

Making the Connections ...



SONOMA LAND TRUST  
*2008 Annual Report*

Dear Friends,

In 2008, we fielded our customary array of marathons and one spectacular sprint.

The main event for the past several years, and for some time to come, is the long-running acquisition of the scenic Jenner Headlands on the coast just north of the Russian River. In 2008, we made good headway lining up commitments from our conservation partners for virtually all of the \$36 million needed to purchase the property and half of the \$4 million needed to restore, manage and open the property over time. State agencies are making major contributions to the purchase price from designated bond funds, but for now, bond sales are on hold. To be continued.



Mark Jacobsen and Ralph Benson

Our commitment to protect land *forever* is carried out by our stewardship team and a legion of active volunteers. This work is often not glamorous, but it is ongoing and necessary. Planning for tidal wetlands restoration at Sears Point, bird monitoring at the Baylands, grassland studies and grazing management at the Estero Americano, botanizing and hydrology studies at Pitkin Marsh, trail construction at Little Black Mountain, fence building at Laufenburg Ranch and historic building maintenance at Glen Oaks Ranch ... This list could go on for pages — it is a catalogue of the caring stewardship that your support of the Land Trust makes possible.

The sprint was the opportunity to purchase the top of Sonoma Mountain and knit together a mosaic of protected open space with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and Jack London State Historic Park. We jumped on it and were able to record a deed within three and a half months of the land coming on the market.

The work we do would not be possible without the commitment of our individual, business and foundation supporters acknowledged in this report. We are grateful for their overwhelming generosity. We also want to recognize the long-term commitment of our Legacy League donors who help to ensure the future protection of our beautiful landscapes.

We salute our many volunteers, our partner nonprofits and public agencies, and, in particular, three remarkably innovative organizations — the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, the California Coastal Conservancy and the California Wildlife Conservation Board.

To all, thank you!

Mark Jacobsen, Board Chair

Ralph Benson, Executive Director





The 5,630-acre Jenner Headlands will offer excellent recreational opportunities. Once the Land Trust closes escrow on this spectacular property, getting people out on the land will become a priority. Photo by Brook Edwards.

By the year 2050, the human population in the Bay Area is expected to double. What will the impact of that increase be on our landscapes? On our wildlife? On our grandchildren?

Thus far, the Sonoma Land Trust has protected *forever* 20,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland in Sonoma County, and is poised to bring on board another 5,600 acres in 2009 with the magnificent Jenner Headlands along the coast. With disquieting consequences on the horizon due to climate change and habitat loss, large land acquisitions like this one that provide connectivity to other open lands are more essential than ever to protect the future quality of life for all species.

### PROTECTING THE JENNER HEADLANDS

After four years of complex negotiations, the Sonoma Land Trust reached a milestone in 2008 with the signing of a contract to purchase the Jenner Headlands. This \$40 million deal will ensure the protection of eight watersheds, multiple threatened and endangered species, a large redwood forest and rare coastal prairie, and the public's access to this remarkable landscape. The Jenner Headlands will mark the single largest conservation land acquisition in Sonoma County, and will link to 13,000

acres already preserved along the Sonoma Coast, providing extra protection and movement corridors for the wild animals and plants that make this region their home.

With the advent of climate change, properties like the Jenner Headlands, which offer substantial diversity of habitat and varying degrees of elevation, will present species with the best chances to adapt to whatever unpredictable changes are in store over the next several decades. The Land Trust is committed to managing toward a mature, old-growth redwood forest that will benefit wildlife and improve the region's ability to sequester carbon.

A conservation purchase this large would be impossible without major funding from our chief partners, who include the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, California Coastal Conservancy, California Wildlife Conservation Board, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Thanks to the generosity and commitment of these organizations, only \$2 million of the needed \$40 million remained to be raised in individual donations at the end of 2008. It is anticipated that the Land Trust will close escrow on the Jenner Headlands in 2009.



