

FALL 2016



... to protect the land forever



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ON NOVEMBER 8



NEW ACQUISITIONS TO PROTECT WILDLIFE PASSAGE, FORESTS AND GREENWAY

You can see all the way to the Sierras from McCormick Ranch in the Mayacamas. Photo by Shawn-Paul Luchin Photography.

She bought the land 18 years ago — a stunning inholding in Hood Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve — and left it wild, removing the existing home and only camping there occasionally. When it came time to sell her beloved 162-acre property, Margaret Spaulding of Glen Ellen knew she wanted

to protect the land and the wildlife roaming through it.

We jumped at the chance to buy her property, which contains the headwaters of the south fork of Santa Rosa Creek and is located in a key wildlife corridor, one of our strategic conservation priorities (see stories on page 4 and 7).

Sonoma Land Trust purchased the property in June with funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and transferred it to Regional Parks. Spaulding couldn't be happier. "It means the world to me to know that this rich, beautiful land will be part of the park and available to hikers and wildlife forever," she says.

(Continued on page 3)

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE DELIVER IMPACT

Imagine your role as steward of the special landscapes of Sonoma County and the impact you make by being a member of Sonoma Land Trust. At your fingertips is a complete conservation toolbox, along with a team of passionate professionals and volunteers dedicated to creating opportunity every day to save and care for the special places you love.

We have a deep understanding of our county's land and water resources, which is everything — the core building blocks of our environment, regional economies, and the natural beauty that fuels and inspires our daily living. Sonoma Land Trust is a community of caring people who, over our 40-year history, have protected 48,280

acres through completing 81 property transactions. The expression of our work is found in restored baylands, protected coastal headlands and forests, rugged mountainsides, working ranches, and bucolic farms and parks of Sonoma County.

It is you, our supporters, who make our conservation impact possible. Continuing to build our community to include everyone who wants to make a difference is our goal.

In this newsletter edition, our team highlights our direction, new initiatives and the opportunity to add a new important tool to the toolbox — “Yes on Measure J.” Our track record shows that for

every \$3 our members invest in our work, we leverage it with an additional \$10 from our foundation and public agency partners — we deliver impact.

Thank you for making this work possible. I'll see you out there.

Dave



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Howlett Ranch

Protecting additional properties in the Hood Mountain-Sugarloaf Ridge parks complex is high on our list now that we have extended our wildlife corridor program to the Napa and Marin borders. In July, we accepted the donation of a conservation easement over 100 acres of wild land near Sugarloaf from an environmentally minded couple. Named the “Be Here” conservation easement, this untouched landscape within the corridor contains a tributary of Santa Rosa Creek and a year-round waterfall more than 20 feet high. “It offers amazing habitat,” says conservation easement manager Crystal Simons. “On one visit to the property, we deduced that mountain lions are using it from the remains of a deer carcass we found.”

New projects in the wildlife corridor

Protecting wild land from development and habitat fragmentation is a key element of our wildlife corridor program and we have several projects in the hopper.

Very few places in the North Bay feel like true wilderness, but McCormick Ranch is one of them. Adjacent to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park and straddling the Sonoma-Napa border, this 725-acre property boasts outrageous views, steep canyons, riparian forests, and habitat for bears and mountain lions. “On a clear day

you can see forever — or at least to the snow-capped peaks of the Sierra Nevada,” exclaims conservation director Wendy Eliot.

McCormick Ranch is adjacent to nearly 6,000 acres of park lands and properties protected by conservation easements. The ranch owners are working closely with Sonoma Land Trust and the Land Trust of Napa County to protect the entire property. Without our involvement, it would likely be developed into vineyard and estate homes. In addition to its abundant and varied wildlife habitat, this purchase offers the opportunity to fill a missing link in the Bay Area Ridge Trail between Sugarloaf and Hood. The property is undeveloped and in excellent ecological condition. Thanks to your continued support, we intend to keep it that way.

Our acquisitions staff is also working on three additional projects in the wildlife corridor. Adjacent to both Hood Mountain and Sugarloaf Ridge parks is a 1,300-acre ranch belonging to a family that has farmed, logged and run cattle on the western slopes of Hood Mountain since the late 1800s. Thanks to funding from the Moore Foundation, the Land Trust will contribute toward the purchase of a conservation easement by our partner, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (the District).

