

From [YubaNet.com](http://YubaNet.com)

## **Another 122 acres protected in the Martis Valley**

Author: Truckee Donner Land Trust  
Published on May 9, 2011 - 3:57:23 PM

May 9, 2011 - In April, conservationists closed on a 122-acre property off State Route 267 across from the entrance to "Northstar-at-Tahoe". Known as Martis Creek Estates, the marketing name of a subdivision that never got off of the drawing board, the property includes nearly a mile of the East Fork of Martis Creek and a large wet meadow.

Last year, a would-be developer lost the property in foreclosure and the Land Trust was able to purchase it in April for \$2.6 million, well below its appraised value. In 2008, the property appraised for \$5.6 million.

The downturn in the real estate market has created many opportunities for conservation groups to acquire land at significantly deflated prices.

"The folks that held the note were happy just to cut their losses," said David Brown, Chair of the Land Trust's Lands Committee that oversees all acquisitions.

Since pursuing Waddle Ranch in 2005, this small but conspicuous and important acreage in the Martis Valley has been on a number of group's radar.

"Mountain Area Preservation Foundation believes preserving this land is important to the future of Waddle Ranch, Martis Valley and the region," said Kaitlin Backlund, Executive Director of the Mountain Area Preservation Foundation. "Residents and visitors alike will enjoy exploring this newly acquired public open space for generations to come."

A tentative map had been recorded for a subdivision of estate parcels on this site. Earlier zoning would have allowed as many as 250 units on the property.

"This is a great example of how we can work together to make our shared vision of Martis Valley a reality," says Tom Mooers of Sierra Watch. "Sierra Watch is grateful to support the incredibly effective work of the Truckee Donner Land Trust to protect another 122 acres of the Truckee Donner Region."

While the resource values of the site are fairly substantial, paramount is how the acquisition augments conservationists' overall strategy in Martis Valley to prevent development on the northeast side of SR 267. This 122-acre piece is a small but conspicuous part of that assemblage of natural lands. Once completed, natural lands will extend from Martis Valley to the Mt. Rose Wilderness and onto Toyabe National Forest — more than 70,000 contiguous acres.

Also, the Middle Fork of Martis Creek, a year round stream, runs for nearly a mile through the property. While the property is mostly Jeffrey Pine forest, it does provide riparian and aquatic habitat and has a functioning wet meadow. The parcel is also part of a scenic viewshed off SR 267 and could possibly provide a trailhead off of SR 267 to access Waddle Ranch or, in the future, Sierra Pacific Industries' 7,000 acres that borders the property.

Key partners include the Truckee Tahoe Airport District, The Northern Sierra Partnership, Mountain Area Preservation Foundation, Sierra Watch, and East West Partners.

"Residents and visitors have been blessed with a forward thinking Airport Board and staff. Over the past four years the airport has invested more than \$6 million into open space protection," said Perry Norris, the Land Trust's Executive Director.

"This is a critical parcel of property in close proximity to the airport," said Kevin Smith, General Manager of the airport district. "It not only protects critical aircraft over flight areas but also allows and facilitates additional access to other important airport properties."

The Airport contributed \$1.8 million to the purchase and now holds a conservation easement on the property that the Land Trust owns in fee.

Another key source of funding stems from a landmark agreement reached by Northstar Mountain Properties, Sierra Watch, Mountain Area Preservation Foundation, Trimont Land Holdings, Inc., and Trimont Land Company, Inc in 2005..

That agreement created a 0.50% transfer fee on all new residential property sales and re-sales of new development properties at Northstar. Proceeds from the transfer fee go to the Truckee Donner Land Trust for the purposes of acquiring natural areas in Martis Valley.

This summer, the Land Trust will begin thinning overgrown stock for forest health and to reduce the chance of wildfire.

© Copyright YubaNet.com