

# Tony Taylor: Eastern Sierra's Accidental Environmentalist

After 10 years, 6,000 acres protected by Eastern Sierra Land Trust

By George Shirk  
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He is the Accidental Environmentalist.

Tony Taylor, of Mammoth, is the president of the Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT). He didn't take over the job. He just kind of fell into it.

Ten years ago, he found himself chatting with Swall Meadows' Stephen Ingram and Karen Ferrell-Ingram one day, and the two well-known environmental protectors steered the conversation toward habitat protection.

The result was the Eastern Sierra Land Trust – a first-ever project in the Eastern Sierra.

It began when private citizens and public officials expressed interest in the development alternatives, mitigations, and habitat protections that land trusts can provide.

In December 2003, the ESLT created its first voluntary land conservation agreements (commonly referred to as conservation easements), in the migration corridor of the Round Valley Mule Deer Herd.

In the following year it hired its first professional staff. Currently it continues to work to protect vital lands, making up more than 6,000 protected acres thus far.

Recently, Taylor, 70, and his wife, Sherryl, found themselves in San Francisco International airport when they spotted a large Earth Day display.

"I have to be honest," Taylor said of Earth Day, "I thought a lot more about it in the past.

"But it was interesting walking through the terminal in San Francisco, we walked through this huge display with a lot of focus on it, and it made me think back to whenever it was, 20-30 years ago, when it started.

"It was so important to focus our attention on the conditions we're creating on Earth, and consider what can we do to retain the things the things we love about the environment we live in.

In the Eastern Sierra, there is a lot of environment, to say the least.

"We were looking at potential loss of some very important things in the region," he said.

"Specifically, we are concerned with the loss of wildlife due to encroachment on migration corridors and habitats, a loss of the farm and ranch economy because of the value of the land that ranching was being done on and the offers that were being made to ranchers to either sell their land for development or sell their water rights for export.

"It just created, for a group of us, a big sense of urgency, so we're trying to do something to offset what was coming about.

"The Land Trust approach to working with landowners just made a lot of sense to protect some of those things that are so important to us in the Eastern Sierra."