



Sonoma Land Trust Releases Sears Point Draft Preliminary Restoration Plan March 10, 2006

The Sonoma Land Trust, which a year ago purchased 2,327 acres at the southern end of Sonoma County that had been proposed as a casino resort, today released its preliminary Plan for the restoration and future use of that prominent open landscape so visible to motorists traveling along Highway 37.

The preliminary Sears Point Restoration Plan addresses two portions of land. On the upland portion of the land, billboards will be removed, ranching will continue, and the land will be managed to promote native vegetation and enhance rare upland seasonal bodies of water called vernal pools. On the lowland portion of the land south of Highway 37, the levees will be reconfigured, a trail will be constructed, rail and road flood protection needs will be addressed and, to the extent possible, tidal marshes will allowed to reclaim the land.

John Brosnan, Baylands Project Manager for the Sonoma Land Trust, points out that the Baylands acquired by the Sonoma Land Trust is the only place around San Francisco Bay where an entire landscape from the marshy shoreline of San Pablo Bay and 400 feet up the elevation of Cougar Mountain at Sears Point can be restored as a single, functioning ecosystem.

“A lot of our planning focus has been on the wetlands restoration component, but the project presents major opportunities for restoring a variety of unique habitats across the uplands,” said Brosnan. “It’s not many landowners who develop grazing plans that are compatible with stream and wetland enhancement, but we’re doing that. Retaining grazing is a critical element in our plan.”

Sonoma Land Trust has been working with ranchers, scientists, consultants and neighbors for the past year to develop the preliminary Sears Point Restoration Plan. Implementation of the Plan, including the relocation of levees, construction of a segment of the Bay Trail and the breaching of the existing levees, is expected to take place over the next decade. The pace of work will depend upon the availability of capital funding.



”It’s the amount of broad support – across Sonoma County and the Bay Area – for this restoration that practically ensures its success” said Brosnan. “Sonoma Land Trust is pursuing a ground-breaking vision and we want people to share in the process and see it become the reality.”

More information about the restoration will be available on the Sonoma Land Trust’s Web site, www.sonomalandtrust.org. Development of the preliminary Sears Point Restoration Plan was funded largely with a grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District contributed funds for the acquisition of some of these lands. The nonprofit Sonoma Land Trust and the District frequently work in partnership throughout Sonoma County.