



To Protect the Land
Forever

SONOMA LAND TRUST
2011–2012 Report to the Community

Dear Friends,

Our message in this Report to the Community is “full steam ahead!”

It has been a challenging year. Public funding — the source of much of our capital — is drying up. Existing parks aren’t just threatened with closure; they are not being maintained.

Still, Sonoma Land Trust is playing a long-term game. If the scenic, natural, agricultural and open landscapes we know and love are going to be here generations from now, the work it takes to protect them must roll on without interruption. And, happily, it has, thanks to the many of you who support Sonoma Land Trust and whose names are listed in the following pages.



Ralph Benson and Denny Van Ness

We are persistent in our land acquisitions and in our land restoration work. This past year was marked with significant milestones in the restoration of a thousand acres of tidal wetlands on the Bay and in placing thousands of acres of redwood/fir forest at Jenner on a trajectory toward a biologically diverse future with very big trees.

If you look at topographic and vegetative maps of Sonoma County, you will see that there is one open, natural land bridge across the Valley of the Moon where wildlife might cross from the Mayacamas Range to Sonoma Mountain, which forms the eastern backdrop to Petaluma. It happens to include Stuart Creek, which runs through our Glen Oaks Ranch across Highway 12 to Stuart Creek Run, which is shown on the cover of this report. In the coming years, with the help of our loyal supporters, we will remove fish barriers on the pictured property, create a lovely roadside park and widen the wildlife corridor through the Valley of the Moon up to Jack London State Park. Hats off to our partners at the Sonoma Ecology Center who have mapped this terrain so well.

And speaking of partners, we are delighted that LandPaths will be managing the newly established Bohemia Ecological Preserve near Occidental, the acquisition of which was a long time in coming. Again, persistence paid off.

In Sonoma County, it’s all about the land. The land is the foundation of our economy and our community’s health and well-being. Thank you for helping to protect the land forever.

Denny Van Ness, Board Chair

Ralph Benson, Executive Director



The Napa side of Live Oaks Ranch in the Mayacamas is wild and uncultivated. Bequeathed to Sonoma Land Trust in 2010, our stewardship staff has been restoring buildings on the property and cleaning it up in anticipation of future guided hikes and volunteer workdays. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.

“Nature is not a place to visit. It is home.”

— GARY SNYDER



Land trusts come in several forms. Some focus on conservation easements, some protect land and give it to other agencies to manage, some buy properties and make them into preserves, and some — like Sonoma Land Trust — do it all. Why? Because, at one million acres, Sonoma County is the largest county in the Bay Area and it is also one of the most biologically diverse places in the entire United States.

Despite all of the land protection successes Sonoma Land Trust and the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District have amassed over the years, a recent report from Greenbelt Alliance reminds us that a quarter of our county still enjoys little protection from urban sprawl or rural subdivision. We still have a great deal of work to do to protect our scenic and ecologically important landscapes for all time, but with your help, we will continue to preserve what we all love most about Sonoma County.

We also have a lot to celebrate. Taken together, the projects that occupied us last year and this year cover the entire spectrum of our work: We purchased property, we protected

land with easements, we restored land, we did research and planned how to take the best care of our properties, we planted trees, we got people out on the land, we introduced children to the joys of working on the land, we protected endangered species, we repaired historical buildings, we secured funding to help other agencies save land, and we even played a role in keeping our local state parks open. After protecting more than 27,000 acres, your land trust continues to push the boundaries every day to ensure that our children and grandchildren can enjoy the same scenic landscapes, and clean air and water, that we enjoy today. After all, as we like to say, in Sonoma County, it all starts with the land!

*“Loss of the world’s genetic diversity . . .
is the folly our descendants are least likely
to forgive us.”*

— E.O. WILSON



Clearing the way for fish to run

Early last year, we jumped on an opportunity to purchase a little 3.5-acre gem in Glen Ellen that we subsequently named Stuart Creek Run. Though considerably smaller than most of the properties we seek, this one holds big potential — by removing the fish barriers within Stuart Creek that were built decades ago, we’ll be able to provide safe passage to high-quality spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead once again. In time, we also plan to create a roadside park on the property where residents and visitors to the Sonoma Valley will be able to enjoy a picnic or take a stroll along the creek. Currently, our stewardship staff is working with Sonoma Ecology Center,

the Department of Fish and Game, and the National Marine Fisheries Service to determine the best way to remove the barriers at the lowest cost.