Nearby is a completely undeveloped, 40-acre gem belonging to the same family that is only accessible from Hood Mountain Regional Park. The very last stand of redwoods in the upper reaches of the Santa Rosa Creek watershed survives on this property. Just as we did with Spaulding’s property, our goal is to purchase and eventually turn over these 40 acres to Regional Parks to expand the land available for hikers and wildlife alike.

Near San Pablo Bay, we are partnering with the District to protect 1,000 acres of upland habitat adjacent to Tolay Lake Regional Park. This will significantly expand the size of the Sears Point conservation landscape to ensure greater ecosystem resilience and permeability (or passage)

for wildlife. Thanks again to funding from the Moore Foundation, the Land Trust will contribute toward the purchase of a conservation easement by the District.

Also in the project pipeline

Outside of the Napa-to-Marin wildlife corridor, we currently have other acquisition projects in progress. Near the coast, adjacent to Buckeye (formerly Preservation) Ranch and in the Gualala River watershed, lies 1,395-acre Howlett Ranch, which holds some of the last significant, privately held old-growth forest in Sonoma County. It is also home to the endangered northern spotted owl and two major creeks that have never been entered for logging — a rare occurrence in this region. Thanks to the generosity of a supporter, we are providing the landowners with a loan that allows them to keep their forest intact while they complete their sale of a conservation easement to the District in early 2017.

And in town, we are kicking our fundraising into a higher gear for the Santa Rosa Southeast Greenway acquisition. In August, we and the City of Santa Rosa received preliminary approval for a \$1 million matching grant from the District. A final vote by the Supervisors will take place in October.

Thanks to your support, we’re protecting the diverse landscapes these projects represent. When you donate to Sonoma Land Trust, you are contributing, in part, to the deep expertise and commitment of our staff who are focused on protecting as much of Sonoma County’s biodiverse landscape as possible.

THE PROPERTY IS ENTIRELY UNDEVELOPED AND IN EXCELLENT ECOLOGICAL CONDITION. THANKS TO YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT, WE INTEND TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

ENHANCING WILDLIFE PASSAGE

FROM NAPA TO MARIN

BY SHERI CARDO

It's an unnerving time. Animal and plant species are disappearing 100 times faster than the normal rate of extinction, which means we could lose many of the benefits of biodiversity within three generations, according to renowned Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich.

At a recent presentation in the Sonoma Valley, Ehrlich stated that the sixth great mass extinction event currently underway threatens the existence of humanity even more than climate change does (adding that climate change is, of course, exacerbating extinction). He explained that the huge loss of plant and animal species means that indispensable services upon which we all depend — crop pollination, water filtration, food supply and more — may also go the way of the dodo, leaving future generations of human beings at risk.

Ehrlich wasn't even talking about endangered species, like the gray wolf or the salt marsh harvest mouse, but of heretofore common species, like turtles, foxes, bats, lizards, valley oaks — those that we know from our studies still exist in the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor and perform vital services that enhance our lives.

Clearly, quick action is needed to ensure that wild animals can find and occupy suitable habitat. That is why we are now expanding our work in the wildlife corridor beyond the critical pinchpoint in the Sonoma Valley all the

way from the Marin County line at Highway 101 to the Hood Mountain area along the Napa County border. This corridor is part of an even larger linkage that extends from the Blue Ridge-Berries-sa region in Lake and Napa Counties south through Sonoma County and over to Point Reyes on the Marin Coast.

Our wildlife corridor program is designed to collect information about wildlife movement to help inform land management decisions at the policy level on down to individual homeowners and grape growers. With the data, we can focus on protecting properties that connect important habitats to each other and help willing landowners make changes to their properties to enhance wildlife passage and survival.

