

# System Indicators

## Land Conservation and Wildlife Habitat



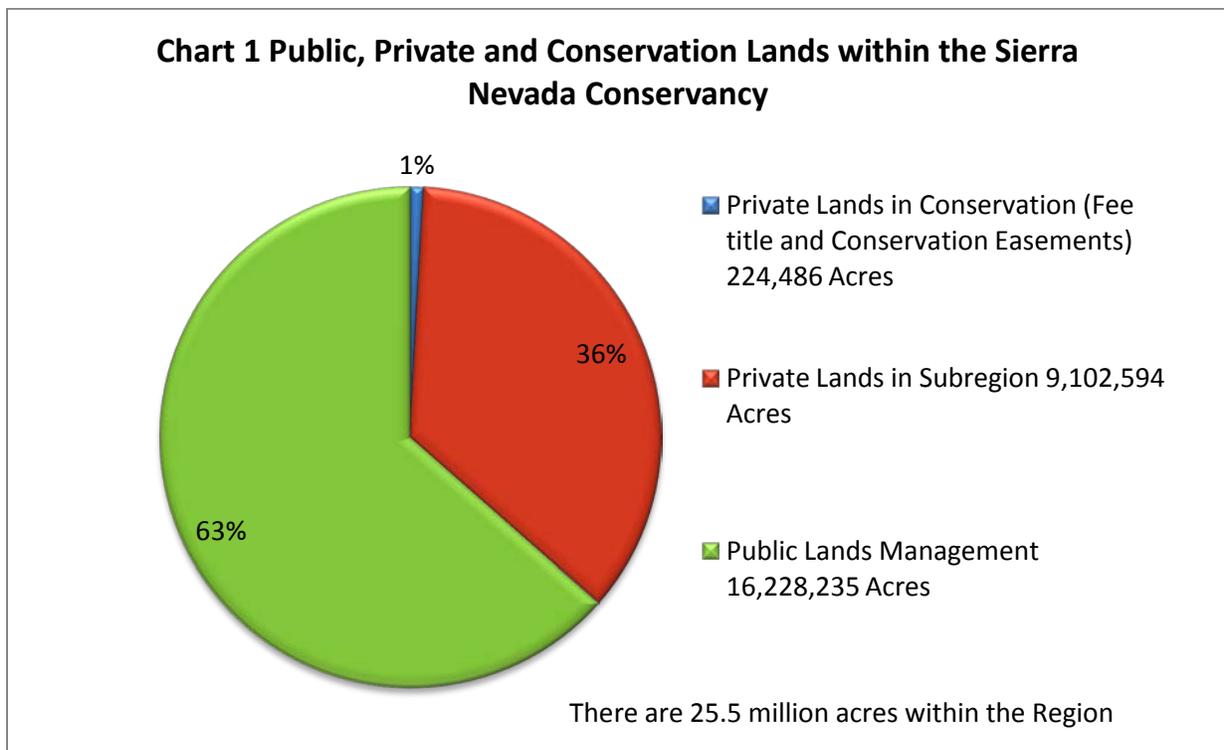
### Acres of Land Conserved (2010)

November 2011

## Acres Of Lands Conserved

The acres of land conserved section includes public lands preserved for natural resource values, which may also be used for recreation, mineral extraction, grazing, and timber production. It also includes the the number of acres of private lands in conservation ownership (fee title) and conservation easement that are protected from future residential and commercial development. These lands have been set aside from development to protect natural resource and agricultural values and provide a number of environmental benefits including habitat for fish and wildlife species, greenhouse gas storage, and air and water filtration.

As shown in Chart 1, a total of 14.5 million acres of land are conserved within the Region or 56% of the total land area.<sup>7</sup> Sixty-three percent of the land area within the Region, or 16,228,235 acres, is primarily managed by three federal agencies: the US Forest Service (64.3% of the public lands within the Region), US Bureau of Land Management (19.3%) and National Park Service (10.6%) A total of 224,486 acres<sup>8,9</sup> are conserved in private ownership, which is one percent of the total land area of the Region. Of this amount, 182,614 acres of private lands have conservation easements that are managed by government agencies or nonprofit organizations. An additional 41,872 acres are in private fee title ownership for conservation.



<sup>7</sup> California Protected Areas Database, GreenInfo Network, June 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Lisa Ohara, GIS Analyst, Biogeographic Data Branch - Lands Program Department of Fish and Game, February, 2010 (32,792 acres).

<sup>9</sup> GreenInfo Network, February 2010.

