tailed hawk, northern harrier, great blue heron, and various species of songbirds and waterfowl. The ranch site itself is historic, complete with a barn, corrals, and a ranch house, dating back to the 1870s when the property was used to raise cattle for the town of Bodie.

State Highway 395, a county- and state-designated scenic highway and a federally-designated scenic byway, crosses through Conway Ranch. This highway is the primary transportation route along the eastern Sierra and travels through some of the most dramatic landscapes in California. Two passing lane construction projects within two miles of the ranch negatively affect both the scenic character of the land and critical deer habitat. Public acquisition of the ranch will help preserve its open space and an important deer migration corridor. In addition to mitigation for the two highway projects, public acquisition will protect the property from development.

The transfer of Conway Ranch into public ownership will provide additional open space and habitat for a county whose economic base relies largely on tourist use of recreational and wilderness lands. By keeping the ranch in its natural state, Mono County will help preserve the valuable habitat, scenic quality, and historical heritage that make the Mono Basin unique. EEMP funding will assist in completing this critical conservation effort.

***Amount of Request***

The EEMP grant of \$500,000 will contribute to Mono County's acquisition of the 1,031-acre Conway Ranch property. The grant will acquire approximately 175 acres of the property.

**b. Explanation for Grant Request that Exceeds Specified Funding Limitation**

A grant request of \$500,000, which exceeds the specified funding limitation, will be used to acquire 175 acres of the 1,031-acre property and will be a critical contribution to the overall effort to protect Conway Ranch. The property has an approved specific plan that calls for the development of 600 units of housing, a 27-hole golf course, and other resort facilities. At significant expense, TPL acquired the property in January 1998 and is acting as a bridge funder for Mono County. If an agency is unable to secure funding to acquire the remaining portions of the property within one year, TPL may be required for financial reasons to put the remaining ranch lands on the private market for sale. A \$500,000 grant from EEMP will enable the protection of this important resource within the time available.

The larger grant request is further justified by the habitat degradation caused by Caltrans' construction projects within the immediate vicinity of the property. The construction projects described in this application degrade the natural habitat and scenery of Conway Ranch and its surrounding area. For example, the widening of the road and subsequent increase in traffic volume significantly impact deer by creating a barrier along their migration route.

The Conway Summit passing lane construction project was funded through the HB-41 program, at an estimated cost of \$4.4 million, for completion in FY 1992-93. The Cemetery Road passing lane project was funded through the HB-4 program, for \$3.9 million, in the same fiscal year. Due to the cost of the construction projects (totaling \$8.3 million) and their effect on adjacent habitat, additional funding is justified for the acquisition of resource lands on Conway Ranch.

#### **4. AGENCY ELIGIBILITY**

##### **a. Authorizing Resolution**

The Mono County Board of Supervisors will consider a resolution authorizing this request from the EEM Program on October 13, 1998. An original copy will be forwarded to the Resources Agency by the Clerk of the Board.

##### **b. Statement of Related Prior Experience**

Mono County has a long history of administering grants. The Planning, Energy Management, and Public Works Departments are presently administering federal, state, and local grants. The County has also already secured grants specifically for the acquisition of Conway Ranch from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Department of Parks and Recreation/Habitat Conservation Fund Local Agency Grant Program, and EEMP.

Mono County operates and maintains five campgrounds in the Tioga Pass area and a campground at Lundy Lake. The County also operates and maintains the following parks:

- Mono Lake County Park
- Walker Park
- Bridgeport Park
- Bridgeport Marina
- Gull Lake Park
- Crowley Lake Park
- Chalfant Park
- Benton Park
- Gus Hess Park

**5. RELATED TRANSPORTATION PROJECT**

This EEMP request relates to two transportation projects: the construction of passing lanes on Highway 395 at Conway Summit and those between Cemetery Road and State Route 167.

Caltrans' statements follow this page.

## 6. GENERAL CRITERIA

### a. Increased Mitigation and Enhancement

Each year the number of motorists who travel Highway 395 increases. Highway 395, a major thoroughfare extending through California from Canada to Mexico, is the only through corridor from Los Angeles to the Lake Tahoe/Reno area. The highway bisects Mono County, winds through the Mono Basin, and crosses the western edge of Conway Ranch.

The scenery surrounding the highway is a unique assemblage of topography and habitat. As the Sierra Nevadas meet the high desert, a beautiful contrast emerges: dry sage and riparian valleys dotted with aspen and cottonwood. It is this beauty—the vast open spaces against the snow-topped ridges of the Sierras—that draws increasing numbers of visitors from California and around the world to the Mono Basin and Mono Lake. In recognition of the beauty of the landscape, the U.S. Congress and Federal Highways Administration designated this particular stretch of Highway 395 a federal scenic highway and scenic byway.

Most of the increased traffic on Highway 395 is from tourism. Ironically, the transportation projects that expanded access for tourists also destroyed portions of the landscape visitors come to experience. In order to widen stretches of State Highway 395 to four lanes, *the scenic quality of the highway, from Conway Summit to Highway 167, was severely marred.* Conway Ranch's acquisition mitigates this destruction by permanently protecting a valuable natural resource and preserving the scenic quality along this historic route.

