



Goal today:
Describe an evolving approach to conservation &
land management in a unique, privately owned landscape

Context
History
Successes
Challenges



This area has always been rich in wildlife



Winter 1832-33: John Work party of fur trappers in Buttes.
"395 elk, 148 deer, 17 bears, & 8 antelopes have been taken
in a month." Irony: trappers brought in malaria, which wiped
out 75% of Maidu (natives) in area; many villages abandoned.



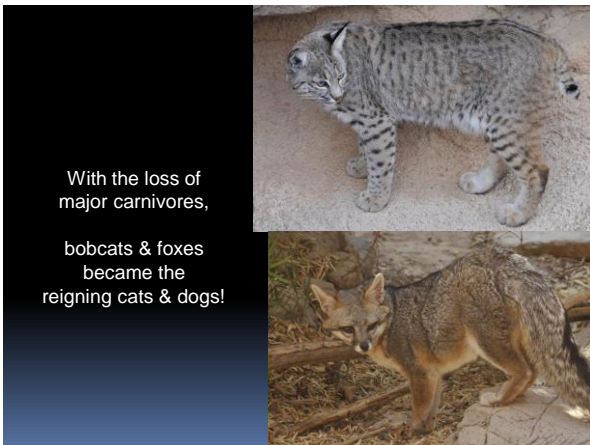
Thousands of waterfowl slaughtered for the market



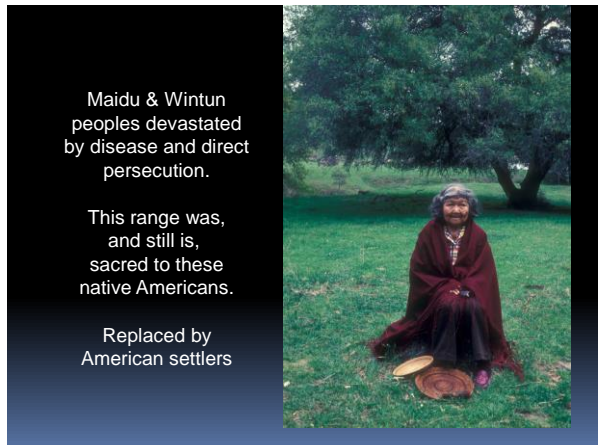
Livestock soon replaced much of the large native wildlife



Pronghorn, elk, grizzly, mountain lion, wolf exterminated



With the loss of major carnivores, bobcats & foxes became the reigning cats & dogs!



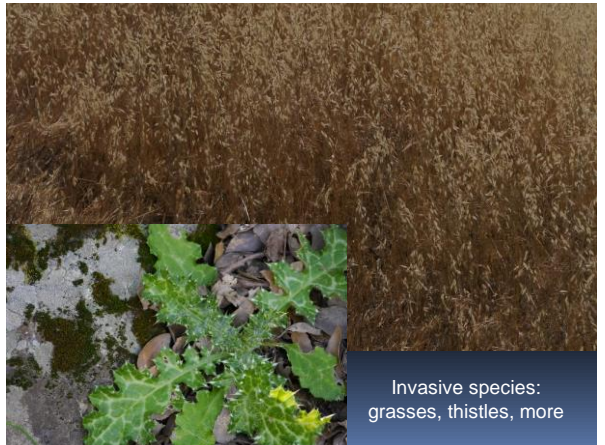
Maidu & Wintun peoples devastated by disease and direct persecution.

This range was, and still is, sacred to these native Americans.

Replaced by American settlers



Recent history, as well as geological and ecological history, is imprinted on the land



Invasive species: grasses, thistles, more



Coyotes & other predators persecuted



Other native species disappeared
(e.g., a woodrat, an endemic kangaroo rat)



1960—Titan Missile Base—first generation
of ICBM's armed with nuclear warheads.
Ironically, not far from "Peace Valley."



Despite changes, the
Sutter Buttes stood out
as a semi-natural island
in a sea of intensely
altered lowlands



This was a "working landscape," but one lacking public access (& support)



By mid-1960s, landowners cracked down on trespass. Access demand increased. Save the Sutter Buttes organization formed, and California considered creating a state park. Extreme polarization.



In response to threat of state parks, one landowner formed the West Butte Sanctuary Company. Walt & Rebecca Anderson hired to direct it.