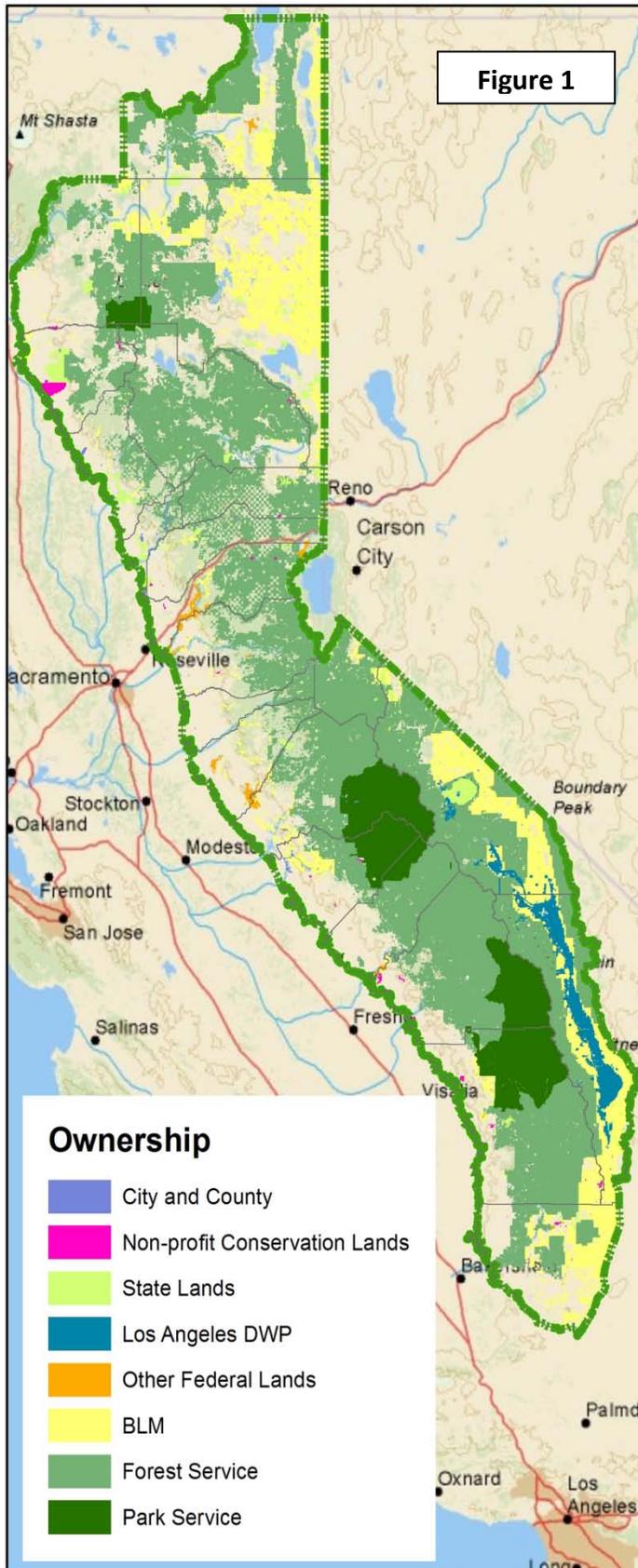
As shown in Table 1, the North Central subregion has the greatest percentage of private lands in conservation at 8.8% compared to the South Central subregion with 0.5% percent of the private lands in conservation. In the Central subregion, which has experienced the greatest conversion of land to development in the last thirty years, 1.6% of the private lands are conserved and 45.7% of lands are public, the lowest percentage of public lands among subregions. Compare that to the East subregion, which has by far the greatest percentage of public lands among the subregions with 94.2% or 3,598,991 acres. The East subregion also has the second highest percentage of private lands in conservation at 4.0% or 8,861 acres.

**Table 1 Acres of Land Conserved by Subregion and Ownership**

<b>Ownership Type</b>	<b>North Subregion</b>	<b>North Central Subregion</b>	<b>Central Subregion</b>	<b>South Central Subregion</b>	<b>East Subregion</b>	<b>South Subregion</b>
Private Lands in Conservation*	27,082	130,958	21,947	7,044	8,861	28,594
Percentage of Private Lands in Conservation	0.9%	8.8%	1.6%	0.5%	4.0%	1.6%
Other Private Lands	2,903,747	1,364,017	1,377,113	1,505,559	211,493	1,740,665
Public Lands	3,406,501	2,128,914	1,176,078	1,829,812	3,598,991	4,087,940
Percentage of Subregion in Public Ownership	53.8%	58.7%	45.7%	54.7%	94.2%	69.8%
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>6,337,330</b>	<b>3,630,741</b>	<b>2,575,138</b>	<b>3,342,414</b>	<b>3,819,345</b>	<b>5,857,199</b>

\*Fee title and conservation easements

The majority of the public lands in the Sierra occupy the mid to upper elevations (see Figure 1.) In the elevation band above 3,000 feet, 74% or 15.1 million of the total 20.3 million acres is in public management. The lower elevation areas are dominated by private and tribal lands. Over 4 million of the 5.23 million acres (76.5%) of land in the elevation band below 3,000 feet in the SNC region is in private ownership. The majority of private conservation areas in this elevation band occur on the western side of the Sierra in the Sierra Nevada Foothills, since the bulk of land in the East Subregion is managed by public agencies.



The Sierra Nevada range has experienced a pattern of landscape change similar to many mountainous regions of the United States and the developed world. Development in the Sierra has been more widespread in the lower elevations of the Sierra closest to the productive farming environment and larger towns of the Central Valley.

Conservation easements are an important tool in preserving agricultural and ranching areas and the fish and wildlife habitat, air and water quality, economic, historical, and cultural benefits they provide to the Region and the State, especially where risk of development is greatest.

While not included under Acres of Land Conserved, another important tool in protecting ranches and agricultural lands in the Sierra Nevada is the Williamson Act, which provides an offset of property taxes for agricultural and ranch properties in exchange for ten or twenty year contracts to maintain livestock or agricultural production on the specified land. Appendix B addresses the current status of the Williamson Act in the Sierra Nevada with regards to land protection.