

Easement Shields Ranch Land From Development

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Part of an 8,000-acre family ranch located between Bridgeville and Blocksburg has been protected from development thanks to the completion of a conservation easement, the North-coast Regional Land Trust announced last week. The easement was funded through the Cali-

fornia Wildlife Conservation Board and a matching donation by the landowners, Tim and Jacquelyn Price and Dorris Fearrien.

The first phase of the easement has put almost 3,000 acres of the Charles Mountain Ranch off-limits to subdividing. A second phase of the easement is slated for completion by the end of the year.

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"The land stays as private property. It can be bought and sold. But it can't be split up," Ben Morehead, project manager with the Arcata-based land trust, said on Monday.

Added Tim Price: "With this easement secured, we have the peace of mind knowing that the property can never be split up, and that it will always be an intact, working ranch."

The easement will help preserve the ranch in its natural state, not least by protecting a 150-foot-wide buffer zone around a riverside area. "A hundred years from now that will be late seral forest," Morehead said.

The ranch's location is another reason protecting it has been deemed a high priority, added Leslie Magnuson, also of the land trust.

The ranch straddles the Charles Mountain ridge and its streams drain into both the Eel River and Van Duzen River watersheds, providing cold water for salmon and steelhead downstream. On the east it borders



COURTESY BEN MOREHEAD, NORTHCOST REGIONAL LAND TRUST

The Charles Mountain Ranch includes streams that drain into both the Van Duzen and Eel River watersheds.

the Six Rivers National Forest and to the northwest is the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's Butte Creek Management Area, a 320-acre preserve.

All of which is not to say that the ranch will stop being a ranch.

"Cattle grazing and timber produc-

tion will be protected and allowed for," under the easement, Morehead said.

He added that the easement, by "securing a critical mass of private working ranch land, [conserves] a resource-based way of life for ranchers."