



**Sonoma Land Trust Breaks Ground on Wetland Restoration Adjacent to
Proposed Casino Site
August 18, 2003**

Heavy equipment at the corner of Highway 37 and Lakeville Highway is not the start of casino construction. It is groundbreaking for the North Parcel seasonal wetland enhancement project, Sonoma Land Trust's latest restoration effort in the Bay region.

The 279- acre property, owned by Sonoma Land Trust, was once part of the extensive wetlands that ringed San Francisco Bay. Like much of the land surrounding the Bay, this property was converted from wetland to farmland a century ago. The Trust, in partnership with the California Coastal Conservancy, North American Wetlands Council and USFWS, is restoring wetlands on this site. Bulldozers and backhoes working on the property are essentially creating a 'bathtub' to hold winter rains on the property. This will provide shallow ponds for shorebirds and waterfowl, such as northern shoveler, wigeons, pintails, sandpipers, dowitchers, and yellowlegs, as well as seasonal wetlands for other wildlife and plants.

This project is another important step in restoring wetlands around the Bay, work that is endorsed as a major goal by every government agency and organization interested in bay conservation. Approximately 600 million dollars have been spent or are committed to restoration of wetlands in the North Bay. In the last 3 decades, 30 wetland restoration projects have been constructed, and 25 more are planned within Sonoma, Marin and Napa Counties, totaling more than 21,000 restored acres. These restoration activities are considered by local, state, and federal agencies as a critical piece for successfully implementing restoration and endangered species recovery efforts in the Bay-Delta.

For decades the Sonoma Land Trust has taken an active role in wetland restoration projects in the North Bay. The Trust has been involved in the acquisition purchase and protection of more than 1,400 acres, as well as the restoration of tidal and seasonal wetlands on more than 700 acres. Acquisition and restoration of wetlands continues to be a high priority of the Trust.