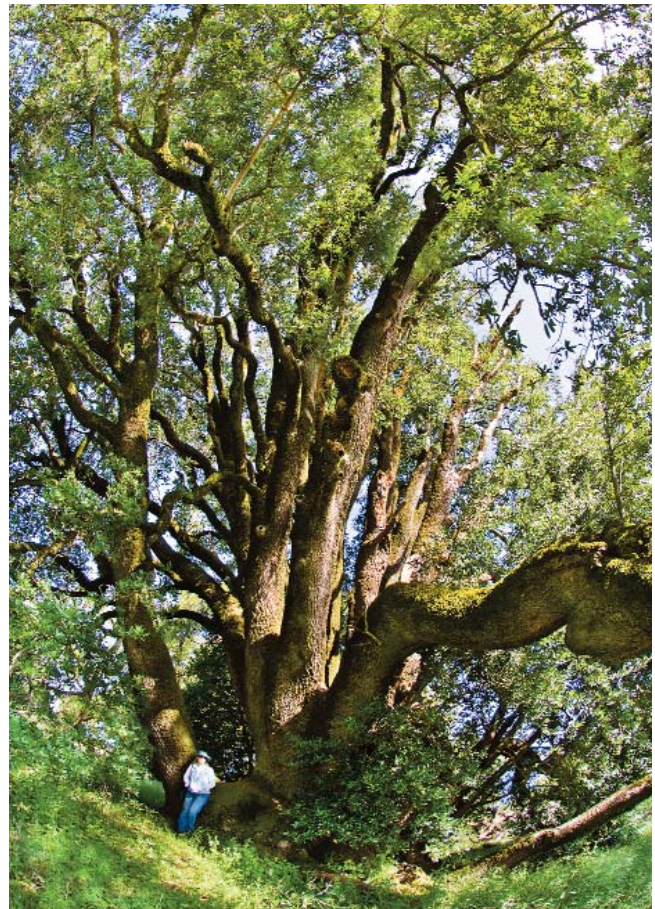


### SECURING THE LAST SIGNATURE MOUNTAINTOP

In contrast to the lengthy negotiations surrounding the Jenner Headlands, the purchase of the 283-acre Sonoma Mountain Ranch was completed in record time — three and a half months to be exact. That’s almost unheard of for a conservation land acquisition — especially one of such high value — but the moment the Land Trust and Open Space District learned that this property at the top of Sonoma Mountain was for sale, staff moved swiftly to meet the landowner’s demands for a year-end closing.

Thanks to donors to our Land Protection Fund, the Land Trust was able to respond with alacrity to this unexpected opportunity by making an immediate \$125,000 down payment on the \$9,975,000 purchase contract. Working in concert with the Open Space District, which now owns the top of the mountain, and with the nimbleness that our independent, nonprofit status affords, together we beat out a competing offer and completed the requisite “due diligence” investigations without delay.

In the Bay Area, all of the signature mountaintops (Mt. Tamalpais, Mt. Diablo, Mt. Hamilton, Mt. St. Helena) were protected for the public long ago, leaving Sonoma Mountain’s summit the last to be held in private hands. Not anymore. On December 30, with funding from the Open Space District and State Coastal Conservancy, escrow closed on Sonoma Mountain Ranch, creating a connected band of 5,500 protected acres across the top of this picturesque mountain forming the boundary between the Sonoma and Petaluma Valleys. Soon, hikers will join the ranks of the other wide-ranging mammals who meander over the mountaintop.



**Above:** Enormous California bay laurel trees hundreds of years old line up near the boundary shared by Sonoma Mountain Ranch and Jack London State Historic Park. **Top:** Being on top of Sonoma Mountain feels like being on top of the world. Looking east from Sonoma Mountain Ranch (in the foreground) is a view of the Sonoma Valley, Mount St. Helena and beyond. Photos by Stephen Joseph Photography.



### CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY WITH THE LAND

In 2008, 200 enthusiastic volunteers donned their hiking boots, slathered on sunscreen and got out on the land with our stewardship team to wrestle weeds, plant seedlings, beat back brush, watch birds and monitor changes. All told, the Sonoma Land Trust hosted 171 hikes, environmental education outings, site visits, monitorings and events on the properties we own and on which we hold conservation easements, and volunteers contributed more than 2,100 hours of sweat equity helping the Land Trust care for the lands we hold in trust. *Thank you, volunteers!*

### SUSTAINING FARMERS AND FARMLAND

More and more, Sonoma County is known as a source of the finest of fare: artisan cheeses, organic vegetables, pastured eggs and meats, award-winning wines and ales ... None of this bounty is possible without maintaining our rich agricultural lands and supporting our farmers. In September, the Sonoma Land Trust was proud to participate in the first Slow Food Nation conference in San Francisco by offering a “Slow Dinner” and a “Slow Hike” to attendees from around the world.

