



In Sonoma County,  
it's all about the land

SONOMA LAND TRUST  
*2012–2013 Report to the Community*

Dear Friends,

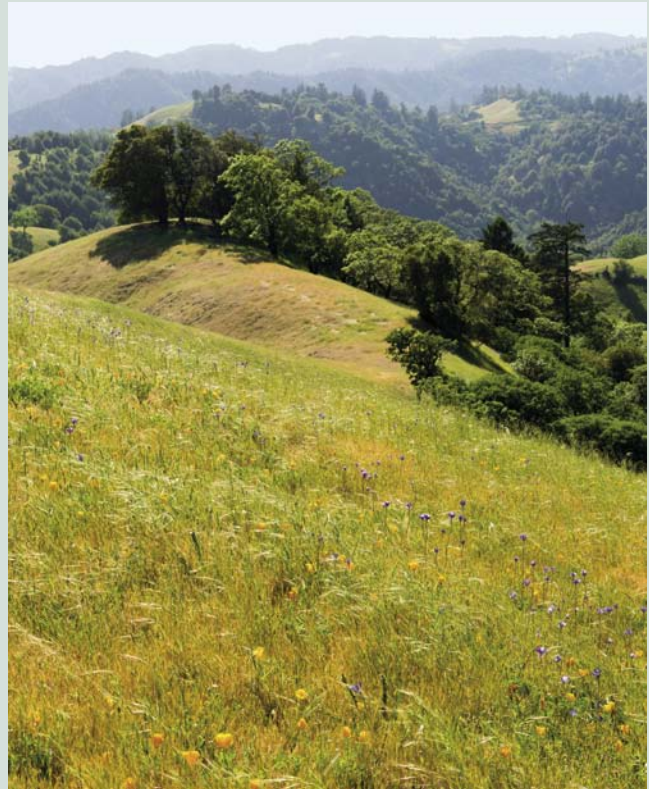
All of us who live or work in, or just visit, Sonoma County have been given this extraordinary legacy of varied and beautiful, rural landscapes to enjoy.

Drive Highway 1 from Bodega to Gualala and the views along the coast will take your breath away. Cut over Coleman Valley Road or go up Myers Grade near Fort Ross and you'll get into golden hills and oak woodlands. In the south along Highway 37 it is wide open. Nowhere else around San Francisco Bay is there such a natural, undeveloped swath of land from the marshes at sea level up to the top of Cougar Mountain at Sears Point. Head north through the Sonoma Valley and enjoy the vineyards nestled at the base of Sonoma Mountain and the Mayacamas Range to the east. Then there are our rivers and their tributary watersheds — the Russian, the Gualala, Sonoma Creek and the Petaluma River marshes. Beauty surrounds us, and that is why there is a Sonoma Land Trust — to keep our beautiful, rural landscapes intact for future generations.

Thanks to each of you whose name is listed in this report. Sonoma Land Trust has made excellent progress over the past year. For one thing, we are accredited! We have always felt a sense of obligation to build a strong institution — in part, because the conservation easements we agree to enforce are for forever. We are pleased to be recognized for the high standards we maintain.

At Jenner with The Wildlands Conservancy, and at Sears Point with Ducks Unlimited, extensive restoration and stewardship projects are underway.

On larger acquisitions, we normally assemble capital from a network of public agency funders. Recently, we drew on our own resources (which you, our members, provided) to pick up several parcels in the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor. Your support is more important than ever.



*Saving Pole Mountain will connect the Jenner Headlands with Little Black Mountain Preserve, providing wildlife and plants with the flexibility to move from sea level to the top of the mountain as the climate changes. Photo by Lance Kuehne Photography..*

As this report goes to press, we have signed a contract to purchase the 238-acre Pole Mountain property (the highest point on the Sonoma Coast), which will link our 500-acre Little Black Mountain Preserve in Cazadero with our 5,630-acre Jenner Headlands Preserve on the coast — one more reason we need your continuing help and why generations that follow will thank you for having done your part to protect our magnificent landscapes.

*Thank you!*



Denny Van Ness  
Board Chair



Ralph Benson  
Executive Director



Oak woodlands are a living symbol of Sonoma County. Photo by Scott Hess Photography.