Dec. 26, 1976: 1st "Boots in the Buttes" hike



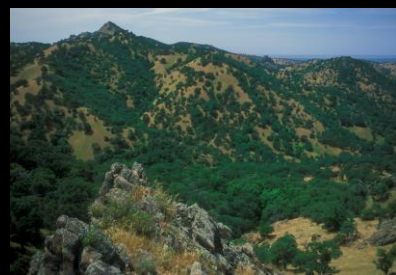
Guided hikes & outings in Sutter Buttes & Butte Sink
 Environmental education for school groups
 College classes. Illustrated talks
 Gallery of art, books, etc. based on place
 A model of using private lands for public access



It worked!
 Access demand satisfied by having legal entry (with guide)
 Trespass elsewhere could be managed more effectively
 More & more interest in Sutter Buttes—building constituency
 Polarization between landowners & public declined



Sensitive wildlife areas
 (e.g., for bats, eagles)
 were protected
 from people



A government parks professional told me:
 "Thank God we don't own this place.
 We'd put in expensive roads & facilities.
 Despite our brochures and warnings,
 We'd lose the eagle nest each year."



Challenges:
Capacity limited: one access point
Only 2-3 employees
Summer inhospitable—no tours then
Limited exposure to new participants
Philosophical differences with owner



Feb. 1979—landowner abruptly closes WBSC



Andersons believe concept valid
& too important to depend on one property.
Formed Sutter Buttes Naturalists & gained access
to 40 properties within a year.



Concept maturing: many properties, many guides.
SBN carried liability insurance, paid for access.
Scientific studies encouraged.
Hundreds involved in education programs.



Landowners' only obligations:
Don't cancel scheduled access
& don't do anything hazardous for participants.

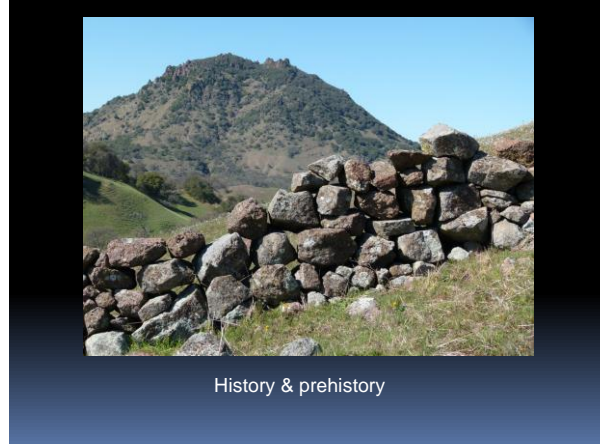


Ecology, open space, esthetics, education, exercise . . .
tremendous public response and support developed

Geology &
land forms



With expert instruction





Waterfowl



Mammals



Reptiles & amphibians



Butterflies



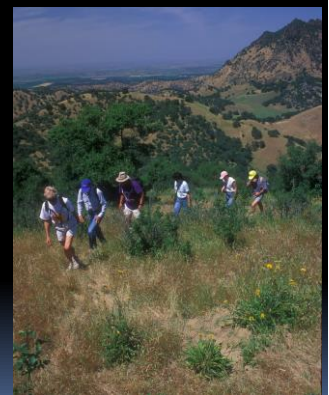
Wildflowers



Built good will toward landowners
for their generosity
and willingness to share



Recognition increased dramatically:
Sutter Buttes & Butte Sink designated California Natural Areas
Link in Cross California Land Heritage Corridor
Featured in books, magazines, other media
(1983 *The Sutter Buttes: A Naturalist's View* by Anderson)



Sutter Buttes Naturalists:
Andersons 1979-1985
Don Schmoldt 1985-1986
Ira Heinrich 1986-1989



1989: Heinrich & Freeman obtained non-profit status. Organization renamed Middle Mountain Foundation (based on Indian recognition of this sacred range).