Protecting the coast at Rocky Point

The North Coast of Sonoma County contains a wealth of grassland and forestland that is largely unprotected and is, thus, a high priority for Sonoma Land Trust. Many of the properties in this region are working landscapes, where cattle graze and timber is harvested. North of the Jenner Headlands, we’ve received a donation of a conservation easement on a 255-acre property called Rocky Point that straddles Highway 1 and contains a variety of habitats. This conservation easement prohibits future development, and ensures that the forests and coastal prairie will be well managed in perpetuity. The owners possess a strong land ethic and are committed to using the resources on their land in a sustainable manner. We are grateful for their foresight in protecting their dramatic coastal landscape.



The main canyon in the Cedars is now protected public land thanks to Save the Redwoods, the Coastal Conservancy, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and former landowners Roger Raiche and David McCrory. This geologically and botanically unique region near Cazadero is a conservation priority of Sonoma Land Trust. Photo by Scott Hess Photography.



Working together, Sonoma Land Trust and LandPaths created a long-awaited preserve at Bohemia Ranch near Occidental. Here, Sonoma Land Trust stewardship director Bob Neale and LandPaths' Rebecca Abbruzzese take a moment to enjoy the stunning scenery. Photo by Erik Castro.

Preserving the rarest ecosystem of them all

If you haven't heard of the Cedars, you are not alone. Many residents of Cazadero, which is the closest town, don't know about it either! The Cedars is remote and truly a world of its own — a land of deep serpentine canyons, weirdly beautiful rock formations, moonscape-like terrain, and rare and unusual plants. Because of its geologically and botanically unique ecosystem, the Cedars Conservation Region has been a priority for several years. In 2007, Sonoma Land Trust purchased a 40-acre property at the gateway to the region; in 2009, we published a conservation plan for the region; last year, we worked with Save the Redwoods League to protect the 500-acre Main Canyon property; and this year, with funding from the Resources Legacy Fund, we purchased a conservation easement on a remarkably diverse 160-acre property that the Larsen Family has worked hard to reforest during their 40-year ownership.

*“Uniformity is not nature’s way;
diversity is nature’s way.”*

— VANDANA SHIVA



Bohemia Ranch — worth the wait

It seemed like the whole county made a joyful noise when Bohemia Ranch finally closed escrow and Bohemia Ecological Preserve was born. It was a long haul, starting in the late 1990s — but protecting significant landscapes isn't about immediate gratification; it takes time and tenacity. Sonoma Land Trust never gave up on securing this spectacular property for the public and, working in partnership with LandPaths, we completed a complicated transaction that protects the entire ranch and creates a 554-acre nature preserve. Now, this beautiful forested land with a year-round waterfall and serpentine flower fields has been protected forever — and people will have ample opportunity for getting out and enjoying it.



Bringing people together

Saving state parks

A year ago, we were all stunned to learn that 70 state parks were slated for closure — five in Sonoma County! While everyone was still reeling from the news, Sonoma Land Trust executive director Ralph Benson met with Caryl Hart of Regional Parks and Bill Keene of the Open Space District, and offered to fund a forum to generate solutions.

Thus, the **Parks Alliance of Sonoma County** was born, an ad hoc organization that has been remarkably successful in supporting the nonprofit groups that have worked diligently to contract with the state to run Sonoma County's state parks. The result of Sonoma Land Trust taking the initiative on this issue of tremendous concern to all of us is that, as of July 1 of this year, all Sonoma County state parks remained open — and will continue to stay open for the foreseeable future with the ongoing support of the Parks Alliance. It's astonishing what becomes possible when people of good hearts and minds come together to solve a communal problem.

Forestry conference

More recently, Sonoma Land Trust convened more than 150 foresters, landowners, economists and conservation professionals to discuss the importance of keeping our Sonoma County forests ecologically and economically viable. This three-day **North Coast Forest Conservation Conference** held at Shone Farm was a wonderful coming together of individuals interested in protecting the ecological resources of the Redwood Empire and our way of life. Thank you to the Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group and the California Northern Region Land Trust Council for partnering with us on this enlightening endeavor that will have far-reaching benefits.

