



El Dorado Ranch Phase 5 Conservation Project

Location: El Dorado County, CA

Watershed: Cosumnes River

American River Conservancy (ARC) is a public benefit, non-profit organization that serves our communities by ensuring healthy ecosystems in the Upper American River and Upper Cosumnes River watersheds through conservation, education, and stewardship. ARC serves communities in the Greater Sacramento Metropolitan Region, including communities in Sacramento County, Placer County and El Dorado County.

The Cosumnes River is the only river on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada that is un-dammed. This river system supports a population of wild fall-run Chinook salmon and steelhead that make their way from the ocean to spawning gravels in the river each year. ARC has been working with a private landowner, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), El Dorado County, California Natural Resources Agency, California Wildlife Foundation, the Cosumnes Coalition, and many other diverse partners to protect the 7,500-acre El Dorado Ranch, located along the Cosumnes River and its tributary streams. To date, ARC has acquired 3,157 acres of this ranch and plans to close escrow on an additional 1,025 acres (Phase 4) in fall 2023. The property is a high priority within the approved Upper Cosumnes River Conceptual Area Protection Plan and is considered a "Priority Conservation Area" in El Dorado County's Oak Woodland Management Plan.

Phase 5 seeks to complete the purchase of the ranch through the purchase of the remaining 2,997 acres (approximate value \$13,750,000). Phase 5 is in Township 9N, Range 10E, Sections 15, 16, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, and 34 M.D.M. This property acquisition is the fifth phase of what is planned to become the first CDFW Wildlife Area (WA) in El Dorado County. The new WA would provide public access for wildlife-based recreation on land frequented by several game species including black-tailed deer, black bear, wild turkey, gray squirrel, mourning dove and California quail. This purchase would also provide habitat linkages between existing Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered public lands and two large ranches up and downstream that are protected by conservation easements held by the American River Conservancy and BLM. The ranch and the surrounding area contain important cultural and historical resources, including Native American cultural sites (Nisenan, Miwok), remnants of historic ranching communities, and gold-rush era archaeology. The property is currently a working landscape and is grazed by cattle from October through May each year. Future management costs would be largely offset by continuing existing best grazing lease practices.

Protection of this ranch from future subdivision and development is important to maintain habitat connectivity and watershed health. Development pressure from El Dorado Hills, Folsom and the west are increasing threats to oak woodland biodiversity and ecosystem health. Time is of the essence to protect California's iconic oak woodland landscapes before they are lost forever.