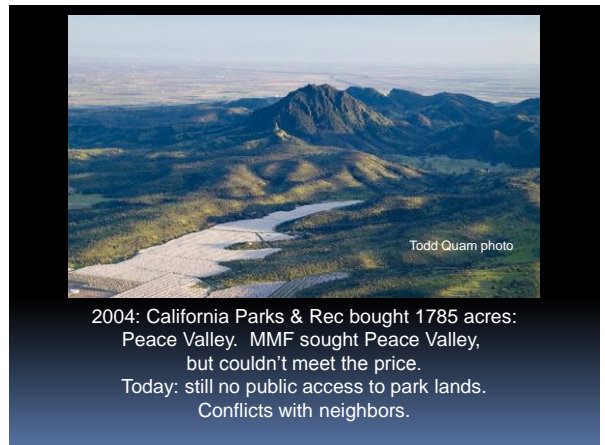
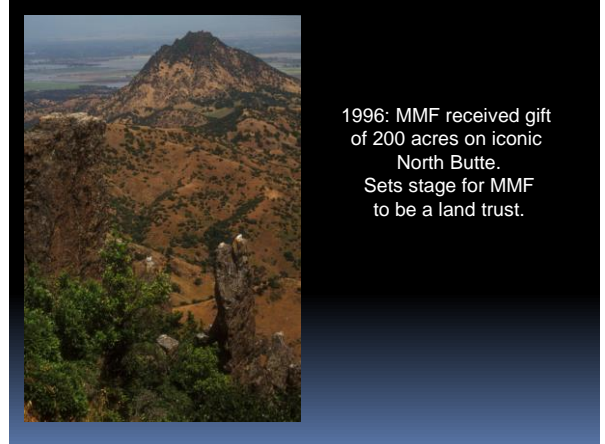
MMF fought proposals for major housing development & toxic dump. Conservation activism.



Ranchettes & trophy homes exploit zoning loopholes.



Heinrich: "If we view the Buttes in parts or pieces, an impenetrable veil is drawn over their true nature . . . The Buttes' uniqueness, value, and very identity are, in fact, found only in their entirety, in their wholeness as one Place, one feature."





MMF growing pains:
 How to respond to state park
 How to respond to competing enterprises
 How to balance financial needs vs. human capital
 How to stay neutral politically when issues have direct impact on integrity of range



Through ups & downs, activities and events continued.
 Credit a dedicated board, volunteers,
 and cooperating landowners.

Spring 2005 Newsletter

THE MIDDLE MOUNTAIN FOUNDATION
 A Sutter Buttes Land Trust

"Inland Island"
 It was in August of 1979 when we first saw the Buttes. They were on the map but the actual topography didn't show until August we drove over the great trough of the Inland Empire. And then we saw it, a surprisingly narrow line of peaks and ridges rising in regular isolation from the flat parkland of the Sutter Buttes. In the opening paragraph of **Inland Island: The Sutter Buttes**, Walt Anderson shares with us an unforgettable first experience.

Butler spent over one year's worth of painstaking observation of a first experience that touched his family. You, the trespasser of the Buttes. Are there any of you out there who feel wistful as the Buttes with Walt Anderson who expect realize a memorable experience or encounter? Probably not for those of you who have not accompanied Walt on a walk into the Buttes, such as the peak-to-peak to be an experience that will stay with you for the rest of your life.

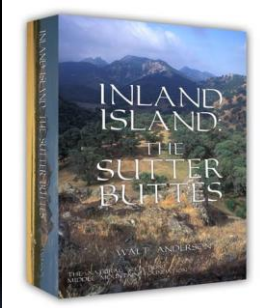
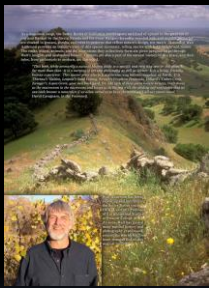
Like the philosophy of the Sutter Buttes that serves to be more than just a park, that is dedicated to some lesser peak. So, the trail points in you, Walt's unforgettable experience that is for all.

Walt Anderson, National Geographic Explorer in Residence at the Middle Mountain Foundation. That's right, he has been exploring the Buttes' unique landscape, identifying the elusive areas, and mapping them out to create a world-class experience. That's why we're so excited to have Walt Anderson on board to bring you the very best of the Buttes. Walt Anderson brings you the very best of the Buttes.

Spring 2005 Hike Schedule

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Monday - February 20 | Chico Canyon - "From Canyon" Wildlife in the Buttes (Duckham) |
| Tuesday - March 15 | Chico Canyon - "From Canyon" Ridge Trail to Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Wednesday - March 17 | Wildlife in the Buttes (Duckham) |
| Thursday - March 17 | Ridge Trail to Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Friday - March 18 | Ridge Trail to Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Saturday - April 2 | Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Sunday - April 2 | Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Monday - April 2 | Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Tuesday - April 19 | Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Wednesday - April 19 | Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Thursday - April 20 | Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
| Friday - April 20 | Wolf Anderson (Duckham) |
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Meet Walt Anderson
 Walt Anderson is a National Geographic Explorer in Residence at the Middle Mountain Foundation. That's why we're so excited to have Walt Anderson on board to bring you the very best of the Buttes. Walt Anderson brings you the very best of the Buttes.