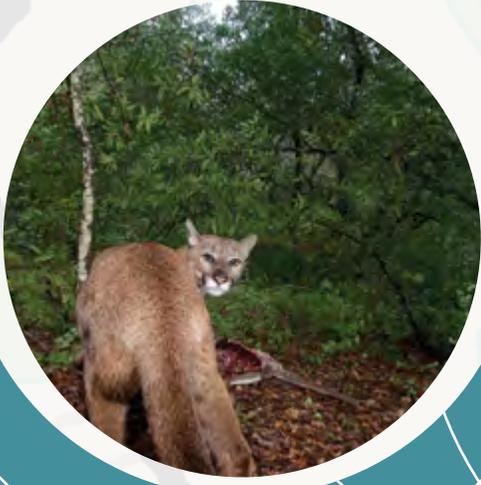
Gratitude to the Moore Foundation

Our expanded wildlife corridor program has been made possible by a new \$2.1 million grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, which also provided the initial \$1.8 million grant in 2012 that funded our work in the Sonoma Valley corridor pinchpoint between the Mayacamas and Sonoma Mountain. The new

funding allows our stewardship team to further assess wildlife use in the region by placing remote cameras at several bridges and underpasses along Highway 101 and other major roadways south of Sonoma Mountain, developing management strategies that minimize the effects of recreation on wildlife, continuing landowner outreach and supporting Audubon Canyon Ranch's (ACR's) radio-telemetry study of mountain lions in the corridor. On the land protection side, our acquisitions team is gearing up to protect additional properties that play an essential role in retaining connectivity and wildlife passage — or permeability — throughout the corridor (see story on page 1 for more information).

The mountain lion study is an especially exciting new venture. With SLT support and funding assistance, ACR's plan is to trap and collar 4–6 cougars this fall in order to track their movements through the corridor and across the landscape over the next two years, after which time, the collars will fall off. The data gleaned during this period will help us understand the animals' movements, behaviors, feeding habits and home

CLEARLY, QUICK ACTION IS NEEDED TO ENSURE THAT WILD ANIMALS



ranges. At the end of this study, we expect to know whether lions are able to roam freely throughout the linkage and, if not, what the barriers are to passage. The collared lions should reveal preferred movement pathways for other species as well. This information will be very significant because the presence of thriving apex predators, like lions and bears, is considered an indication of a healthy corridor.

Studying the effects of recreation

With respect to recreation, our land protection efforts in the wildlife corridor are both expanding recreational opportunities and exploring and reducing their impacts. For example, we purchased the 29-acre Curreri property in 2014 and transferred it to Sonoma Valley Regional Park; this year, we bought the 162-acre property belonging to Margaret Spaulding to add to Hood Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve. Both acquisitions include special management protections to ensure they remain permeable to wildlife. Because scientific studies indicate that recreation may have negative repercussions on wild animals,

we will evaluate the potential impacts on the Spaulding property (as well as our Glen Oaks Ranch and the Sonoma Developmental Center), and then work with Regional Parks to develop a balanced plan for future use.

“We’ll be looking for the best ways to manage recreation in our imperiled wildlife corridor,” says Tony Nelson, Sonoma Valley program manager. “Given the importance of this corridor, we need to better understand what can be done to minimize the effects of recreation on wildlife passage.”

As Aldo Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” We can’t argue with that. It’s why we are expanding our wildlife corridor program. Look for updates over the next two years and thank you for your ongoing support that enables Sonoma Land Trust to take on such meaningful projects.

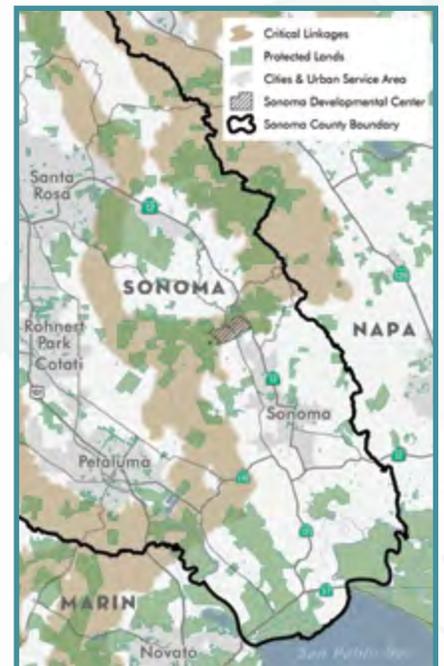
Sheri Cardo is SLT’s director of communications.