Conway Ranch is located between the two highway construction projects. The \$4.4 million Conway Summit project involved stabilizing and landscaping a slope that was graded for the construction of two additional lanes to provide northbound and southbound passing opportunities on Highway 395 north of Conway Summit. Mono Basin is the location of a critical deer migration route, which runs through Conway Ranch. Seven acres of habitat were permanently lost under pavement as a result of this project and a total of 45 acres of mule deer habitat was destroyed, creating a barrier in the migration corridor. Other wildlife affected by the project include Brewer's blackbird, sage sparrow, and mule deer.

The \$3.9 million widening between Cemetery Road and State Route 167 also involves cutting into slopes to widen Highway 395 from two to four lanes to create passing opportunities. According to the environmental report, the construction of two additional lanes on this section of Highway 395 will damage vegetation and riparian areas, particularly along DeChambeau and Mill Creeks, and leave a visual scar. The construction project will also affect associated wildlife habitat for many species including mountain beaver and mule deer (the construction project is located within mule deer winter range and astride migration paths). Other wildlife affected by the construction project include bobcat and black tailed jackrabbit, and common birds such as the red tailed hawk, mourning dove, song sparrow and others. All plants and animals were removed from approximately 24 acres of land.

While the environmental document called for revegetation on the slopes and replanting in the riparian areas as mitigation, impacts from the highway construction were substantial and the mitigation required did not address the full scope of their consequences. Among the most significant was the creation of a barrier for migrating deer. Additional segments of the existing migration route must be protected to prevent the formation of additional barriers, the combined effect of which would negatively impact deer populations over an area much larger than the acres directly paved and stripped of vegetation. The acquisition of Conway Ranch will offer substantial additional mitigation by protecting valuable resource lands, high-quality habitat, and segments of the migration corridor similar to those destroyed in the construction project.

Further, the environmental document recognized that the project's new cuts along the hillsides would create a scar visible to both the highway user and the visitor to Mono Lake. Because of its location within the Mono Basin Scenic Area, the project's impacts to the scenic integrity should have been considered. The acquisition of Conway Ranch will protect over a thousand acres of this unique landscape and prevent additional degradation of the area's scenic quality.

The Conway Ranch acquisition project represents an excellent opportunity for additional mitigation. The EEMP grant of \$500,000 will allow for the protection of approximately 175 acres of natural habitat along Highway 395 and contribute to the overall effort to protect the ranch. The Conway Ranch acquisition will directly benefit wildlife harmed by the two construction projects.

#### **b. Statewide Project Goals and Local Cash Contributions**

Conway Ranch is a resource of statewide significance. The property consists of two historic California ranches formerly owned by the Mattly and Conway families. The Conway family ranch site, complete with corral and homestead, dates back to the 1870s when the property was used to raise cattle for the nearby town of Bodie. It also provides valuable habitat, including a major migration route for the Mono Lake deer herd. Over 700 deer travel through or by the ranch each year.

With its proximity to Mono Lake and Bodie State Park, Conway Ranch is a key component of Mono Basin's overall tourism draw. The acquisition of Conway Ranch will advance the ongoing effort to protect Mono Lake and its surrounding resources, including the scenic viewshed and wildlife habitat.

The variety of public and private funding secured for the acquisition of Conway Ranch demonstrates its multiple resource values and the broad commitment to its protection at the local, state, and federal levels. Contributions towards the \$2.8 million purchase price include:

- **\$450,000** from two previous EEMP grant cycles.
- **\$592,500** from the Habitat Conservation Fund Program for the acquisition of deer/mountain lion and wetland habitat.

- **\$100,000** from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the acquisition of wetland habitat.
- **\$500,000** or more of land exchange funding is expected from BLM.
- **\$200,000** in donated land value from TPL.

A total of \$1,842,500 has been secured for the acquisition of Conway Ranch. In addition to the EEMP funds requested, TPL is also seeking \$500,000 in contributions from private foundations and individuals to complete the project.

### **c. Project Readiness**

In order to assure protection of this critical resource, TPL exercised its option and acquired the property in January of 1998. Mono County is ready to acquire the 175 acres described in this proposal immediately upon receipt of funds. The project will be completed in phases - Phase I (the acquisition of 175 acres) is expected to close by October 31, 1998. The environmental document verifying that the acquisition is categorically excluded from CEQA is attached.

Mono County is committed to acquiring the ranch and is ready to provide effective stewardship. The County's objectives in protecting Conway Ranch include maintaining habitat, protecting open space for deer migration and scenic value, and preserving historical resources. However, TPL, as temporary owner, is incurring significant carrying costs. If public funding is not obtained in the next year, TPL may have to place the remaining ranch lands on the private market for sale.

An agency and community stewardship planning effort is underway: the Conway Ranch Evaluation Workgroup (CREW). The CREW is a multi-agency, multi-participant group committed to the proper stewardship and management of the property. The group is engaged in building consensus around the long-term management of the ranch and its valuable resources.

