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### **Finalists Named for 2015 California Leopold Conservation Award®**

**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** – (August 24, 2015) Sand County Foundation, the California Farm Bureau Federation and Sustainable Conservation are proud to announce the 2015 finalists for the prestigious California Leopold Conservation Award®, which honors private landowner achievement in voluntary stewardship and management of natural resources.

The finalists are:

- Prather Ranch, Shasta County
- Hafenfeld Ranch, Kern County
- Altman Specialty Plants, Riverside and San Diego counties

Jim and Mary Rickert own and manage **Prather Ranch (Shasta County)**, a diversified cattle and certified organic rangeland business. The business includes a feed yard, slaughter facility, retail meat and beef by-product outlets, hay and strawberries. Prather Ranch established conservation easements on several properties to protect biodiversity. They use many conservation practices, including solar powered watering systems, intensive grazing, targeted vegetation management, riparian buffer strips, tail water recovery systems and conversion of open irrigation ditches to pipelines to conserve water. Prather Ranch also provides many educational activities for the public to learn about ranching, and the Rickerts serve on agriculture and conservation boards.

**Hafenfeld Ranch (Kern County)** is owned by Bruce and Sylvia Hafenfeld, and managed with their son, Eric and his wife, Jamie. The Hafenfelds manage certified organic cattle pastures on their ranch, and on their leases with the U.S. Forest Service and Audubon's Kern River Preserve. The ranch has a Southwestern willow flycatcher mitigation easement that demonstrates how cattle, wildlife and water management are connected. Conservation practices include riparian plantings, wildlife-friendly water systems and improved irrigation to more efficiently use water and manage water quality. To benefit conservation and agriculture, Bruce serves on several public and private boards.

Ken and Matt Altman own and manage **Altman Specialty Plants, (Riverside and San Diego counties)** and specialize in drought tolerant and water efficient plants. The nurseries are retrofitted with water and energy efficient irrigation systems, reducing water use per acre by 50%. The Riverside County facility's recycling system reuses 1 million gallons of water per day. Soil moisture sensors are being installed in their container plants to minimize water use. Altman Plants raises 5,000 plant species with integrated pest management, which controls pests in ways that minimize risks to people and the environment. Ken and Deena Altman founded the Center for Applied Horticultural Research, a non-profit research and teaching center dedicated to advancing a sustainable horticulture industry. Several Altman team members actively serve on agricultural boards.

The 2015 California Leopold Conservation Award will be presented in December at the California Farm Bureau Federation's Annual Meeting in Reno. Each finalist will be recognized at the event. The award recipient will be presented with a crystal depicting Aldo Leopold and \$10,000.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the Leopold Conservation Award recognizes extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation. In his influential 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage, which he called “an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity.” The Leopold Conservation Award program inspires other landowners through these examples and provides a visible forum where farmers, ranchers and other private landowners are recognized as conservation leaders.

The California Leopold Conservation Award is made possible thanks to generous contributions from many organizations, including American Ag Credit, The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense Fund, Farm Credit, The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, DuPont Pioneer and The Mosaic Company.

#### ABOUT THE LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD®

The [Leopold Conservation Award](#) is a competitive award that recognizes landowner achievement in voluntary conservation. The award consists of \$10,000 and a crystal depicting Aldo Leopold. Sand County Foundation presents Leopold Conservation Awards in California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

#### ABOUT SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

Sand County Foundation is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to working with private landowners across North America to advance ethical and scientifically sound land management practices that benefit the environment. [www.sandcounty.net](http://www.sandcounty.net)

#### ABOUT SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION

Sustainable Conservation helps California thrive by uniting people to solve the toughest challenges facing our land, air and water. Since 1993, it has brought together business, landowners and government to steward the resources that we all depend on in ways that make economic sense. Sustainable Conservation believes common ground is California's most important resource. [www.suscon.org](http://www.suscon.org)

#### ABOUT CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

The California Farm Bureau Federation works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 74,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of more than 6.2 million Farm Bureau members. [www.cfbf.com](http://www.cfbf.com)

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