

## 9<sup>th</sup> Annual California Rangeland Conservation Summit Jan. 21-22

With California rangelands returning as little as \$1 per acre per year, ranchers and grazing are being replaced not only by ranchettes and shopping malls but by tree crops, vineyards and other types of agriculture. This conversion is particularly evident in the San Joaquin Valley.

The Fogarty family has been in the cattle ranching business in Stanislaus County since the 1870s. In recent years, they've seen rangeland around them converted to housing and orchards. "With the conversion around us, we are affected with a declining water table and increased traffic" said Bill Fogarty. Ranchers, researchers, managers, agency representatives and conservationists will gather in January to discuss challenges and opportunities in maintaining rangelands.

Keeping rangelands and ranches viable for wildlife, wetlands and water will be discussed at the 9<sup>th</sup> annual California Rangeland Conservation Coalition Summit set for Jan. 21-22 at the Oakdale Community Center in Oakdale, 16 miles northeast of Modesto. The summit is sponsored by the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition and the University of California Cooperative Extension.

"This event is a time for ranchers to showcase their positive role in stewarding California's wide open spaces and their contributions to the state's economy," said Tim Koopmann, president of the California Cattlemen's Association. "Ranchers who attend the annual event learn valuable information on the latest research outcomes about best management practices for their land that simultaneously improve the natural resources and economic profitability." At risk is the future of California's ranching industry and the ecosystem services that ranches provide: diverse wildlife, unique wetlands and healthy watersheds. At the rangeland summit, ranchers, researchers, land managers, agency representatives and conservationists will focus on rangeland science, land management, land-use policy and livestock production.

The event will feature presentations on the challenges ranchers face, impacts of rangeland conversion to natural resources and opportunities to support working ranches and rancher stewardship. Ranchers from Colorado and Montana will share new opportunities they are finding to keep ranching viable through conservation efforts. The first day of the two-day summit will feature presentations and a ranch tour on the second day. "University of California Cooperative Extension is pleased to be a partner in bringing together a diverse group of people interested in rangelands to discuss the opportunities and challenges for keeping California's ranches working to support communities and habitat," said Theresa Becchetti, UC Cooperative Extension advisor in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties. "We are particularly fortunate to be able to hold this meeting and engage in a constructive dialogue with stakeholders in Oakdale, where rangelands and associated resources are at risk."

This event is sponsored by University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, Environmental Defense, Audubon California, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts, California Cattlemen's Association, California Native Plant Society, California Rangeland Trust, Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, Center for Natural Lands Management, Defenders of Wildlife, Cal-Pac Chapter Society for Range Management, East Bay Regional Park District, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative - California, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife – Partners Program, Mid-Peninsula Open Space District, Point Blue Conservation, Sierra Business Council, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Sustainable Conservation, InterWest Insurance Services, Inc., The Nature Conservancy,

Koopmann Rangeland Consulting, and Westervelt Ecological Services. In addition, Oakdale Cowboy Museum and numerous private ranchers are sponsors, hosts and speakers.

The event is open to ranchers, researchers, land managers, agency representatives, conservationists and others interested in California's rangelands. Journalists are encouraged to attend the event. For more information, visit <http://www.carangeland.org/calendarevents/2014summit.html> or call Pelayo Alvarez at (916) 313-5800, ext. 107.