Several agencies own and manage land in the surrounding area. Conway Ranch lies just outside the Mono Basin Scenic Area, which is managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in an effort to preserve the unique character of the region. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) both own land that borders Conway Ranch and manage it for habitat protection and public recreation.

The Caltrans construction projects have been funded and are complete as of 1993.

Environmental documents are included and follow this page.

## 7. PROJECT CATEGORY CRITERIA/RESOURCE LANDS PROJECTS

### a. Important Resource Values

Spectacular surroundings and a unique heritage make Conway Ranch one of the most valuable parcels of private land in Mono County. The property is located at the northwestern end of the Mono Basin, with the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west and the Bodie Hills to the northeast. Mono Lake dominates the view to the southeast and Conway Summit is just a mile to the north. The Conway family ranch site dates back to the 1870s when the property was used to raise cattle for nearby towns. Both temporary and long term camps of hunters and farmers have been discovered, indicating that the Conway family was not the first to enjoy this beautiful spot.

The natural meadows, wetlands, and riparian corridor on Conway Ranch provide valuable habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including the Mono Lake deer herd, which uses the property as its primary migration route. More than 700 deer travel through or by the land each year. Conway Ranch also harbors sage grouse, mountain lion, pronghorn antelope, red-tailed hawk, northern harrier, great blue heron, and various species of songbirds and waterfowl.

Conway Ranch is a critical component of the migration corridor for the Mono Lake mule deer herd, which leave their higher-elevation summer range in the Sierra Nevada before the onset of winter and move to their winter range in Nevada. It is during this migration that they pass through or near Conway Ranch. Mule deer are attracted to the riparian vegetation along Wilson Creek, which traverses Conway Ranch for approximately 1.2 miles. Additional riparian vegetation in the area exists along 1.75 miles of Wilson Creek, which crosses through public land, and along Mill Creek to the south of Conway Ranch. The riparian corridor serves primarily as hiding and resting cover for mule deer, while the adjacent bitterbrush/sagebrush vegetation community is a high-quality foraging area. The overall quality of the mule deer habitat is exceptionally good. Further, the resources that will be protected by public ownership of the ranch extend well beyond its boundaries. With the increased traffic that the widened road facilitates, a more significant barrier is created for deer. Public acquisition of the ranch will protect the migration corridor from introduced obstructions (e.g., residential development) between the Sierra Nevada and western Nevada.

There are several perennial freshwater springs on the Conway Ranch property where numerous species of sedges, rushes, and grasses dominate the wet meadow community. The wet meadow community comprises 139 of the 171 wetland acres on the property. The wet meadows of the Mono Basin are extraordinarily rich in butterflies. Several uncommon species of butterflies have been observed on the ranch property, including the Apache silverspot. The northern bog violet is found throughout the wet meadow community as is the larval hostplant of the Apache silverspot.

The public acquisition of Conway Ranch, which has been the target of a controversial housing and resort development for many years, represents a unique opportunity to protect the natural qualities of the Mono Basin. Transfer of this property into public ownership will provide additional open space, recreational opportunities, and habitat resources for Mono County, whose economic base relies largely on tourist use and enjoyment of recreational and wilderness lands. By keeping the ranch in its natural state, Mono County will help preserve the historical heritage of the eastern Sierra, protect valuable habitat, and maintain the scenic quality that makes the Mono Basin unique. EEMP funding is essential to completing this critical conservation effort.

#### **b. Sustainability**

Mono County is working with local residents, public agencies, and private organizations to prepare specific plans for permanent management of the site. The 1,031-acre ranch will be managed as open space. The County currently maintains parks, campgrounds, and other recreational facilities in the area and is ready and able to assume management responsibilities of the ranch. Additionally, there is a community and agency effort underway to plan for management of the ranch: the Conway Ranch Evaluation Workgroup (CREW). The CREW is building consensus around the long-term management of the property and its valuable resources.

#### **c. Other Benefits and Community Participation**

The acquisition of the Conway Ranch property will provide multiple public benefits. The protection and enhancement of its wetland and riparian habitats will attract wildlife and birds, offer environmental education opportunities, and provide recreation for residents and visitors alike. Visitors to the property will be able to see the historic relics of the first settlers of the Mono Basin. Travelers on Highway 395 will benefit from the scenery on the ranch that would otherwise be marred were development plans allowed to proceed. Due to its location on Highway 395, public acquisition of Conway Ranch will provide new opportunities for access to roadside recreation.

In addition to pursuing the ranch's acquisition, the County is cooperating with the State Water Resources Control Board to build agency and community consensus on its long-term management. The Conway Ranch Evaluation Workgroup (CREW) participants have included Mono County, Mono Lake Committee, People for Mono Basin Preservation, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Parks and Recreation, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, State Lands Commission, California Department of Transportation, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Southern California Edison, CalTrout, Ducks Unlimited, and the Trust for Public Land, among others.