“One cannot be pessimistic about the West. When it fully learns that cooperation, not rugged individualism, is the quality that most characterizes and preserves it ... then it has a chance to create a society to match its scenery.”

— WALLACE STEGNER



Sonoma Land Trust — the go-to partner

Working collaboratively with our partner groups to create a society that matches Sonoma County's unparalleled scenery is one of Sonoma Land Trust's goals. For us, the bottom line is the land itself; if there is a good project on the table and we have the resources to help, we will. That is why other groups often request our assistance with structuring and financing transactions, as the Open Space District did to find funding for Sonoma Mountain Ranch in 2009, and as Regional Parks has recently done in asking our help to fund the final 297 acres in the Mayacamas that it is hoped will complete the future Mark West Creek Regional Park and Open Space Preserve. Our acquisitions staff is highly experienced and well regarded, and their assistance to other organizations has led to the protection of additional signature landscapes in our county.

Sharing the land with others

Developing a land ethic in the community is only possible when people get out of their normal routines and engage in meaningful experiences on the land. When we give people the opportunity to stretch their legs on our trails, paint a watercolor by a creek, learn the differences between raptor species, immerse their whole being in a tumble of wildflowers, and participate in a workshop about grasslands or forest ecology, we are helping our fellow community members develop their own personal sense of place. This is the role of Sonoma Land Trust's On the Land program, which began in 2011 and is quickly expanding. Between the public hike series on the Jenner Headlands, our annual wildflower and raptor hikes, open days at Glen Oaks Ranch, environmental education outings with our partner groups, and volunteer workdays on any number of properties, “kids of all ages” enjoyed outdoor activities with the Land Trust last year. This year, the public hike series is taking it further with even more outings that engage one's senses and mind. Look for a fall schedule soon that will knock your hiking boots off!



The Jenner Headlands is a raptor thoroughfare, with more than 90 birds of prey per hour flying by during the peak of the fall migration. This has made our raptor hike series very popular! Photo by Ingrid Stearns.

“The very process of restoring the land to health is the process through which we become attuned to Nature and, through Nature, with ourselves.”

— CHRIS MASER, AUTHOR OF *FOREST PRIMEVAL*



Taking care of the land

You’ve heard it before: Acquiring a property is just the first step. After that, our stewardship team delves deep into the land to learn all about its resources and condition, sets in place a plan for restoring it based on the latest science, and then does what needs to be done. That is different for every property, but because of our large acquisitions in recent years, Sonoma Land Trust always has major restoration projects going on all fronts. At Toley Creek Ranch, we’ve planted hundreds of trees to return the stream to a healthier state. At Pitkin Marsh, our intensive hand-weeding method has contributed to an increase of 723 percent of the highly endangered white sedge.

At Live Oaks Ranch, we’ve been repairing the residences and, at Glen Oaks Ranch, we’ve received a large donation that will enable us to restore the historic stone barn. Glen Oaks Ranch has also been the focus of considerable trail building and native plantings.



Student Conservation Association members helped clear trails at Laufenburg Ranch last spring. Photo by Bob Neale.



Above: Students from Project Regeneration, a program of Conservation Corps North Bay, spent a day digging homes for burrowing owls at Sears Point Ranch — and found an interesting skull along the way.

Below: Construction will begin soon on 1,000 acres of tidal marsh that we will restore at Sears Point Ranch along the edge of San Francisco Bay. Both photos by Scott Hess Photography.

“Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed.”

— WALLACE STEGNER



But the biggest stories are taking place at the Jenner Headlands and Sears Point Ranch. After several years of planning and fundraising, the Baylands Center has been built to great acclaim. Thank you to architect Olle Lundberg who donated his formidable talent in designing this stunning structure, which has become a greatly admired meeting place for our hikes and other events. To relax on the deck and watch the resident wild animals and birds hunt and play amidst the grasslands is a great pleasure. Also, earlier this year, the final EIR for the Sears Point Wetland Restoration Project was certified. That is an enormous step and means that we can soon start to restore the historic tidal marsh.