*“The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”*

— PROVERB



The best time to preserve land is always now and, as always, Sonoma Land Trust has taken every opportunity over the past year to leverage our past successes and create ever more connections between the Sonoma County landscapes we hold dear. These landscapes are our legacy to future generations and we thank you for making this important work possible.

Despite the funding constraints being experienced by our public agency partners, your support has continued to propel Sonoma Land Trust forward on key projects that are adding protection for wildlife, restoring wetlands and keeping our great redwood forest intact.

But first, did you hear the news?

**WE GOT AN “A” FOR ACCREDITATION**

Accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance,



signifies that Sonoma Land Trust is meeting national standards for excellence, upholding the public trust and maintaining the ability to protect our lands forever. As of April, Sonoma Land Trust is proud to have been recognized as one of the 207, or 12 percent, of land trusts across the country to have been awarded accreditation. This seal, which we are now authorized to use, indicates *your* land trust’s capacity to honor the commitments we have made to protect Sonoma County’s treasured landscapes in perpetuity. It is a promise and a privilege.



*The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor stretches from Sonoma Mountain across Sonoma Creek and the valley floor, and east up to the crest of the Mayacamas Range. But in the Sonoma Valley, it narrows down to a slender pinchpoint that needs to be protected to reduce the barriers to wildlife movement and prevent Sonoma Mountain from becoming a genetic island. The corridor was first mapped by the Sonoma Ecology Center several years ago. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.*

*Below: These gray fox kits and other mammals depend on the wildlife corridor remaining open. Photo by D. Robert and Lorri Franz.*

## Sonoma County is blessed with an extraordinary range of beautiful landscapes

For the past year, we have been most active in the Sonoma Valley, at the southern tip of the county along San Pablo Bay, and along the North Coast in the redwoods...