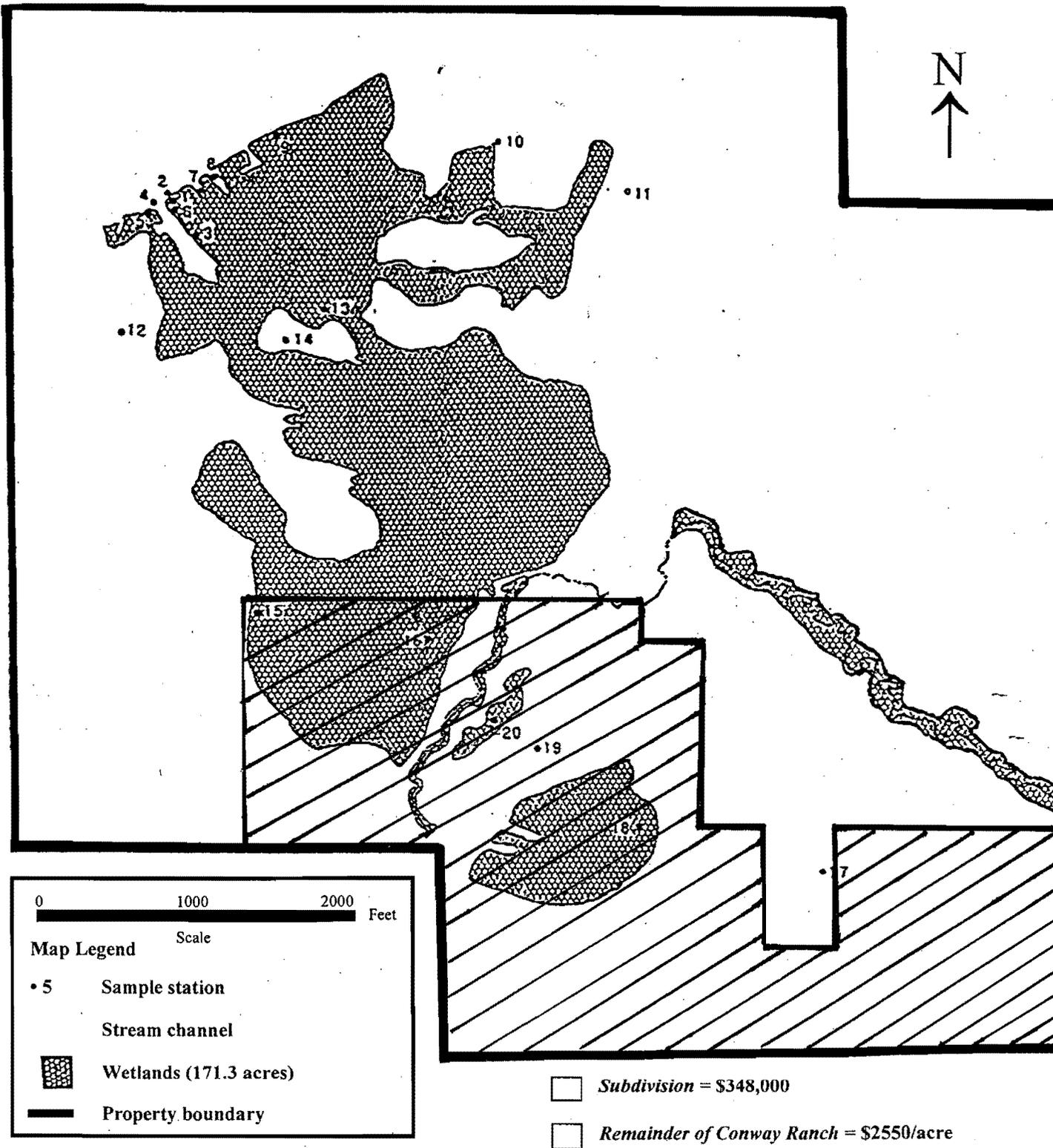
The area's natural beauty and wildlife attract thousands of visitors and outdoor enthusiasts each year. Protection of additional open space and habitat will benefit Mono County's

recreation/tourist based economy. County plans for Conway Ranch include the possible development of a compatible fish rearing facility on a small portion of the property. The fish raised there would stock County creeks, further stimulating tourism.