CAN FIND AND OCCUPY SUITABLE HABITAT.



APA

Wildlife Critical Linkages Through Southern Sonoma County



SONOMA LAND TRUST

Critical Linkage Designs provided by Conservation Lands Network and produced by Science and Collaboration for Connected Wildlands.

PRESERVATION PARTNERS BY NICOLE NA

INTRODUCING OUR NEW BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

There are so many things we appreciate about working with our local community. We especially love the richness and diversity of our supporters' backgrounds — and how people from all different walks of life are knit together into a community by their shared love for the land. We've always had a strong contingent of business supporters that are very committed to land conservation and we are pleased to introduce our new business member program, *Preservation Partners*.

Sonoma Land Trust strives to educate our members and others in the community about the value of land protection and good land stewardship. We know that the health of our local economy is tied closely to the health of our land. Our Preservation Partners program will help companies forge a partnership with the land — and let their employees, customers and the

community know that they care about the future of our incomparable county.

In addition to the benefits that businesses will gain by supporting the health of our open spaces and farmland, they stand to benefit in other ways as well. Business members will be introduced to the Sonoma Land Trust community in our publications and on our website. Business members will also receive print collateral — signs, stickers and flyers — to put on display, along with the right to feature the Sonoma Land Trust logo on their own websites to highlight their commitment to land preservation. In their new partnerships with Sonoma Land Trust, businesses will build relationships with like-minded customers — and foster networks with other business members at our annual business member mixer!

Business members will also be invited to include their employees in special

volunteer days to gain intimate experiences of the land, to extend Sonoma Land Trust memberships to their customers, and to offer special benefits that introduce our members to their products and services.

With the launch of our new business membership program, we're excited that our local business sector will have a powerful vehicle for showing their support for the unique landscapes and ecosystems of Sonoma County — and play an even bigger role in our accomplishments and achievements to come.

For more information, please contact Kaaren Van Dyke, membership program manager, at kaarenv@sonomalandtrust.org or (707) 526-6930 ext. 108.

Nicole Na is SLT's communications coordinator.

Photo by Corby Hines.

JOIN. PROTECT. ENJOY.

WHEN YOU BECOME A MEMBER OF SONOMA LAND TRUST,
YOU ARE PROTECTING THE NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL AND OPEN
LANDS THAT DISTINGUISH SONOMA COUNTY.

We offer Individual, Household and Student membership levels that include special benefits, like outings discounts and members-only activities. Stay tuned to learn more about what your new membership card has to offer. Remember, too, that a gift membership is a wonderful way to show someone you care about them and our breathtakingly beautiful county.

AT SONOMA LAND TRUST,
WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON
WORKING AS A COHESIVE WHOLE
TOWARD A SHARED VISION.
WE ACT AS A TEAM TO NAVIGATE
CHALLENGES AND IDENTIFY
OPPORTUNITIES, COMMIT TO
PROTECT AND STEWARD THE
LAND, AND STRIVE TO MAKE OUR
DREAMS AND GOALS FOR THE
COUNTY COME TO LIFE. DURING
OUR FIRST 40 YEARS, WITH THE
SUPPORT OF OUR DEVOTED
COMMUNITY OF DONORS, WE
PROTECTED 81 PROPERTIES
TOTALING 48,280 ACRES.



SAVING AND CARING FOR THE LAND REQUIRES

A GOOD PLAN BY NICOLE NA

Every five years or so, we pause to take stock of our accomplishments and to generate new ideas for broadening the scope of our conservation efforts. That's what we did earlier this year when the entire staff and board participated in a strategic planning process spanning several months.

First, a committee of board and staff members thoughtfully researched and discussed the future challenges and opportunities for land conservation in Sonoma County. We collected more insights by reaching out to our partners, and sought the aid of a consultant to convene our entire staff and board at a daylong strategic planning retreat. Piece by piece, each element of our new strategic plan was carefully shaped, resulting in a strong foundation for the work we'll be striving to accomplish from 2016–2020.