Our Jenner Headlands team, which includes staff from both Sonoma Land Trust and our partner The Wildlands Conservancy, has been in a race the last couple of years to research and develop the comprehensive management plan that will guide our restoration and outreach activities for the property. This “tome” was completed on time this spring and





Our spring wildflower hikes have become an annual ritual drawing people from all over the Bay Area. Here, Baylands program manager Julian Meisler (seated left) discusses the various plants and grasses found at Sears Point Ranch. Photo by Ellen Gavazza.

“Look! Look! Look deep into nature and you will understand everything.”

— ALBERT EINSTEIN



contains the goals and strategies for managing this 5,630-acre property in a way that will conserve and enhance its substantial ecological resources while providing greater public recreation opportunities. By using active land management tools, such as grazing and tree thinning, we will keep the coastal grasslands in good shape and grow the forests older and healthier. We'll also be building a parking lot along Highway 1 as a key step toward opening the property for hiking at will in addition to the guided hikes that are currently offered.

Your support drives our conservation work

Sonoma Land Trust exists to make sure our remaining wild lands remain intact. Even in this tough economic climate, our efforts to save land have not diminished.

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

Over the past decade, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation has had a transformative effect on conservation and the landscapes of Sonoma County through its San Francisco Bay Area Program.

The Foundation made possible the acquisition and restoration of Sears Point, Tolay Creek and the Jenner Headlands. They also provided grants leading to the creation of the Bohemia Ecological Preserve and the protection of the main canyon at the Cedars, and they have funded the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to demonstrate the economic value of open space.

Across the board, the recent progress that has been made protecting Sonoma County's natural landscapes has been propelled by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation's visionary philanthropy.



This spring marked the fourth year of a grassland monitoring project at the Estero Americano Preserve, done in partnership between Sonoma State University, the California Native Plant Society and Sonoma Land Trust. Photo by Ingrid Stearns.

Jean Schulz Wildflower Meadow

In gratitude for Jean Schulz’s extraordinary contribution that helped to protect the Jenner Headlands, the scenic meadow that overlooks the ocean and bursts into bloom each spring has been named the Jean Schulz Wildflower Meadow. Her gift ensures that future generations will be able to stand in this beautiful flowering meadow and see the same dazzling view that we enjoy today.



Rather, with the help of our donors, we are moving ahead faster than ever before.

Thank you for donating to your local land trust. Your contributions remain right here in Sonoma County’s economy and are put to work preserving what you love most about this beautiful place. Virtually everywhere you go in Sonoma County, you gaze upon land that has been protected forever by your donations.

Individual donations established the Parks Alliance, allowed us to protect the four properties described earlier, are expanding our On the Land Program, will be helping to bring steelhead back to Stuart Creek and are enabling us pursue a new regional park in the Mayacamas.

“The Holy Land is everywhere.”

— BLACK ELK

It certainly is in Sonoma County. Thank you for being a vital part of the work we do to preserve forever what we all love about this exceptional place we call home.



Our diversified portfolio of conservation projects

ANCHOR PRESERVES

	Acreage
1 Baylands: Sears Point	2,327
2 Estero Americano Preserve	127
3 Glen Oaks Ranch	236
4 Jenner Headlands	5,630
5 Laufenburg Ranch	179
6 Little Black Mountain	500

OWNED IN FEE

7 Baylands: Leonard Ranch	244
8 Baylands: North Parcel	279
9 Baylands: Tolay Creek Ranch	1,665
10 Cedars: Gateway	40
11 Freezeout Redwoods	89
12 Live Oaks Ranch	572
13 Lower Pitkin Marsh	27
14 Secret Pasture	300
15 Sonoma Creek	2
16 Stuart Creek Run	35
17 White Rock Preserve	92

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

18 Airport Boulevard	50
19 Bald Mountain Ranch	420
20 Baylands: Lower Ranch	528
21 Baylands: Tolay Creek Riparian	36
22 Bear Canyon	96
23 Blucher Creek	7
24 Bohemia Ranch	964
25 Canelis Old-Growth Redwoods	1
26 Cuffeys Cove	1,068
27 Dimbat Tree Farm (Larsen)	160
28 Drake Family	34
29 Elarra	60
30 Enchanted Wood	8
31 Finley Creek	240
32 Fish Rock Ranch	7
33 Gird Creek	99
34 Knaus Forest at Nuns Canyon	36
35 Little Creek	40
36 Mason	18