# CONWAY RANCH

**Proposed First Conveyance:  
180 acres of Conway Ranch, plus subdivision  
(existing homes are not included)**

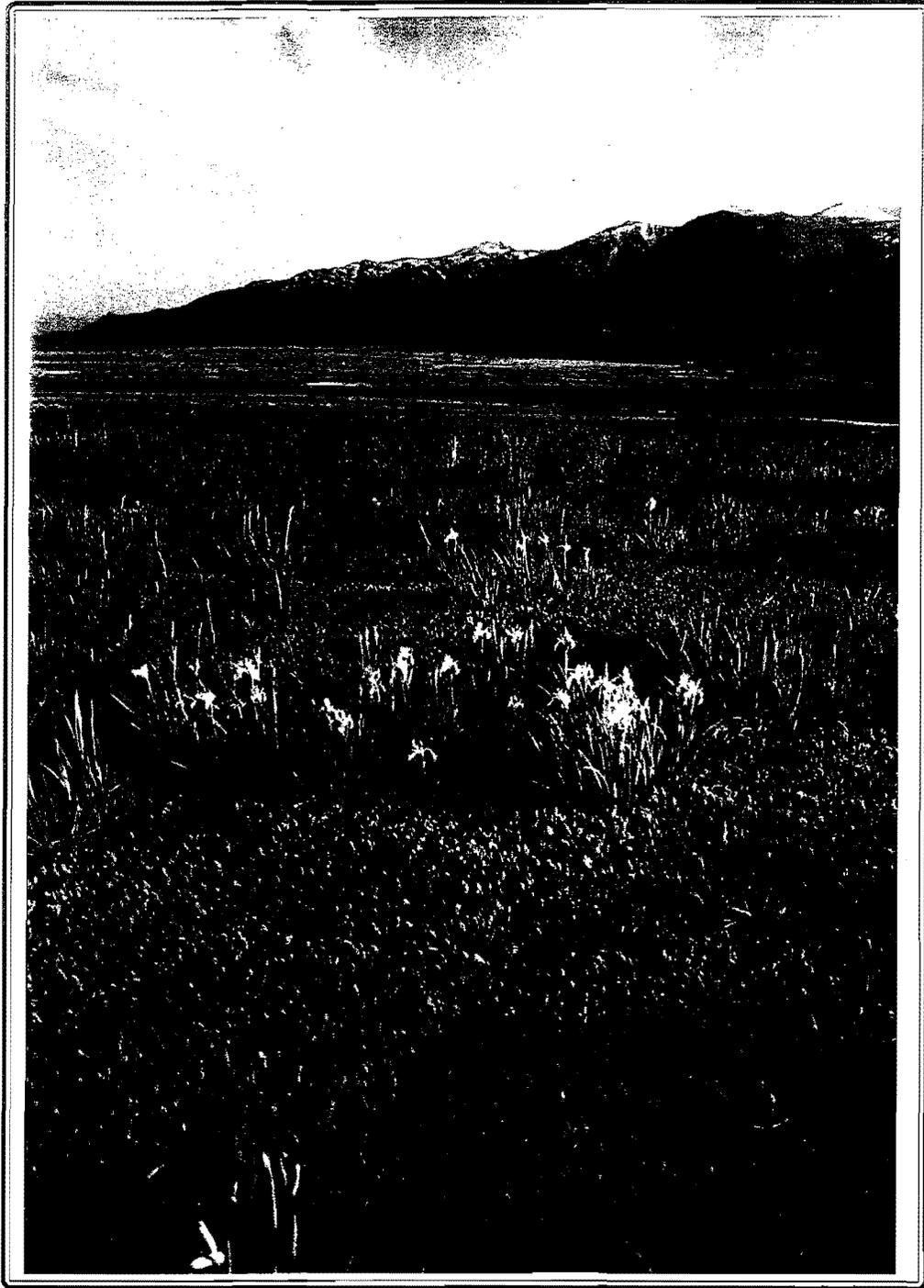


**g. Project site photos**



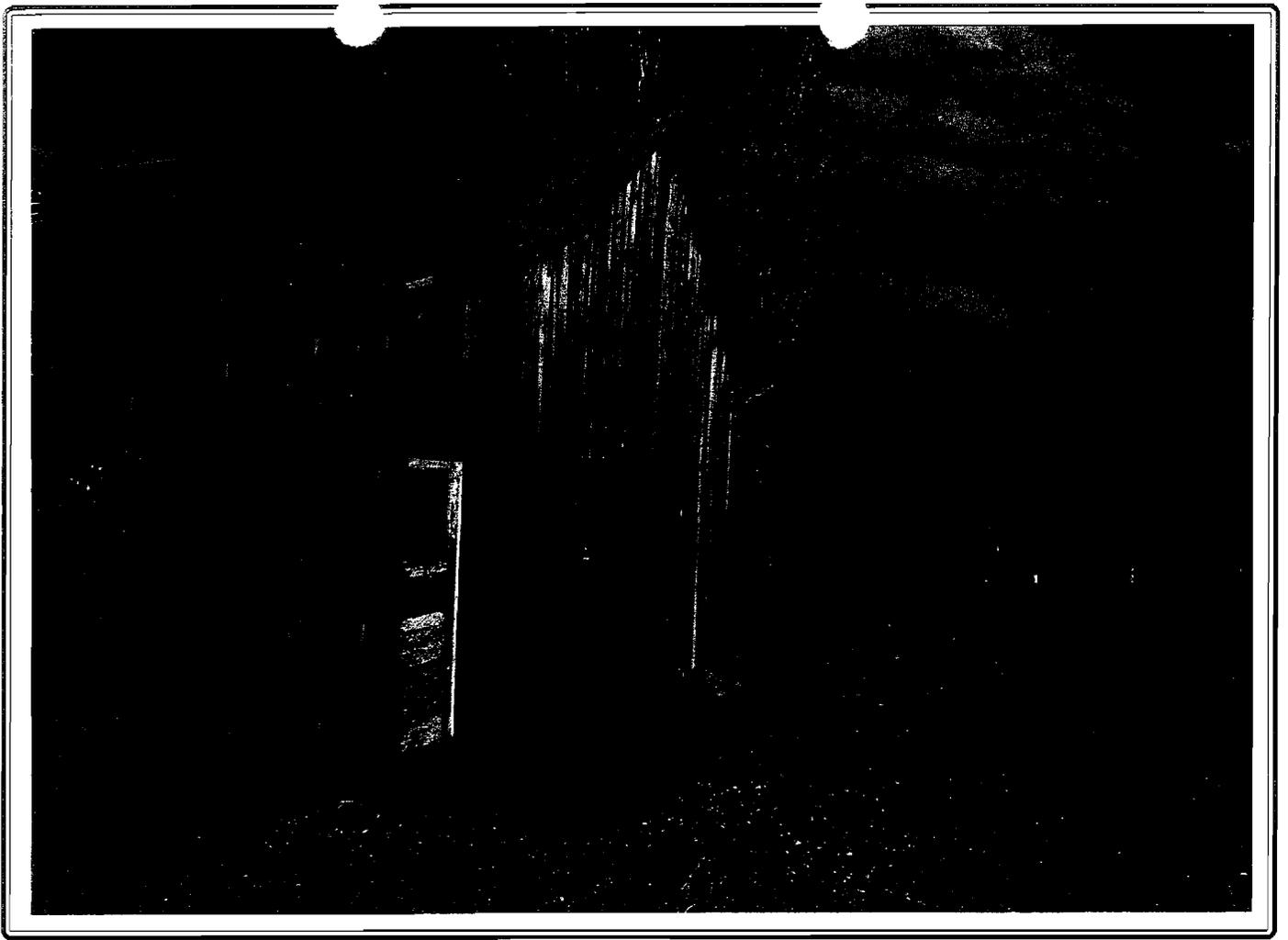
*Photo by Andrew Vesselinovitch.*

**M**ule deer rely on Conway Ranch and neighboring public lands for resting, foraging, and as an important part of their natural migration corridor from higher elevations in the Eastern Sierra to the open ranch in Nevada. Both of the related transportation projects directly impact the area's well-known wildlife migration route. EEMP funds are needed to continue the significant progress already made for the protection of the cultural, visual, and critical wildlife habitat resources contained on the ranch. ❖



