

## **Rangeland Conversion**

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### **Problem:**

Conversion of rangeland to urban development, golf courses, vineyards, orchards, and intensive agriculture. Result is habitat fragmentation, loss of valuable grassland habitat, vernal pools, water storage, etc and loss of available forage for livestock producers which decreases the sustainability of ranching operations and decreased food production.

### **Troubling Trends:**

1. Competing economics, *e.g.*, orchard trees produce more \$ than cows
2. Increased technology puts more land into production
3. Increasing population in the Bay Area
4. Once the land is converted, it never is restored to rangelands
5. Agencies have funding to buy more land, but do not have the staff time or resources to properly manage more lands - "Open Space" needs to be managed – ranchers are land stewards that manage the natural resources, infrastructure, and food production

### **Solutions:**

1. Purchase of rangeland conservation easements – several land trusts are already purchasing easements – protect ranch and habitat from development in perpetuity and keep the rancher on the ranch to steward and manage the property (kill two birds with one stone) – provide a payment to the rancher
2. Identify additional sources of income for ranchers such as hunting, mining, recreation, board horses – ranching has high labor costs and low economic return
3. Secure long-term lease agreements on public lands to provide ranchers with some security
4. Convince public agencies/park districts to shift toward easements as opposed to fee acquisition.

### **Barriers to Implementation:**

1. Economic return from orchards or selling to a developer significantly higher.
2. Securing funds to purchase conservation easements.
3. Disagreements among family members and inheritance issues (taxes?)