New initiatives

While our basic work of protecting and stewarding the land will not change, we will be focusing our efforts in a few new areas. For example, under the goal of safeguarding our food and water systems, retaining ecological functioning and building resilience in the face of climate change, we plan to continue and expand implementation of our existing programs:

- Sonoma Coast
- Wildlife Corridor
- Sonoma Baylands
- Sonoma Valley/Sonoma Mountain
- Conservation Easement

We also plan to add a new program, Russian River Watershed; to develop our

Resource Preserve System Plan that integrates our land management and restoration activities with our public recreation and community outreach activities; and see where we can be effective partners through agricultural land conservation projects. You'll be learning more about these exciting new programs soon.

The goal of building a broad and diverse constituency base with an array of fresh voices for conservation includes securing the Southeast Santa Rosa Greenway acquisition and the wild land on the Sonoma Developmental Center, as well as strengthening and building new partnerships and tailoring our On the Land Program to provide recreational opportunities for a broader array of audiences. We are also exploring the development of a Land and Water Apprenticeship Program. This would provide opportunities to recent college graduates to gain valuable, on-the-ground stewardship experience while assisting the organization with our land management tasks and creating a cadre of trained conservation professionals that will benefit the entire community.

The final two goals address the need to sustain our strong team of board, staff and volunteers to provide sufficient capacity to achieve the other goals, and also to raise the necessary funds to successfully complete the strategic plan and ensure the organization's long-term financial security. The reality is that continued progress would be unattainable without our steady and visionary donors who make all this work possible.

To read the complete strategic plan, please visit www.sonomalandtrust.org.



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VOTE YES ON MEASURE J ON NOVEMBER 8!

BY JOHN MCCAULL



Sonoma County has built one of the most diverse park systems in California. Fifty-six parks, trails and beaches attract five million annual visitors. Since 2010, park attendance has increased 38 percent; however, support from the County's general fund has not increased since 2008. The addition of major parks, increasing costs for operations and maintenance, threats to natural resources and demand for programs are stressing our park system.

Along with LandPaths, the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation and the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, your land trust is sponsoring Measure J on the November ballot. The measure will generate an estimated \$9.5 million annually for improving and maintaining parks.

Measure J offers a detailed plan to expand, maintain and improve our parks for future generations; protect drinking water sources, streams and rivers; protect natural areas; preserve fish and wildlife habitat; and increase local trails. The detailed expenditure plan calls for:

- Adding miles to our unique trails system in parks from Helen Putnam and Riverfront Regional Parks to the rugged slopes of Hood Mountain, and expanding our

regional paved trail networks that connect Sonoma County's towns and are perfect for commuting, leisurely bike rides and walks. Safeguarding local drinking water in Sonoma County by protecting local rivers, creeks and streams, and protecting habitat so wildlife can thrive. Opening thousands of acres of parkland in Sonoma County that are currently not open to the public for hiking, biking, horseback riding and camping.

Measure J funds are dedicated to Sonoma County Regional Parks, cannot be taken by the State, and must be used for parks maintenance and improvements only. Independent citizen oversight and annual audits will ensure that every penny is used for voter-approved purposes. Measure J will expire in 10 years.

Sonoma Land Trust strongly supports Measure J. If you love our county parks and wildlife, we encourage you to vote YES on November 8. For more information, go to: www.YESforSonomaCountyParks.org.

John McCaull is a land acquisition program manager at Sonoma Land Trust.

OUR MISSION

The Sonoma Land Trust protects the scenic, natural, agricultural and open landscapes of Sonoma County for the benefit of the community and future generations by:

- DEVELOPING LONG-TERM LAND PROTECTION STRATEGIES;
- PROMOTING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC FUNDING FOR LAND AND CONSERVATION;
- ACQUIRING LAND AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS;
- PRACTICING STEWARDSHIP, INCLUDING THE RESTORATION OF CONSERVATION PROPERTIES; AND
- PROMOTING A SENSE OF PLACE AND A LAND ETHIC THROUGH ACTIVITIES, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH.

SUPPORT OUR WONDERFUL COUNTY PARKS