### **A WILDLIFE HIGHWAY — ACROSS THE VALLEY**

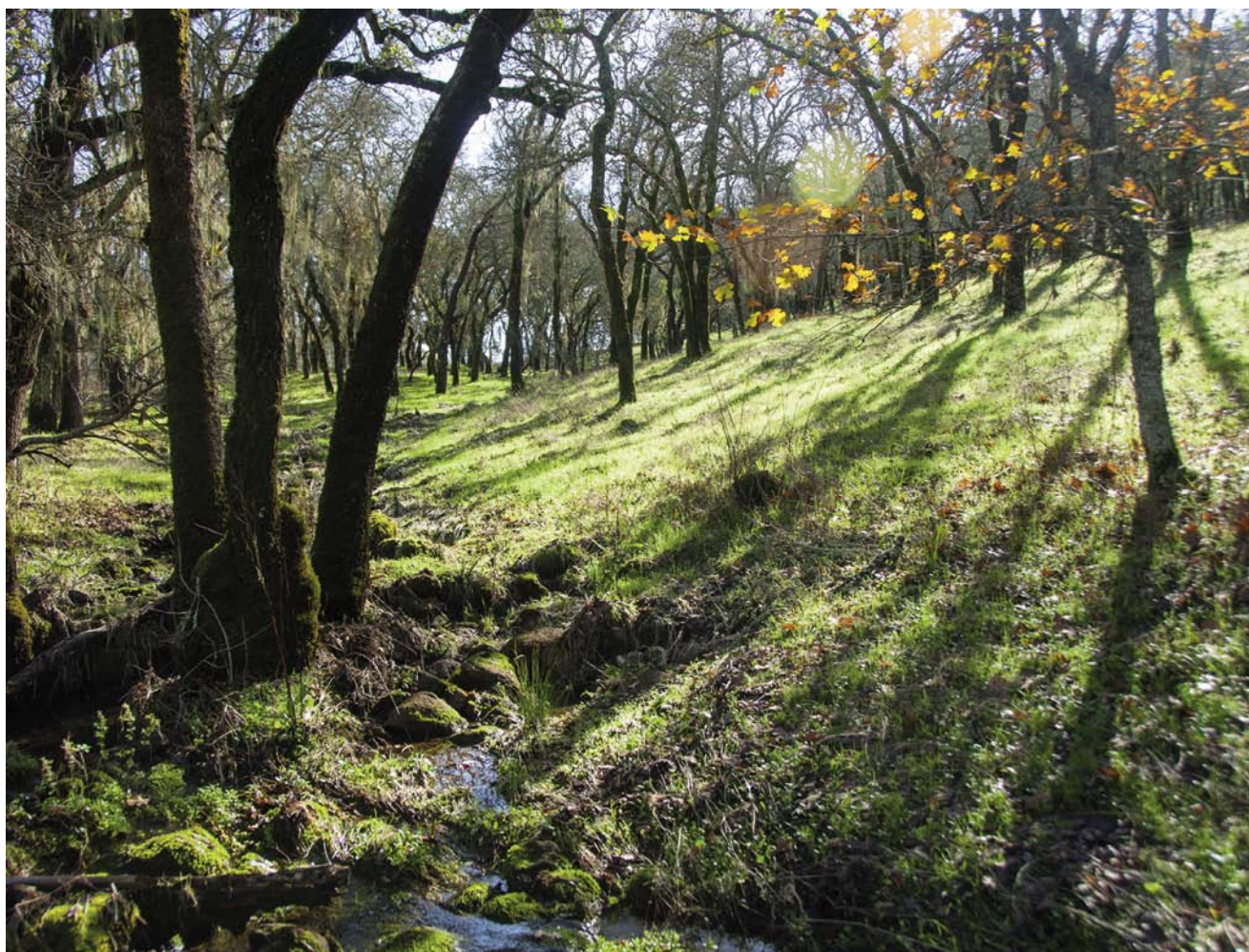
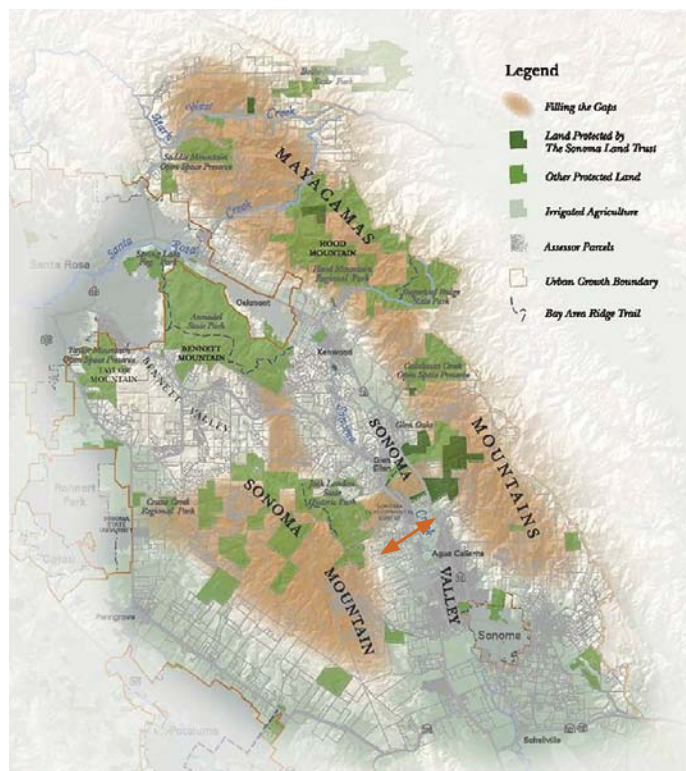
Most of our members would say that it is critical to conserve habitat and passages for wildlife. But without a concerted effort, it won't happen. It isn't easy: Animals have to contend with dangerous road crossings, vineyards, fencing and houses. And yet, mountain lions, bobcats, foxes, coyotes, deer and the rare bear are still able to roam along the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor as it extends from the Mayacamas to Sonoma Mountain. But for how long?

More than 9,000 acres in this region are already protected, which is likely why the wildlife populations

are as viable as they are. However, the corridor they depend on to move back and forth throughout the wider region, all the way from Lake County to Marin, narrows down to a “pinchpoint” in the Sonoma Valley that is in extreme danger of being closed up. That is where we are concentrating.

