

# Irish Hills Conservation Area, Andre Ranch, San Luis Obispo County

*Last updated: 8/13/2008*

**Project Name:** Irish Hills Conservation Area, Andre Ranch, San Luis Obispo County

**Approving Board:** Wildlife Conservation Board **Link to Board Meeting and Agenda:**

[www.wcb.ca.gov](http://www.wcb.ca.gov)

**Agenda Date:** August 28, 2008 **Agenda Item:** 31 **Allocation:** \$1,005,000.00 **County:**

San Luis Obispo **Size:** Conservation Easement over a 1,172 acre property **Bond**

**Section Providing Funding:** Public Resources Code Section 75055(d)(1); Rangeland,

Grazing Land and

Grasslands Protection The primary purpose of this project is to protect livestock grazing, together with wildlife, water quality, watershed and open space benefits which emanate from livestock grazing on a privately-owned property situated in the coastal mountain range known as the Irish Hills, six miles east of the City of San Luis Obispo. The property consists of a mix of annual grassland, native perennial grassland, coastal scrub, riparian woodland, coastal live oak savanna and coastal live oak woodland. The land has been the home of the Andre family's cattle operation and ranching headquarters for over 100 years.

The property is bordered on the west by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. The BLM parcels connects the Andre Ranch to Montana de Oro State Park, an 8,000-acre park that includes the lower Coon Creek, Islay Creek and Hazard Canyon Watersheds. Immediately south of the conservation easement area is the 730-acre Andre Ranch property to be acquired in fee by the Department of Parks and Recreation as an addition to the Montana de Oro State Park. This fee acquisition portion of the ranch is contiguous with the Hibberd Preserve, a 1,500-acre preserve owned by the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County.

This conservation easement will prevent the conversion of the property's rangeland, grazing land and grasslands to nonagricultural uses and, thereby, sustain and protect associated plant and wildlife habitat, water quality, watershed and open space values. The proposed easement will benefit numerous species such as steelhead trout, golden eagle, California red legged frog, coast range newt, southwestern pond turtle, California horned lizard, silvery legless lizard, two-striped garter snake, southern rubbery boa,

prairie falcon, American peregrine falcon, white-tailed kite, northern harrier, sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper's hawk, desert woodrat and mountain lion. The property also supports habitat for numerous special status plant species and for rare plants such as San Luis Obispo morning glory and the Pecho manzanita.

The property owners have agreed to sell the conservation easement to The Nature Conservancy for the appraised fair market value of \$4,615,000.00, as approved by the Department of General Services. The Wildlife Conservation Board will contribute a grant in the amount of \$1,000,000.00. The remainder of the funding will come from numerous sources including: Department of Fish and Game Avila Spill Mitigation Funding (\$1,000,000.00), The Nature Conservancy (\$904,000.00), Packard Central Coast Opportunity Fund (\$1,261,000.00), Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Avila Spill Mitigation Funding (\$250,000.00) and County of San Luis Obispo Coast Resource Grant (\$200,000.00).

The purposes of this project are to protect livestock grazing, together with wildlife, water quality, watershed and open space benefits which emanate from livestock grazing. These purposes are consistent with the stated purposes of the funds provided to the Wildlife Conservation Board under Chapter 6, Section 75055(d)(1) for grazing land protection and with the general priority characteristics for natural resource protection projects described under Chapter 10, Section 75071(a) Landscape/Habitat Linkages protection, (b) Watershed Protection and (e) non-state matching contributions.