

# Featured Friend

Eastern Sierra Land Trust, California



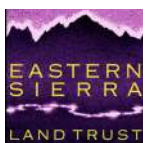
## Conserving Heritage and Habitat for the Bi-State Sage Grouse

**E**very time the Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) helps private landowners preserve their lands, wildlife benefits, too. Collaborating with private landowners, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and other partners, ESLT has completed conservation projects on more than 7,600 acres of critical sage grouse habitat in California, with several more large projects in the works. Conservation easements with ESLT give landowners flexibility to run agricultural operations, maintaining an important rural heritage and keeping breathtaking landscapes intact.

The Bi-State population of greater sage-grouse live exclusively in the Eastern Sierra regions of California and Nevada, relying on habitat spanning public and private lands. In October, 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing the genetically distinct birds as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Private lands play a significant role for the future of the Bi-State sage grouse. The birds need wet meadows that support wildflowers and insects for the growing chicks in late summer. Those lush wetlands are abundant on private lands with historic water sources and irrigation.

*“ESLT is proud to be working in close coordination with private landowners and agency partners on land conservation efforts to benefit grouse and the tradition of agriculture in our region.” ~ESLT Lands Director Aaron Johnson*



### Contact

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## Meet the Eastern Sierra Land Trust

### About

The only local land trust focused on California's Eastern Sierra, ESLT works with willing landowners who wish to explore options for permanently preserving their lands. ESLT brings specialized experience and skills to assist interested landowners through the conservation easement process, from drafting the specifics of the legal conservation agreement, identifying and applying for competitive funding programs, and completing the ongoing monitoring obligations once completed.



The land trust also conducts annual monitoring of easement properties and habitat enhancement projects on ESLT-owned lands or in collaboration with interested landowners. Their Community Connections program offers events that engage participants with the Eastern Sierra landscape.

### Role with Sage Grouse Initiative

NRCS-SGI easement funding programs play an essential role in supporting the ESLT Working Farms & Ranches Program area by providing funds to compensate landowners for development rights, restricting future uses to those that will ensure the agricultural integrity of the property and, under the SGI programs, managing and preserving critical habitat for sage grouse in the face of increasing pressure to subdivide lands.