We were the beneficiaries of an exquisite end-of-summer dinner benefit at Oak Hill Farm conducted by Slow Food Sonoma Valley, and of a special autumn evening reception at the deliciously quirky Jimtown store in Alexander



Valley. Staff and volunteers ferried our Land Trust display to farmers’ markets throughout the county and to the delectable Artisan Cheese Festival in Petaluma. And farmer Ken Orchard of well-known Orchard Farms signed a lease to grow organic vegetables at the Land Trust’s Laufenburg Ranch in Knights Valley outside Healdsburg — putting this historic farm back into agricultural production after several years of some of the fields lying fallow.

**Above:** Well-known Sonoma County organic farmer Ken Orchard is now growing vegetables at the Land Trust’s historic Laufenburg Ranch. Look for Orchard Farms’ colorful produce at area farmers’ markets. Photo by Scott Hess Photography. **Below:** Hikers enjoy spring blooms and views at Little Black Mountain Preserve near Cazadero. The Land Trust conducts hikes on its properties for its members and the public throughout the year. Photo by Shanti Wright.







Tolay Creek Ranch, acquired by the Land Trust in 2007, will be added to Tolay Lake Regional Park, doubling the size of the park and offering miles of trails from the edge of the bay to the toe of Sonoma Mountain. Photo by Scott Hess Photography.

### **WATCHING OVER AND CARING FOR THE LAND**

When landowners donate a conservation easement to a land trust, they count on the organization upholding the terms of the easement; so when the Sonoma Land Trust deemed activities at Lower Ranch along Highway 37 to be contrary to the conditions of the agricultural easement we hold on the property, we took action. When talks failed, we filed suit. Happily, after three years, the lawsuit came to a settlement in 2008 that both SLT and the landowner feel supports the agricultural values of the land. This case was watched all over the country and was supported by the State Coastal Conservancy and the California Council of Land Trusts.

Caring for the needs of the 14 highly diverse properties owned by the Land Trust and monitoring 35 conservation easements keeps our stewardship team on the go throughout the seasons. During the summer, SLT began implementing the Sears Point grazing management plan and installed more than three miles of new cross-fencing across Sears Point Ranch to create 11 pastures. These fields will help protect riparian corridors, wildflower fields and an area to be enhanced as breeding habitat for the endangered California red-legged frog.

Little Black Mountain in the West County saw increased activity in 2008, including road work, a cabin demolition, property clean-up, a new caretaker and research by a graduate student on the cultural resources left by indigenous peoples. At Tolay Creek Ranch, we conducted biological and cultural resource assessments to collect important information about the plants, animals, and historic and prehistoric resources.

A Friends of Glen Oaks Ranch group was formed to integrate the historic Glen Ellen property with the local community, while at North Parcel, skilled volunteers were coordinated to document the abundant bird life utilizing our seasonal wetlands. At Pitkin Marsh, we conducted extensive surveys for the rare and endangered plants in order to target our management, have embarked on a detailed hydrological assessment, and began working with volunteers to control invasive plants that threaten to overtake this unique ecosystem.

### **LINKING TO THE FUTURE**

Between the Sonoma Land Trust and the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, nearly 100,000 acres of the one million acres comprising our county have been preserved — and, yet, thousands more still need protection. With your support, you can count on your land trust to continue to work to prevent fragmentation of the awe-inspiring Sonoma County landscapes and to foster habitat connectivity. We will strive to engage the public with our special properties and to instill a love of the land among our county's youth. Our work is in the here and now, but it is all about the future.

*Many thanks to Andrea Mackenzie, former general manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (2000 – 2009), for her collaboration, vision and leadership.*