Inland Island: The Sutter Buttes
 by Walt Anderson

Interpretation extended through publications:
 books, magazine articles, radio & TV, etc.



School group program remained significant. (Currently over 1600 3rd graders visit each year).



Sunset Serenade a big fund-raiser for organization



Middle Mountain Foundation acquires historic West Butte School



Oakland Museum is featuring Sutter Buttes as 1 of 7 special places in state—natural environments & land management issues

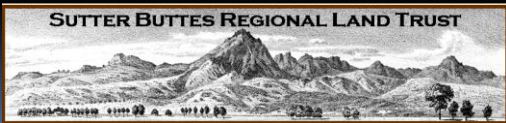
THE MIDDLE MOUNTAIN FOUNDATION

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MMF was a land trust, but the new name, **Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust**, adopted Fall 2013, reflects the **broader** mission of strengthening regional land conservation efforts to include not only the Sutter Buttes, but Sutter, Yuba, and Colusa Counties

SUTTER BUTTES REGIONAL LAND TRUST



SBRLT Mission:

Long-term land protection in Sutter Buttes and surrounding region



SBRLT Values:

1. Protect natural, cultural, geological, historical, & scenic qualities



SBRLT Values:

2. Identify prime agricultural lands & natural areas that preserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the region



SBRLT Values:

3. Build partnerships with landowners, community leaders, & developers to balance conservation with economic growth, flood protection, & water quality



SBRLT Values:

4. Respect landowners' rights; provide info to those wanting to conserve their land



SBRLT Values:

5. Increase awareness of the foundation's dedication to education, interpretation, & land conservation programs



SBRLT Values:

6. Maintain an efficient, effective, & sustainable organization



Actions in past 18 months:

1. Hiring permanent Executive Director, Land Steward, Outreach & Fund Development Coordinator, Administrative Services Coordinator
2. Updating governance policies & procedures
3. Advancing strategic planning & information technology; new website



4. Expanding Education Program—record 1600 students
5. Continuing workshops & hikes—more than 1000 participants/year



6. Managing 5 land trust projects, over 600 acres
7. Joining Sacramento River Watershed Rangeland Conservation Project



Immediate charge:

1. Obtain Land Trust Alliance accreditation
2. Increase the public understanding of the benefits of land conservation
3. Solicit community and business involvement
4. Enhance outreach and educational programs
5. Influence regional planning and mitigation efforts



Regional Planning means attention to local politics.
 Sutter County General Plan:
 "The County shall preserve the Sutter Buttes
 as an important agricultural, cultural,
 historical, and ecological reserve."



But what does "reserve" mean here?
 County doesn't own the land.
 Primary tool is zoning, which is set
 by county supervisors.
 Vulnerable to politics & loopholes.



Sutter County General Plan also says:
 "The County shall support the preservation
 of natural landforms, natural vegetation,
 and natural resources as open space
 to the maximum extent feasible."

Emphasis on "maximum" or "feasible"?



Challenges for a land trust like SBRLT:

1. Many view land conservation as
 impediment to profit & progress
 (vital: education of farmers,
 ranchers, hunters, general public)



2. Actions adjacent to trust lands can threaten integrity
(e.g., feral or trespass animals, weeds,
poachers, development, trophy homes)



3. Nature herself sets limitations
(e.g., summer heat, fire, drought)



4. Virtues like patience and tolerance
can conflict with need for action



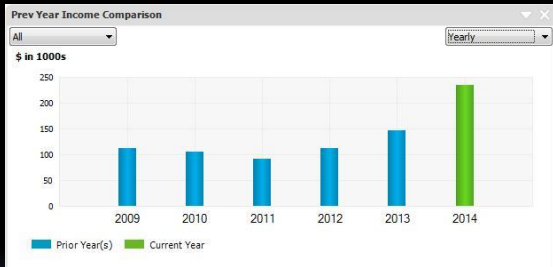
5. Inertia: resistance to change
(potential clients & non-profit itself)



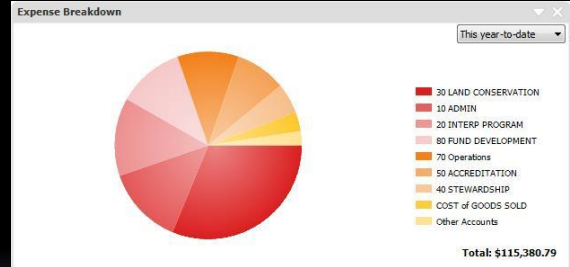
Long-term sustainability is a concern:
 Volunteer burn-out
 Staff turnover
 Adequate revenue