Fortunately, thanks to our recent strategic acquisitions to restore the steelhead run in Stuart Creek, we are well poised to increase the permeability and permanence of the wildlife corridor as a whole. Right now, we are working to either purchase outright or purchase the development rights of key properties, collaborating with neighbors and partners to reduce fencing and other wildlife barriers, and restoring habitat where it has degraded.

Protecting the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor is an immense and exciting endeavor — one that is fitting for the land trust that was founded in the Sonoma Valley 37 years ago.



*Last year, Sonoma Land Trust made three additional acquisitions along Stuart Creek. Photo by John Hansas Photography.*

**PREPARING FOR RISING WATERS —  
ALONG THE BAY**

More than 90 percent of San Pablo Bay’s wetlands have been lost to development over the past century, but we have been doing our part in Sonoma County to restore them. At Sears Point, our plans for reestablishing 1,000 acres of tidal wetlands are based on the latest climate science that recommends building a “habitat levee” fronted by restored tidal marsh, also known as nature’s low-cost defense against sea level rise. The gently sloped levee buffered by a nearly 4,000-foot wide vegetated marsh will allow nature to protect the shoreline from sea level rise and wildlife from storm surges in one of the best, least expensive and most aesthetically pleasing ways, according to a recent study by The Bay Institute. The vegetation of tidal marsh cuts wave size dramatically and absorbs surging water like a sponge — naturally.



*After nearly a decade of preparation, which included an extensive planning and regulatory process, and the raising of nearly \$18 million in state and federal grants, the Sears Point tidal marsh restoration is set to begin this fall. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.*



*Keeping the redwood forest on Sonoma's North Coast ecologically and economically viable is a key goal of Sonoma Land Trust. Succeeding will result in a landscape harboring a wide diversity of species and healthy watersheds. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.*

### **GIVING FORESTS TIME TO RECOVER — IN THE REDWOODS**

Sonoma County's redwood forest runs along the North Coast from just south of the Jenner Headlands on up to Preservation Ranch, which extends, over many miles, to the Mendocino County line. Thanks to new partner, The Conservation Fund, which acquired Preservation Ranch at the end of May, the nearly 20,000 acres will remain intact forest rather than vineyards — an enormous safe haven of biodiversity connected to 55,000 forested acres in Mendocino County that also belong to The Fund. This is conservation on a grand scale, and Sonoma Land Trust was pleased to secure a \$1 million grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to help bring this deal to fruition.

Both at Preservation Ranch (renamed Buckeye Forest) and the Jenner Headlands, the second-, third- and fourth-

growth forests will be regenerated through restoration forestry techniques, removing the dense underbrush of skinny, less viable trees to assist the stronger trees to grow older and bigger. Over time, this will result in vibrant, healthier forests with old-growth characteristics.

And next up for the 5,630-acre Jenner Headlands, our partner organization, The Wildlands Conservancy, will be building a parking lot, day use area and restrooms to set the stage for open access to the property.

There are few places on earth with the amount of natural diversity we enjoy here in Sonoma County. As we adapt to the realities of our changing climate, the need to protect as much of it as possible for future generations is greater than ever. Our vision for each of the above regions relies on you and your continued willingness to keep Sonoma County beautiful and biologically vigorous.



*Springtime brings wildflower enthusiasts from all over the Bay Area to enjoy the bounty in the Baylands; in fall and winter, our raptor hikes draw a huge number of birds of prey devotees; and scenic hikes are offered throughout the year for those wishing to simply bask in the wild beauty surrounding them. Photo by Lance Kuehne Photography.*



*Acquired in 2007 by Sonoma Land Trust, 1,665-acre Tolay Creek Ranch includes 2.5 miles of Tolay Creek, which we have been working diligently to restore with the help of volunteers young and old. Next year, the ranch will be transferred to Sonoma County Regional Parks, where it will be added to Tolay Lake Regional Park, doubling its size! Photo by Scott Hess.*

## **CONNECTING PEOPLE — TO THE LAND**

Sonoma Land Trust owns some of the most stunning properties in the world and, at a time when many of us suffer from a “nature deficit,” we have been expanding our programming to get people out on this land. With a full-time outings coordinator and growing cadre of interns and volunteers, we now offer opportunities in all seasons for people to experience the splendor and richness of our landscapes.

