UC SANTA BARBARA

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Shelly Leachman

It's a Match

Encompassing over 200 acres across two locations in Mammoth Lakes, UC Santa Barbara's Valentine Eastern Sierra Reserves (VESR) are places of breathtaking beauty and prolific hubs for research and teaching. And they'll soon be doing a lot more of both, courtesy of a generous new gift.

The private grant-making Tambour Foundation has awarded VESR $1 million to support students, staff and researchers, and outreach programs for all ages, as well as essential infrastructure projects at the two research outposts, which are part of the UC Santa Barbara Natural Reserve System (NRS).

The donation was motivated by part-time Mammoth residents and philanthropists Ruth and Roger MacFarlane, who approached the education- and environment-focused foundation on VESR's behalf.

"The Tambour Foundation's transformative investment supports vital infrastructure projects, promotes ecological and environmental research through support of fellowships and scholarships, and ensures that elementary school children and community members have the opportunity to learn about the Eastern Sierra environment and natural history at the reserve," said Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "We are deeply grateful to the Tambour Foundation, and to Roger and Ruth MacFarlane for their advocacy for the Valentine Eastern Sierra Reserves and this visionary and generous gift."

The Valentine Reserves includes 156-acre Valentine Camp, right in the city of Mammoth Lakes, and the nearby, 55-acre Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory (SNARL) just a few miles east, off U.S. Highway 395. The pair is among the seven sites that make up UC Santa Barbara's NRS, itself part of the expansive UC Natural Reserve System, which boasts 41 such protected lands, totaling 756,000 acres, across California.

"It seems like such an extraordinary resource. We have such diversity in our ecosystems in the state and we have this reserve system to allow research into all of it," Roger MacFarlane said. "I'm very happy to be involved with such an engaged university system as the University of California, and a component of that system in UC Santa Barbara that is stewarding these two reserves under the leadership of Carol Blanchette.

"Since having a home in the Sierras, coming to understand the history of the Sierras, and trying to preserve some of it for posterity other than national forests and wilderness areas, it seemed like Valentine Camp and SNARL are two hidden jewels that I didn't know anything about," he continued. "It seemed incredibly opportune timing to do something about it, and with an energetic and enthusiastic director like Carol it seemed like a nice match. I thought this would be an appropriate place for Tambour, as foundation I'm involved in, to make a grant."

Blanchette, reserve director and a research biologist herself, characterized the leadership gift to VESR as a "celebrated event" for UC Santa Barbara and for the Natural Reserve System overall.

Tambour's commitment, she said, will expand science-based training at VESR for students at both the K-12 and university levels, and be a major boon to world-class researchers from across the UC system who pursue and apply their science in the Sierra. It also will enhance knowledge and strategies for land managers and stewards in the region and, ultimately, Blanchette added, "improve prosperity and success for the communities of the Eastern Sierra."

"This gift is going to have a huge impact," she said. "It's going to enable us to do so many things that we want to do. And importantly, because it's following on the heels of our strategic planning process, it will allow us to do things that have been well-informed by a broad array of users, stakeholders and community members. The MacFarlanes are people that have invested in other entities here in Mammoth and I

think they really see that we are not working in isolation — we're working with other groups in town. They're also really interested in building community, and with a gift like this we can do that in a much bigger way."

Engaging scientists, students and the local community is core to VESR's overall mission to advance knowledge and promote stewardship of the Eastern Sierra region through science, education and outreach. Similarly, the practice is perfectly aligned with the UC's mission of research, teaching and public service.

Undergraduate and graduate student fellowship opportunities, greater support for researchers and for reserve staff, and evaluation and potential expansion of VESR's popular and important Outdoor Science Education Program are all funding priorities.

Also, infrastructure. Much-needed safety upgrades and renovations to the historic, centenarian cabins at Valentine Camp, as well as improved disability access and expanded accommodations for visiting scholars to SNARL are also on the to-do list.

By using part of the gift to leverage matching funds from the State of California, via Proposition 68, the reserve will see an estimated $400,000 additional dollars to put toward such projects. And a partial match from UC Santa Barbara's Graduate Division will support fellowships for graduate students doing summer research on the reserves.

"The UC Santa Barbara Natural Reserve System is deeply grateful, and tremendously excited, for this generous support from the Tambour Foundation," said Patricia Holden, director of the UCSB NRS and a professor in the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management. "This very timely gift allows Valentine Eastern Sierra Reserves to leverage other precious resources and to accomplish more of the great articulation of the NRS mission that, under the capable leadership of Carol Blanchette and with the great support of so many in Mammoth, is the impressive basis for this recognition."

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society.

All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.