



## **#FridaysontheFarm: Where Wildflowers Will Always Bee**

2,500 pristine acres of vibrant wildflowers cover Jim Keegan's ranch in Bear Valley, California.

Those wildflowers, varieties numbering into the hundreds, are food for bees. The property is so breathtaking that sightseers and tourists stop to gaze in awe.

Jim recognized this annual tradition and opened his property to visitors. Through conservation measures and a land easement, the visitors and bees will be happy there for perpetuity.

### **A Perfect Fit**

"Jim is a pleasure to work with," said Andrea Casey, a NRCS California resource conservationist that has worked with Jim for more than a decade. "His passion for ranching and keeping to tradition is evident every time you talk with him or tour the ranch with him."

Jim's father, Matt, worked with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs decades ago. The Keegan's have implemented many conservation programs including grazing management for cattle.

The ranch has a natural vernal pool—a seasonal wetland that forms from winter to spring. It is this pool that feeds the soil and the wildflowers.

Once Jim saw the conservation improvements, he decided NRCS' Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program would be perfect for his ranch.

### **Keeping the Ranch in Ranching**

In the program, the land is protected for perpetuity and cannot be developed. Jim happily says that his goal is "to keep this ranch in ranching."

Founded in 1880, Keegan's great grandparents emigrated from Ireland and made their home in Bear Valley. The original passion for ranching lives on through Jim and his sister.

The easement was created with support from partners California Rangeland Trust and the California Wildlife Conservation Board. The easement received a special designation as the first Grassland of Special Environmental Significance through California's ALE program due to its unique soils and environmental benefits for bees and other pollinators.