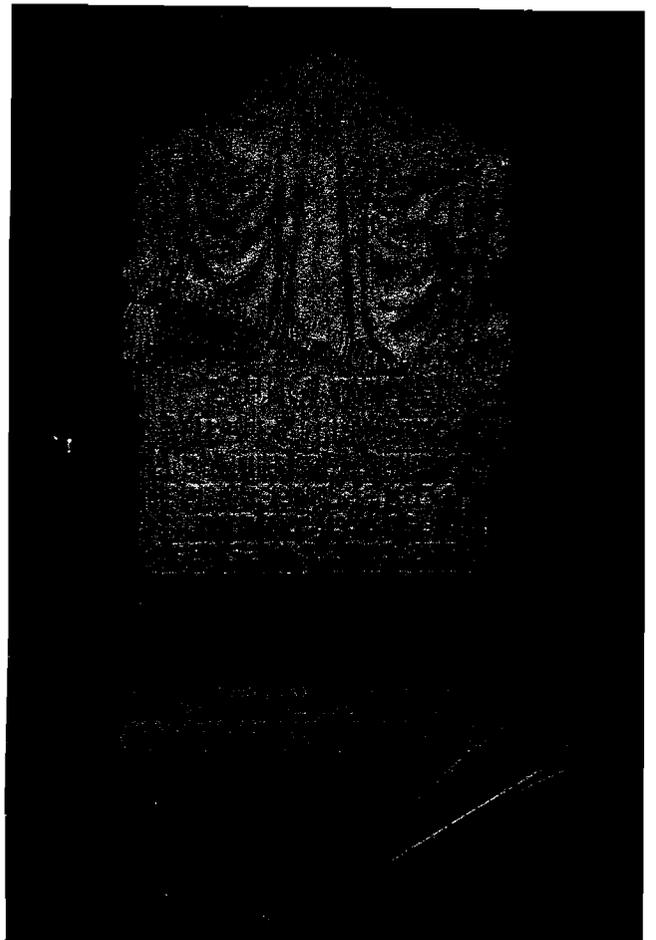
*Photo by Nelson Mathews.*

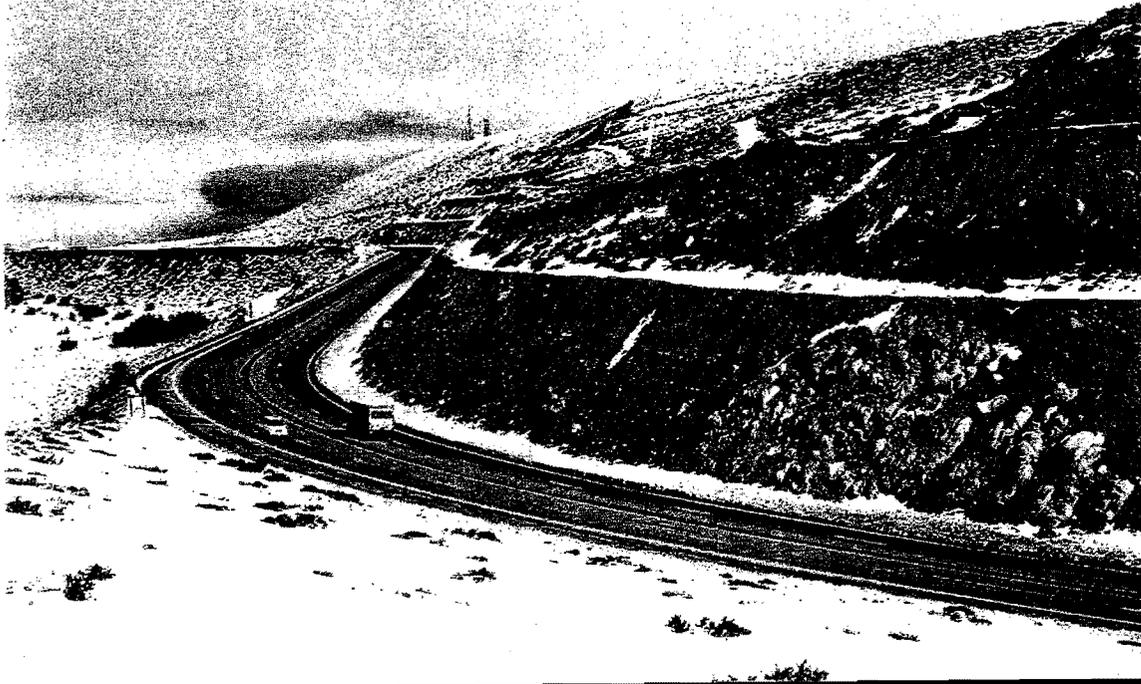
**C**onway Ranch has an approved development plan calling for the construction of 600 housing units and other facilities on the property. EEMP funds, combined with funds from other sources, are needed to acquire and permanently protect the area's natural migration corridor and habitat from incompatible development. In addition to providing habitat protection, the acquisition of Conway Ranch will also maintain the natural integrity of the area's expansive open space and afford travelers and residents with new opportunities for roadside recreation. ❖



*Top photo by Nelson Mathews. Bottom photo by Andrew Vesselinovitch.*

**I**n addition to protecting the land's critical wildlife habitat, EEMP funds will help maintain the historic character of the area. The 1,031-acre project site is comprised of two ranches — Mattly and Conway. The Mattly and Conway families worked and lived on the land as part of the area's American settlement. ❖





**T**he related transportation projects, the construction of passing lanes on Highway 395 at Conway Summit and near Cemetery Road, require cutting into the area's prominent hillsides and the displacement of habitat. In addition to disrupting the area's mule deer migration corridor, the construction projects also negatively impact the Mono Basin's spectacular natural landscape. The acquisition and protection of Conway Ranch provides additional mitigation for the impacts resulting from construction of Highway 395. ❖

*Photos by Jim Stimson.*



*Photo by Nelson Mathews.*

**V**isitors from all over California, the United States, and the world travel Highway 395 to enjoy the spectacular beauty of the Mono Basin and Mono Lake — according to Caltrans, an estimated 3,000 vehicles travel this particular stretch of Highway 395 everyday. Development of Conway Ranch would permanently damage the natural beauty that draws so many. Approximately \$1.8 million in public and private funds have been secured for the acquisition of Conway Ranch, all in recognition of the property's outstanding wildlife habitat and open space resources. Two EEMP grants have already been awarded for the protection of Conway Ranch, one of which will be used to complete the first phase of this important project by the end of October 1998. EEMP funding this year will contribute towards the County's acquisition of the entire 1,031-acre ranch. ❖

**m. Letters of endorsement**



# MONO LAKE

COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 29  
Hwy 395 and Third Street  
Lee Vining, CA 93541  
Phone (760) 647-0595  
Fax (760) 647-6327

#### Board of Directors:

Go Chang  
Sally Gaines  
Liz Manning

Jim Raetke  
Martha Davis  
Amy Helm  
David Kanner  
Robert Marks  
Dave Marquet  
Jane Rogers  
Tom Solo

#### Directors Emeriti

Helen Green  
Mary Hanson  
Grace de Lant  
Genny Smith

#### Executive Director

Frances Spivy-Weber

Southern California  
Office

322 Culver Blvd.  
Playa Del Rey, CA 90293  
(310) 716-8488

On the Internet  
[www.monolake.org](http://www.monolake.org)

Doug Wheeler, Secretary  
California Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth St.  
Sacramento, CA 95814

October 6, 1998

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

The Mono Lake Committee supports Mono County's funding request through the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP). A third year of EEMP funding will contribute significantly towards the purchase and protection of the highly scenic Conway Ranch in the north Mono Basin.

