

## The Tejon Ranch Agreement: Protecting a California Treasure

**A**udubon California, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Endangered Habitats League, and the Planning and Conservation League on May 8, 2008, announced a far-reaching agreement with the Tejon Ranch Company to protect up to 240,000 contiguous acres – 375 square miles – of spectacular and ecologically significant California. The agreement will protect approximately 90% of Tejon's rich natural habitat from development and open new opportunities for Californians to enjoy this tremendous landscape firsthand.



### A top conservation priority

The Tejon Ranch has been a top conservation priority for Audubon California and other organizations for years, as it encompasses more of California's natural beauty and diversity than any undeveloped area of the state. Located at the crossroads of four distinct ecological regions, the ranch is a vital linkage between the Coast Ranges and the Sierra Nevada and the San Joaquin Valley and the Mojave Desert. This enormous parcel is home to precious native grasslands, oak woodlands, Joshua tree woodlands and conifer forests. It is home to the endangered California Condor and more than two dozen state and federally listed plant and animal species.

### Locking in protection

The agreement puts in place:

**Permanent Conservation:** Safeguards 240,000 acres, including 178,000 acres through an enforceable conservation easement and dedicated open space, as well as the option to purchase an additional 62,000 acres. Public and private funding is being sought to complete this purchase within three years while the conservation easements will be held and enforced by an independent conservancy.

**Governance and Funding:** Establishes an independent Tejon Ranch Conservancy to manage and restore landscape, monitor the conservation easements, and provide for public access. The conservancy will have a 12-person board and Graham Chisholm, Audubon California's Director of Conservation, will serve as the Board Chair. The agreement also provides upfront funding of \$800,000 per year for seven years and a permanent funding source through a transfer tax on lots and homes sold and resold on the ranch.

**Public Access:** Thirty-seven miles of the Pacific Crest Trail will be realigned in order to allow hikers to cross the Tejon Ranch. The agreement commits all parties to work together to establish a state park on a portion of the ranch, and the Tejon Ranch Conservancy will manage a public access program.

**Agreement:** Audubon California and its partners agree not to oppose three development projects on 10 percent of the

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Tejon Ranch. These developments will still be subject to public review and applicable federal and state environmental protection laws.

Audubon California and its partners in the environmental community have secured a hard fought victory for California's environment through intense negotiations. Ultimately, these negotiations presented a unique opportunity to settle the ranch's future and avoid decades of piecemeal legal wrangling with little likelihood of gaining the extensive habitat protection and funding for long-term restoration and management that this represents.

### **The Tejon Ranch Conservation Agreement and Condors**

Meeting the condor's needs was critical to Audubon California and our environmental partners. The negotiators reviewed condor flight data to understand how condors are using the Tejon Ranch, and based on that data were able to secure a number of important protections for the condor, including:

- Making the lead ammunition ban binding;
- Pulling back development on Grapevine, Squirrel and Lolas ridges;
- Removing all proposed development from Tunis Ridge;
- Pulling back development 3.5 miles on Geghus Ridge;
- Protecting the vast majority of the ranch's backcountry under conservation easements.



In addition, the newly formed Tejon Ranch Conservancy will work closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish condor feeding and monitoring programs and is expected to hire a condor biologist in the coming years.

Finally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will have the final word on whether the proposed development on the Tejon Ranch, including Tejon Mountain Village, is compatible with the continuing presence of the California Condor as it reviews and eventually approves the proposed Tehachapi Uplands Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

### **Additional information**

For more information about Tejon Ranch from Audubon California, please visit: [www.ca.audubon.org](http://www.ca.audubon.org).