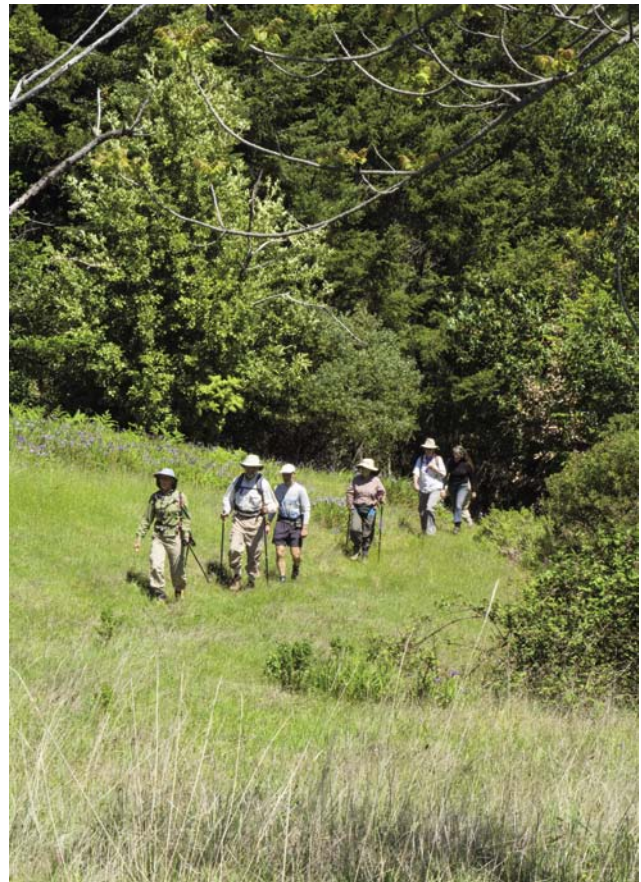
Our growing inventory of projects means that our stewardship staff is busier than ever. They could not accomplish nearly as much as they do without a dedicated and skilled group of volunteers. From planting trees to clearing trails to leading hikes, volunteers are vital to Sonoma Land Trust’s efforts and we salute each and every one of them for the important role they play in caring for the land.



Other volunteers raise their hands to work in the office, helping with the multitude of needs of a lively organization. In 2012, we estimate that, organization-wide, more than 350 individuals contributed 3,600 hours of volunteer power to Sonoma Land Trust. For their generous efforts, we are immensely grateful.

### **RENEWING OUR HERITAGE — IN THE PARKS**

The past couple of years have been tough for our magnificent state parks with meager funding and turmoil in Sacramento. Many of our nonprofit partners, including Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, the Sonoma Ecology Center, LandPaths, the Sonoma Trails Council, Jack London Park Partners and many others, stepped forward to keep the parks open and cared for. Sonoma Land Trust, with County Regional Parks and the Open Space District, created the Parks Alliance for Sonoma County. This ad hoc group functions as a forum for the park support groups and a voice for Sonoma County parks and open spaces through what we hope will be a period of renewal for our state park system.



*Volunteers collecting grassland data at the Jenner Headlands. Photo by Jim Coleman.*

## Claire Russell — A gift of her own



There are many ways to support Sonoma Land Trust. Recently, Claire Russell, a retired teacher, donated a beautiful 22-acre parcel of land near the Sonoma-Napa border. It's a beautiful property that serves as important wildlife habitat, but doesn't

fit our criteria for becoming a preserve. So in order to permanently protect it, we placed a conservation easement over the property, which now enables us to sell it to a buyer who is willing to live within the development limits.

