



January 27, 2010

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Williamson Act Subvention Funding

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

The undersigned partners of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition (Coalition) are distressed that your proposed 2010-11 budget continues the current budget year's elimination of subvention funding to California counties for the California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act). The elimination of subvention funding is contrary to the underlying goals of our partnership to protect California's rangeland landscape.

The Coalition is an unprecedented group of California ranchers, environmental organizations and government agencies. Together, these partners are working to preserve private working landscapes, support the long-term viability of the ranching industry, and protect and enhance California rangeland for both legally protected and still-common species. This unique partnership encompasses the expertise of rangeland managers, ecologists, grassland wildlife experts and private ranchers who strongly believe the Williamson Act is intrinsically linked to our Coalition's ability to preserve private working rangelands.

The Williamson Act plays a critical role in preserving rangeland. According to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Fire and Resource Assessment Program, California is losing tens of thousands of acres of rangeland annually. This significant conversion of rangeland contributes to the loss of open space, groundwater recharge, the state's primary watersheds, homes of common and threatened species, and family ranchers. Research on these rangelands finds that nearly all of the species of grassland birds, most native plants and the threatened vernal pool ecosystem actually benefit from responsible grazing practices. The Williamson Act plays an important role in preserving California's rangelands that are the foundation of the economic and social fabric of California's ranching industry and rural communities, and will only continue to provide habitat for plants, fish and wildlife if the Williamson Act remains a viable tool for landowners.

We greatly appreciate your leadership to get the state budget on track; however we believe longer-term negative impacts vastly outweigh the short-term budget savings the state would receive from the elimination of subvention funding to counties for the Williamson Act. Furthermore, the elimination of subvention funding sends the wrong message about the importance of open space, threatened and endangered species and domestic food production to the state of California. Again, the Coalition strongly supports subvention funding to California's counties for the Williamson Act. Should you have any questions regarding our support please contact Tracy Schohr, Director of Rangeland Conservation, California Rangeland Conservation Coalition at (916) 444-0845 or tschohr@calcattlemen.org.

Sincerely,

Partners of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition



Dawn Clover
Director of Government Relations
California Cattlemen's Association



Belinda Morris
Regional Director, Center for Conservation Incentives
Environmental Defense Fund



Noelle Cremers
Director, Natural Resources and Commodities
California Farm Bureau Federation



Nita Vail
Executive Director
California Rangeland Trust



Vance Russell
Landowner Stewardship Program
Audubon California



Joe Ciolek
Executive Director
Agricultural-Natural Resources Trust
of Contra Costa County



Lesla Osterholm
District Manager
Nevada County Resource Conservation



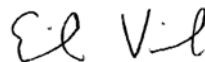
Melva Bigelow
Director of State Government Relations.
The Nature Conservancy



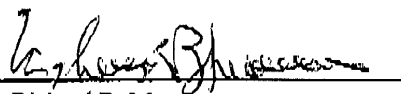
Kim Delfino
California Program Director
Defenders of Wildlife



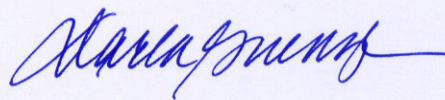
Wade Belew
President
California Native Grasslands Association



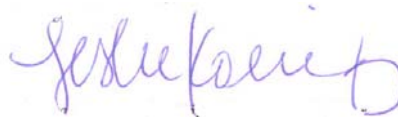
Erik Vink
Central Valley Program Director
Trust for Public Land



Rich Morris
Chairman
Central Coast Rangeland Coalition



Darla Guenzler
Executive Director
California Council of Land Trusts



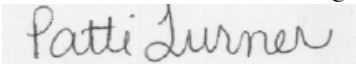
Leslie Koenig
Interim Executive Officer
Alameda County Resource Conservation District



Cory D. Wilkins
Executive Director
Middle Mountain Foundation



Mark Hennelly
Vice President.
California Outdoor Heritage Alliance



Patti Turner
District Manager
Colusa County Resource Conservation District



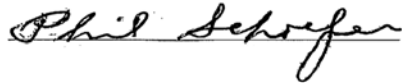
Pia Sevelius
District Manager
Butte County Resource Conservation District




Matt Rogers
President
California Deer Association



Carol Witham
VernalPools.Org



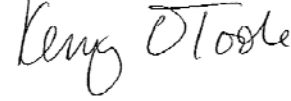
Phil Schoefer
President, Board of Directors
Western Shasta RCD



Tacy Currey
Executive Director
California Association of Resource Conservation
Districts



Doug Johnson
Executive Director
California Invasive Plant Council



Kerry O'Toole
President
American Land Conservancy



Ed Pandolfino, Ph.D.
Chair, Placer County Conservation Committee
Sierra Foothills Audubon Society



Nicole Byrd
Executive Director
Solano Land Trust



Lesa Carlton
Executive Director
California Wool Growers Association



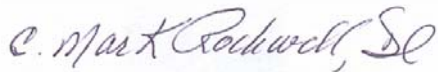
Ashley Boren
Executive Director
Sustainable Conservation



Michael Feeney
Executive Director
Land Trust for Santa Barbara County



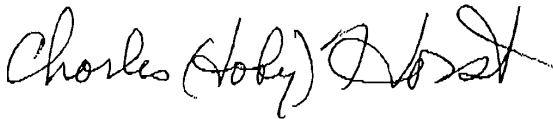
Debra Chase
Executive Director
Tuleyome



Dr. C. Mark Rockwell, D.C.
California State Representative
Endangered Species Coalition



Mace Vaughan
Pollinator Program Director
The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation



Toby Horst
Representative
Sierra Resource Conservation District



Ernest White
President
Tehama County Resource Conservation District



Mike Michael S. Johnson
President
San Benito County Cattlemen's Association



John Hopkins
President
Institute for Ecological Health



Aimee Rutledge
Executive Director
Sacramento Valley Conservancy



Jude Lamare
President
Friends of Swainson's Hawk



Bob Hammond
Lands Program Manager
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation



Tara Hansen
Executive Director
California Native Plant Society



Brian Stark
Executive Director
Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County

cc: Honorable Members, California State Senate
Honorable Members, California State Assembly
A.G. Kawamura, Department of Food and Agriculture
Bridgett Luther, Department of Conservation
Brian Leahy, Department of Conservation