37 Middle Reach	44
38 Mill Creek Old Growth	54
39 Morgan's Hill	22
40 Mother Gardens at OAEC	3
41 Nefertierra	78
42 Oak Hill Farm	677
43 OGA Little Creek	73
44 Old Hill Ranch	37
45 Quail Hill	81
46 Rancheria Creek Recesses	602
47 River Bend	32
48 Rock Fall Woods	31
49 Rocky Point	255
50 Santa Rosa Creek Headwaters	162
51 Sassin	6
52 Summerfield Waldorf School	32
53 Sunrise Redwoods	20
54 Van Winkle Redwoods	46
55 Ward Creek	240
56 Watson Ranch	530
57 West Ridge Knolls	74
58 Wild Turkey Hill	8

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE—ACQUISITION

59 Cedars: Main Canyon	500
60 Cloudy Bend	388
61 Harrison Grade Serpentine	32
62 Laguna de Santa Rosa	535
63 McCord Ranch	2,786
64 Rigler Preserve	370
65 Sonoma Mountain Ranch	283

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE—STEWARDSHIP

66 Baylands: Petaluma River Marsh	49
67 Bel Marin Keys	1,500

TRANSFER

68 Baylands: Halperin Baylands	11
69 Baylands: Sonoma Baylands	348
70 Red Hill	910

Financial Statements

The amounts presented here are derived from the Sonoma Land Trust's audited financial statements for the years ending December 31, 2011 and December 31, 2010. Copies of the audited report of financial statements are available upon request.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT DECEMBER 31

ASSETS	2011	2010
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 3,915,741	\$ 7,142,642
Investments	5,256,674	2,488,560
Contracts and other receivables	469,897	1,288,729
Pledges receivable	329,574	591,640
Deposits and other assets	67,106	52,271
Conservation lands and easements	66,984,547	66,965,736
Property and equipment, net	920,447	935,130
<i>Total Assets</i>	<i>\$ 77,943,986</i>	<i>\$ 79,464,708</i>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
<u>Liabilities</u>		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 402,749	\$ 339,393
Deferred income	237,699	282,546
Short-term note payable	140,000	—
Current maturities of long-term debt	—	3,508
Long-term non-recourse debt	—	—
<i>Total Liabilities</i>	<i>\$ 780,448</i>	<i>\$ 625,447</i>
<u>Net Assets</u>		
Unrestricted		
Available for operation	\$ 3,465,252	\$ 4,771,314
Board designated — conservation projects	787,662	707,870
Investment in conservation lands	66,984,547	66,453,736
Total unrestricted net assets	\$ 71,237,461	\$ 71,932,920
Temporarily restricted net assets	5,926,077	6,906,341
<i>Total Net Assets</i>	<i>\$ 77,163,538</i>	<i>\$ 78,839,261</i>
<i>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</i>	<i>\$ 77,943,986</i>	<i>\$ 79,464,708</i>

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31

REVENUE AND SUPPORT		
Contributions and grants	\$ 1,751,746	\$ 6,281,904
In-kind contributions	17,667	11,200
In-kind contributions: Conservation land & improvements	21,944	1,106,957
Project income	906,692	890,348
Investment income	(92,086)	179,246
Other gains (losses)	(7,741)	(4,346)
<i>Total Revenue and Support</i>	<i>\$ 2,598,222</i>	<i>\$ 8,465,309</i>
EXPENDITURES		
Projects and stewardship	\$ 3,123,604	\$ 2,276,143
Governance and administrative	711,749	665,920
Fundraising	375,092	395,608
<i>Total Expenditures</i>	<i>\$ 4,270,445</i>	<i>\$ 3,337,671</i>
Net income before land acquisitions & donations	\$(1,672,223)	\$ 5,127,638
Land acquisition expenses	(3,500)	—
Land acquisition contributions (net)	—	12,905,244
<i>Net income after land acquisitions & donations</i>	<i>\$ (1,675,723)</i>	<i>\$ 18,032,882</i>



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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 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