Claire was delighted with this solution, which allowed her to both protect the land she has loved for so long and benefit the work of Sonoma Land Trust. She has asked us to name this project after her brother, who, she said, loved the land even more than she did, so it will be forever known as the John Holden Conservation Easement. Claire remarked, "I feel this gift of land is a gift to my great-grandchildren. May their generation always find a piece of nature in which to reconnect and restore themselves." *Thank you, Claire, for your gift that will give in perpetuity!*



## GIVING — FOR THE LAND

With this annual report, we take the opportunity to thank the many new donors who have joined Sonoma Land Trust, as well as those who have faithfully renewed their annual support. We count on annual donations from our members



*Pole Mountain, the highest peak along the Sonoma Coast, has become available and we are racing to raise the \$2.35 million to purchase it. Photo by Lance Kuehne Photography.*

to provide the resources for our ongoing work to preserve this incomparable place we call home. Every dollar was put to work right here in Sonoma County to sustain a wide variety of land conservation activities, from restoring steelhead spawning habitat in Stuart Creek to helping to create a new 1,100-acre regional park near Pepperwood Preserve, and much more.

Exciting new projects are in the works that will lead to 4,000 more acres of restored tidal marsh along the Bay, connect two wild North Coast properties, increase recreational access to the Jenner Headlands, expand protection in the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor, and much more.

We can't slow down when there is still so much irreplaceable land at risk. The remarkable support we are provided by our community gives Sonoma Land Trust the ability to move quickly when opportunities arise. Thank you for your enduring love of the land that makes it all possible.

# Our diversified portfolio of conservation projects



## Financial Statements

The amounts presented here are derived from the Sonoma Land Trust's financial statements for the years ending December 31, 2012 and December 31, 2011. Copies of the audited reports of financial statements are available upon request.

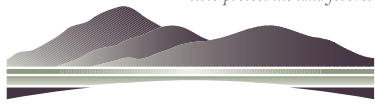
### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT DECEMBER 31

ASSETS	2012 (pre-audit)	2011 (audited)
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 4,873,431	\$ 3,915,741
Investments	2,344,352	5,256,674
Contracts and other receivables	370,407	474,198
Pledges receivable	1,301,120	329,574
Deposits and other assets	60,985	62,796
Conservation lands and easements	68,656,882	66,984,547
Property and equipment, net	931,340	920,447
<i>Total Assets</i>	<i>\$ 78,538,517</i>	<i>\$ 77,943,977</i>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
<u>Liabilities</u>		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 381,706	\$ 402,749
Deferred income	137,652	237,699
Short-term note payable	350,000	140,000
Current maturities of long-term debt	—	—
Long-term non-recourse debt	—	—
<i>Total Liabilities</i>	<i>\$ 869,358</i>	<i>\$ 780,448</i>
<u>Net Assets</u>		
Unrestricted		
Available for operation	\$ 2,502,300	\$ 3,546,697
Board designated — conservation projects	734,721	695,450
Investment in conservation lands	68,777,096	66,984,547
Total unrestricted net assets	\$ 72,014,117	\$ 71,226,694
Temporarily restricted net assets	5,655,042	5,936,835
<i>Total Net Assets</i>	<i>\$ 77,669,159</i>	<i>\$ 77,163,529</i>
<i>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</i>	<i>\$ 78,538,517</i>	<i>\$ 77,943,977</i>

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

REVENUE AND SUPPORT		
Contributions and grants	\$ 4,671,722	\$ 1,751,746
In-kind contributions	4,216	17,667
In-kind contributions: Conservation land & improvements	335,320	21,944
Project income	708,893	906,692
Investment income	232,530	(92,086)
Other gains (losses)	—	(7,741)
<i>Total Revenue and Support</i>	<i>\$ 5,952,681</i>	<i>\$ 2,598,222</i>
EXPENDITURES		
Projects and stewardship	\$ 2,962,690	3,121,271
Governance and administrative	647,006	774,731
Fundraising	380,528	374,452
<i>Total Expenditures</i>	<i>\$ 3,990,224</i>	<i>\$ 4,270,454</i>
Net income before land acquisitions & donations	\$ 1,962,457	\$ (1,672,232)
Land acquisition expenses	(1,451,828)	(3,500)
<i>Net income after land acquisitions &amp; donations</i>	<i>\$ 510,629</i>	<i>\$ (1,675,732)</i>

...to protect the land forever



SONOMA LAND TRUST

966 Sonoma Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

[www.sonomalandtrust.org](http://www.sonomalandtrust.org)

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Bev Scotland, Development Director  
Ingrid Spetz, Outings Coordinator

Editor/Writer: Sheri Cardo

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