The historic ranch offers outstanding views of natural and irrigated meadows as well as of historic ranch buildings to motorists traveling Highway 395 in the eastern Sierra. In addition, the property offers wildlife habitat and serves as a major migration corridor for the Mono Lake deer herd. Over 700 deer travel through the site annually.

Public acquisition of the Conway Ranch will help mitigate the visual disturbance caused by CalTrans' construction of passing lanes adjacent to the Conway Ranch on Highway 395. Protection of the ranch's open space will benefit not only Mono County and Mono County's wildlife, but also the millions of tourists and recreationalists who annually pass through the area.

The Committee urges approval of third-year EEMP funding for this important project.

Sincerely,

Frances Spivy-Weber  
Executive Director

cc: Robert Wolfe, California Transportation Commission



National Audubon Society  
Chapters of California

Altacal  
Juena Vista  
Central Sierra  
Conejo Valley  
Eagle Lake  
Eastern Sierra  
El Dorado  
Fresno  
Golden Gate  
Gern  
Kerncrest  
Laguna Hills  
Lake Almanor  
La Purisima  
Los Angeles  
Madrone  
Marble Mountain  
Marin  
Mendocino Coast  
Monterey Peninsula  
Morro Coast  
Mount Diablo  
Mount Shasta Area  
Napa-Solano  
North Cuesta  
Oblone  
Palomar  
Palos Verdes/South Bay  
Pasadena  
Peregrine  
Plumas  
Pomona Valley  
Redbud  
Redwood Region  
Sacramento  
San Bernardino Valley  
San Diego  
San Fernando Valley  
San Joaquin  
Santa Barbara  
Santa Clara Valley  
Santa Monica Bay  
Sea and Sage  
Sequoia  
Sierra Foothills  
South Coast  
Stanislaus  
Tulare County  
Ventura  
Whittier  
Wintu  
Yolo  
Yosemite Area

October 1, 1998

Mr. Douglas Wheeler  
Secretary of Resources  
1416 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

On behalf of the National Audubon Society, I am writing to request you to approve the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) grant request submitted by Mono County to purchase 184 acres of Conway Ranch.

The Conway Ranch acquisition would greatly benefit Mono Basin's resident and migratory waterfowl populations. The multi-agency effort to acquire Conway Ranch will protect the naturally occurring wetlands on this property including 140 acres of wet meadows that contain numerous freshwater springs. Numerous wetland dependant birds and waterfowl rely on these natural resources including the Northern pintail, Canada goose and Pied-billed grebes. In addition, Conway Ranch serves as a major deer migration corridor for over 700 mule deer annually and provides habitat for pronghorn antelope and sage grouse.

This grant would continue the Resources Agency's EEMP commitment to Conway Ranch by providing \$500,000 to purchase and permanently protect this critical property. This request will complement the \$450,000 in EEMP funds awarded previously, bringing this important conservation project closer to completion.

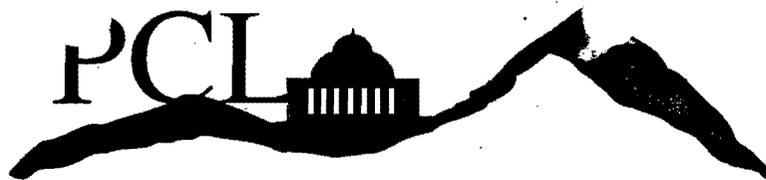
Two Caltrans construction projects on Highway 395 negatively affect the scenic character and the quality of the deer habitat on Conway Ranch making this grant a very appropriate use of these funds.

A \$500,000 grant would be an excellent use of EEMP funds. I urge you to approve the EEMP grant request submitted by Mono County to assist in acquiring Conway Ranch.

Sincerely,

John McCaull  
Legislative Director





## PLANNING AND CONSERVATION LEAGUE

### OFFICERS

Janet Cobb  
*President*  
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October 1, 1998

Mr. Doug Wheeler  
Secretary  
California Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Doug:

I am writing to express the Planning and Conservation League's strong support for Mono County's \$500,000 request from the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) for the Conway Ranch acquisition project.

The 1,031-acre Conway Ranch property consists of historic and natural resources of statewide significance including two historic California ranches which contain outstanding resource lands that truly reflect the natural heritage of the Eastern Sierra.

The property provides valuable open space and wildlife habitat including a major migration route for the Mono Lake mule deer herd. These deer are the most important big game species of the Eastern Sierra Nevada, with over 700 deer traveling through or immediately adjacent to this land each year.

This EEMP grant will provide additional mitigation for two Caltrans lane construction projects on Highway 395 within two miles of Conway Ranch. The construction projects adversely impact the same deer migration corridor which passes through the Conway Ranch as well as other similar resources.

Mono County currently has an agreement to acquire all or portions of Conway Ranch subject to funding. The \$250,000 EEMP grant will acquire 184 acres of this property and assist in the multi-agency effort to permanently protect Conway Ranch.

I hope you will join PCL in supporting this important project by endorsing Mono County's request. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gerald Meral  
Executive Director

California Affiliat



NATIONAL  
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FEDERATION

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