Sources of Revenue:
 Events, donations, memberships, product sales
 Interpretive hikes & workshops (>\$40K/yr.)
 New events: Fun Run, Bike the Buttes, Beers for Buttes
 Signing up with non-profit funding organizations
 Easement agreements
 Potential mitigation funds



Income since recession is again growing



Where the money goes



If accredited by Land Trust Alliance (LTA):

- Can apply for funding from state & federal agencies
- Can join other trusts in larger campaigns
- Can gain credibility for other sources (e.g., planned giving)



Challenges for an interpretive program:

When does a "working landscape" lose its appeal?
How many cowpies can be tolerated?



When do noxious plants
become simply too
much to take?



Can you speak out against encroachment
without jeopardizing landowner relationships?



When does "collaboration" become capitulation?



What do you do when a cooperator allows devastating overgrazing?



Is it a landowner's **right** to release feral animals like pigs or sheep that spread everywhere and cause enormous ecological damage?

Commercial hunting of feral pigs in Northern California

Courtesy Kirk Portocarrero, SacRiverGuide.com



Are you ready to adjust to climate change?



My advice:

1. Continually seek to refine your identity
2. Welcome dissent as an opportunity for growth
3. Beware the dangers of self-congratulation
4. Value humility over hubris



My advice:

5. Put the health of the land above organizational stability
6. Recognize your debt to those who came before (including the Native Americans who called this home)
7. Always seek to understand the big picture



Since I guided my first hike some 38 years ago, I have watched generations fall in love with this special place

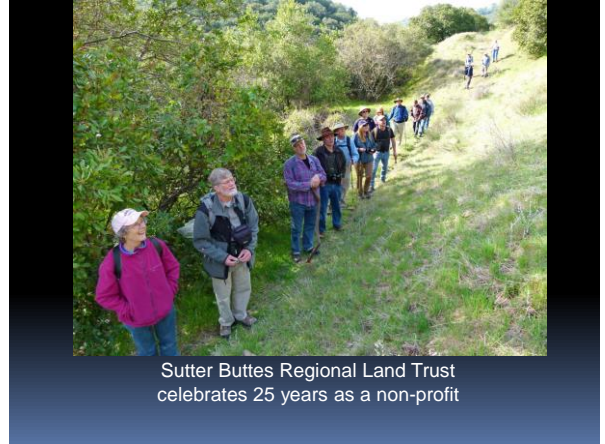


This island-mountain will continue to share her stories



The Sutter Buttes, this singular range, retains a sense of wildness





Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust celebrates 25 years as a non-profit



I celebrate 68 years as a non-prophet,
but I can tell you this:

*If we listen, if we understand, and if we
employ our powers of informed imagination,
we can act with wisdom and firm resolve.*

*If we do, the Inland Island
of the Sutter Buttes will continue
to be the heart stone of the valley,
our beacon and guide.*



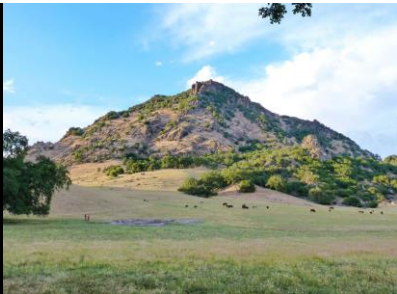
Success depends on maintaining
a **positive spirit of constructive collaboration.**



Inclusiveness: landowners, scientists, educators, students, photographers, anyone who loves nature.



This landscape, sacred to local Indians, is again a meeting place, a place of connection & renewal.



Wildlife and human livelihoods share new possibilities



This takes vision, imagination, hard work, and sometimes compromise



It takes landowners who see the land as more than commodities, who see the land as a heritage essential to future generations.



The Sutter Buttes is an island, after all —an island of enlightenment, of vision



Acknowledgments

Prescott College, where my passion for teaching flourishes
Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust for carrying on my dream
High Lonesome Institute for supporting me at this congress
All who believe in Leopold's Land Ethic & act upon it
and
the Sutter Buttes, landscape of memory & promise

Photos by Walt Anderson, Sutter Buttes Regional Land Trust, & Todd Quam