

Contacts:

Danny Palmerlee, Western Rivers Conservancy, (503) 241-0151, dpalmerlee@westernrivers.org

JT Chevallier, Alpine County, (530) 240-5574, jchevallier@alpinecountyca.gov

Alpine County Becomes New Owner of 1,688-Acre Property on East Fork Carson River Following Conveyance from Western Rivers Conservancy

Funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board, the project protects trophy trout waters and prime wildlife habitat, while expanding recreation.



*This stretch of the East Fork Carson is prized among anglers and whitewater enthusiasts.
(Credit: David Dines/Western Rivers Conservancy)*

ALPINE COUNTY, CA (August 25)— A premier stretch of the East Fork Carson River has been permanently protected following Western Rivers Conservancy’s conveyance of the 1,688-acre Park Ranch to Alpine County using funding provided by the Wildlife Conservation Board.

Alpine County is excited to welcome the public to enjoy the property once a comprehensive management plan has been established to guide public access and the long-term stewardship of the land.

The effort protects habitat for native fish, conserves a key link in a migratory corridor for mule deer and other wildlife, expands public access to 1.6 miles of the East Fork Carson River, and helps reduce wildfire risk for the community of Markleeville.

“On behalf of the residents of Alpine County, the Alpine County Board of Supervisors, and Alpine County staff I want to thank the Wildlife Conservation Board and Western Rivers Conservancy for supporting the County’s acquisition of the Park Ranch. This funding will create a permanent, community-managed wildlife preserve that reduces wildfire risk through compatible grazing and expands public access for future generations,” said **Samuel Booth, Alpine County CEO**.

The East Fork Carson River is one of the few major rivers in the Eastern Sierra that remains undammed, and Park Ranch lies along one of its finest stretches. The ranch includes nearly three additional miles of Markleeville Creek, Pleasant Valley Creek and Hot Springs Creek, key tributaries to the East Fork. The river and creeks together are home to federally threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout as well as other native fish like Paiute sculpin, mountain whitefish, mountain sucker, Tahoe sucker, Lahontan redbreasted sunfish and speckled dace.

With its intact stands of cottonwood and willow, mixed conifer forests, sagebrush-steppe and expansive mountain meadows, Park Ranch is important for wildlife. The property makes up a key link in a migratory corridor that mule deer, black bear, western monarch, and numerous other species rely on for survival and seasonal movement.

"This project shows what can happen when state, county and non-profit partners share a common vision for a landscape," said **Jennifer Norris, executive director of the Wildlife Conservation Board**. "WCB’s investment will ensure Park Ranch is protected forever, keeping a vital corridor open for native species while giving the local community year-round access to outdoor recreation."

Western Rivers Conservancy purchased Park Ranch in two phases beginning in 2025. During its ownership, WRC continued compatible livestock grazing to reduce wildfire risk to the town of Markleeville. With the help of a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and volunteers from the Patagonia Distribution Center in Reno, WRC removed fencing to improve wildlife movement across the property and installed wildlife-friendly riparian fencing to protect Markleeville Creek from erosion.

With funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board, and broad support from the community, local businesses, angling groups, and nonprofits across California and Nevada, WRC successfully transferred the property to Alpine County for permanent stewardship.

Now owned by Alpine County, Park Ranch will be managed for conservation and recreation, with compatible grazing playing a role in both improved habitat and wildfire fuels reduction. Protecting the property will significantly expand public access, connecting Markleeville Campground and hiking trails that begin at Hangman’s Bridge, just upstream of the ranch. Park Ranch’s future will now be one that benefits fish, wildlife and recreationists alike, while maintaining the open space and character of the area’s ranching legacy.

“Our efforts at Park Ranch show how conserving a river can strengthen both the natural landscape and the communities that depend on it,” said **Nelson Mathews, president of Western Rivers Conservancy**. “We’re deeply grateful to Alpine County and the Wildlife Conservation Board for their commitment to the East Fork Carson River. Conserving Park Ranch will protect cold water for native fish, keep an important migration corridor open for wildlife, strengthen Markleeville’s resilience to wildfire and ensure this remarkable stretch of river remains a place where people can fish, explore and connect with nature for generations.”

This project was made possible through funding and support from the State of California Wildlife Conservation Board, Richard King Mellon Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The McCabe Walls Family Foundation, Park Ranch Holdings, LLC, and the generosity of individual supporters.

###

About Alpine County

Nestled at the gateway to the Sierra Nevada and the headwaters of Lake Tahoe, Alpine County is home to breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant mountain communities. The County offers unparalleled outdoor recreation, scenic beauty, and a deep connection to the natural and historic character of the region. From alpine peaks and forests to historic communities and working landscapes, Alpine County is defined by its unique blend of natural resources, recreation, and rural mountain culture.

About Western Rivers Conservancy

WRC purchases land along the West’s finest rivers and streams to conserve habitat for fish and wildlife, protect key sources of cold water and create public access for all to enjoy. Park Ranch on the East Fork Carson is WRC’s second project in the Carson River system, complementing its current work in partnership with Nevada State Parks near the town of Dayton. WRC has created sanctuaries for fish and wildlife and secured recreational access along 260 rivers and streams around the West. More information can be found at westernrivers.org.

About the Wildlife Conservation Board

Established in 1947, the Wildlife Conservation Board protects, restores and enhances California’s spectacular natural resources for wildlife and the public’s use and enjoyment. WCB works in partnership with Tribes, conservation groups, government agencies and the people of California to safeguard biodiversity and expand access to nature. More information can be found at wcb.ca.gov