PATRICK KINCAID



PATRICK KINCAID

## Our Diversified Portfolio of Conservation Projects

<i>Project</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
<b>ANCHOR PRESERVES</b>			
1 Baylands: Sears Point	2327	30 Little Creek	40
2 Estero Americano Preserve	127	31 Mason	18
3 Glen Oaks Ranch	236	32 Middle Reach	44
4 Laufenburg Ranch	179	33 Mill Creek Old Growth	54
5 Little Black Mountain	500	34 Morgan's Hill	22
<b>OTHER SLT-OWNED LANDS</b>			
6 Baylands: Leonard Ranch	244	35 Mother Gardens at OAEC	3
7 Baylands: North Parcel	279	36 Nefertierra	78
8 Baylands: Tolay Creek Ranch	1665	37 Oak Hill Farm	677
9 Cedars: Gateway	40	38 OGA Little Creek	73
10 Freezeout Redwoods	89	39 Old Hill Ranch	37
11 Lower Pitkin Marsh	27	40 Quail Hill	81
12 Secret Pasture	300	41 Rancheria Creek Recesses	602
13 Sonoma Creek	2	42 River Bend	32
14 White Rock Preserve	92	43 Rock Fall Woods	31
15 Wild Turkey Hill	8	44 Santa Rosa Creek Headwaters	162
<b>CONSERVATION EASEMENTS</b>			
16 Airport Boulevard	50	45 Summerfield Waldorf School	32
17 Baylands: Lower Ranch	528	46 Sunrise Redwoods	20
18 Baylands: Tolay Creek Riparian	36	47 Van Winkle Redwoods	46
19 Bear Canyon	96	48 Ward Creek	240
20 Blucher Creek	7	49 Watson Ranch	530
21 Bohemia Ranch	937	50 Westridge Knolls	74
22 Canelis Old-Growth Redwoods	1	<b>OTHER COMPLETED PROJECTS</b>	
23 Cuffeys Cove	1068	51 Bel Marin Keys	1500
24 Elarra	60	52 Baylands: Petaluma River Marsh	49
25 Enchanted Wood	8	53 Cloudy Bend	388
26 Finley Creek	240	54 Laguna de Santa Rosa	535
27 Fish Rock Ranch	7	55 Sonoma Mountain Ranch	283
28 Gird Creek	100	56 Baylands: Halperin Baylands	11
29 Knaus Forest at Nuns Canyon	36	57 Baylands: Sonoma Baylands	348
		58 Harrison Grade Serpentine	32
		59 McCord Ranch	2786
		60 Red Hill	910
		61 Rigler Preserve	370

## Financial Statements

The amounts presented here are derived from the Sonoma Land Trust's financial statements for the years ending December 31 2008 (not yet audited) and December 31 2007 (audited). Copies of the audited report of financial statements are available upon request.

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT DECEMBER 31

ASSETS	2008	2007
Cash and cash equivalents	\$753,053	\$2,703,765
Investments	5,677,352	589,964
Contracts and other receivables	167,735	323,817
Pledges receivable	2,476,975	59,400
Deposits and other assets	76,762	66,573
Conservation lands and easements	30,003,046	29,390,420
Property and equipment, net	910,281	937,108
<i>Total Assets</i>	<i>\$40,065,204</i>	<i>\$34,071,047</i>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	2008	2007
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$249,137	\$152,745
Deferred income	510,171	651,859
Current maturities of long-term debt	5,080	4,378
Long-term debt	9,367	14,665
<i>Total Liabilities</i>	<i>\$773,755</i>	<i>\$823,647</i>
<i>Net Assets</i>		
Unrestricted		
Available for operations	\$64,837	\$1,955,737
Board designated - conservation projects	681,132	629,170
Investment in conservation lands	30,003,046	29,390,420
Total unrestricted net assets	\$30,749,015	\$31,975,327
Temporarily restricted net assets	8,542,434	1,272,073
<i>Total Net Assets</i>	<i>\$39,291,449</i>	<i>\$33,247,400</i>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$40,065,204	\$34,071,047

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31

#### REVENUE AND SUPPORT

Membership contributions	\$2,995,150	\$924,451
Other contributions and grants	611,420	1,327,342
In-kind contributions	664,357	121,732
Project income	617,383	746,675
Investment income	(322,335)	122,370
<i>Total Revenue and Support</i>	<i>\$4,565,975</i>	<i>\$3,242,570</i>

#### EXPENSES

Projects and stewardship	1,992,610	1,458,684
Governance and administrative	609,512	486,593
Fundraising	326,105	278,456
<i>Total Expenses</i>	<i>\$2,928,227</i>	<i>\$2,223,733</i>
Net income before land acquisitions & donations	\$1,637,748	\$1,018,837
Land acquisition contributions	4,406,300	12,645,118
Easements donated to public agency		(10,901,488)
<i>Net Income after Land Acquisitions &amp; Donations</i>	<i>\$6,044,048</i>	<i>\$2,762,467</i>





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The Sonoma Land Trust protects the scenic, natural, cultural, 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 conservation
- Acquiring land and conservation easements
- Practicing stewardship, including the restoration of conservation properties
- Promoting a sense of place and a land ethic through activities, education and outreach.

