Our construction crew at Sears Point has been digging and moving earth nonstop since we broke ground on the 1,000-acre Sears Point Wetlands Restoration Project in June. The photo above reflects their labors during this first phase of construction. The marsh mounds are designed as barriers to waves that would otherwise hinder marsh development. These topographic oases will be among the first areas colonized by marsh plants. Once connected to San Pablo Bay, the channels will help distribute needed sediment from the bay and the Petaluma River, and the 2.5-mile levee that extends the width of the property will also serve as a public trail.

We hope you will join us next November when we breach the old levee and let in the bay waters to flood this sculpted basin. Stay tuned!

A tidal marsh in the (re)making —
Sears Point transformed

We’ve witnessed wholesale land transformation over the last six months and, next year, it will all disappear under the tides, until it rises again as marshland.

— Julian Meisler, Baylands Program Manager

If you were flying east over Sears Point Ranch today, this is what you would see and, no, those aren’t crop circles. They’re some of the 500 marsh mounds that have been dug out of six miles of channels five-feet deep and 200-feet wide as part of our wetlands restoration project. Next November, this plain will be underwater and tidal marsh will begin to grow. Photo by Robert Janover.
A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Transformations and transitions

This is the second newsletter in a row that features a photo of bare dirt on the cover. Our restoration team is down and dirty. It may not be visible from Highway 37, but our massive Sears Point Restoration Project, being carried out in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, is well on the way to reshaping the shoreline of San Pablo Bay. Check back in 10 or 20 years and the disturbed dirt shown on our cover photo will be alive with marsh vegetation and the life it sustains.

We are also highlighting a number of the landscape-scale conservation projects that have been accomplished over the years during which I have been privileged to serve as your executive director. These were team efforts and I’d like to give a special shout out to my colleagues Wendy Eliot and Julian Meisler for their leadership at the Baylands; to Wendy, John McCaull and Tony Nelson for their work in the Sonoma Valley; to Amy Chesnut for her leadership on the Sonoma Coast and all matters related to forestry and working landscapes; and to Bob Neale for his leadership of our stewardship team.

We’ve had an excellent slate of candidates from around the country apply to be our next executive director. Our board, under the leadership of chair Denny Van Ness and search committee chair Neal Fishman, expects to make the final selection later this month. So there will be a new face here for our spring newsletter. By then, I expect to have much more time with my family and friends to be out hiking on the gorgeous Sonoma County landscapes that have been protected through your volunteer work and contributions over the years. Thank you!

Please remember to make your year-end, tax-deductible contribution to propel Sonoma Land Trust into 2015 with our sails full.

Ralph Benson
A $1 million challenge
Help Sonoma Land Trust raise
$1 million by the end of the year!

BY DEIRDRE HOLBROOK

Why? There are a million reasons why in this spectacular million-acre county, but we’ll start with just a few very special ones. As 2014 comes to a close, we are working hard to take advantage of the following now-or-never opportunities to protect and restore four iconic landscapes from one end of Sonoma County to the other:

1) A spectacular redwood forest in the Gualala River watershed;
2) Hundreds of acres of coastal prairie along the Sonoma Coast;
3) The 1,000-acre Sonoma Developmental Center property in the heart of Glen Ellen; and
4) Completing the restoration of 1,000 acres of tidal marsh at Sears Point.

Raising $1 million now will help us continue to work on the scale that makes a difference in a million-acre county, enabling us to preserve the land that makes it so extraordinary. This work is not possible without your support!

Two very generous supporters, Mirka Knaster and Larry Jacobs, launched our million-dollar campaign with a spectacular $200,000 gift. It came with a challenge: If we can raise $600,000 more, Mirka and Larry will “top off” the campaign with a second $200,000 gift. That will get us to $1 million. It’s a stretch, but we’re confident we can meet the challenge with your support.

Mirka and Larry are making this commitment because land conservation “is so tangible and is something lasting.” “Once land is protected, it’s something that many generations will be able to access,” says Larry. “We want to do what we can to protect this place for the next generation of kids and families.”

“Many of us are here because of the natural environment,” says Mirka of the county’s North Coast, where she and Larry live. “If we didn’t work to preserve it, this place could have looked like Southern California. Instead, it’s still a rugged, wild coast. The redwoods practically come down to the ocean here.”

This appreciation of the land was driven home this year, Mirka recalls, when she flew over the coast. “It was so stunning I had tears in my eyes. I felt so emotional, so privileged, to live in a place like this with its forests and wildlife — fox, mountain lion, coyote and even bear. I love the fact that it’s still as wild as it is. If we can help preserve the land rather than see it developed, we would like to do that.”

Thank you, Larry and Mirka, for your support!

To make a year-end gift today, please use the enclosed envelope or go to www.sonomalandtrust.org/donate. If you have any questions about this challenge or making a legacy gift, please contact me at deirdre@sonomalandtrust.org or 526-6930 ext. 122.

Deirdre Holbrook is SLT’s interim development director/major gifts officer.

It was so stunning I had tears in my eyes. I felt so emotional, so privileged, to live in a place like this with its forests and wildlife — fox, mountain lion, coyote and even bear.

I love the fact that it’s still as wild as it is.
Celebrating Ralph Benson

BY RETA LOCKERT

As Ralph Benson prepares to retire by the end of this year, and the rest of us get ready to welcome a new executive director onto the land, we take a few moments to recognize the sea change that has occurred since Ralph joined us in 2003.

Sonoma Land Trust has made a quantum leap in terms of lands conserved and partnerships forged during the past 12 years with Ralph Benson as executive director. Having ridden his horse along the Russian River as a teen, his abiding affection for the extraordinary places of Sonoma County drove his decision to return to land conservation after a brief retirement after 24 years at the Trust for Public Land.

“Working on a landscape scale” was effected with the first major project of his tenure, the Sears Point/Dickson Ranch acquisition, where a major casino had been proposed along the bay. “Sonoma Land Trust should be a premier civic institution in Sonoma County,” he said often in the early days, and the growth of membership, donations and impact bespeak our moving into that role.

But don’t take our word for it. Here are accolades from conservation allies who join us in celebrating Ralph:

“Ralph’s magic to bring private and government sectors together to save our rural landscape will leave a beautiful monument to his love of our Sonoma County.”
— Bill Kortum, Longtime SLT board member and former 2nd District Sonoma County Supervisor

“I don’t remember when it was that I first met Ralph, but it always seemed as though I had known him forever. I loved the fact that we could hike along and talk about any sort of land issues and I always felt more enlightened. To me, that is a perfect day!”
— Jeannie Schulz, Community leader

“No landscape has been too small, no landscape too large for Ralph’s highly effective, low-key, inclusive efforts on behalf of Sonoma County’s natural beauty. During a crucial decade in the Bay Area’s great growth, his subtle, inspired leadership brought together hundreds of citizens’ dreams with millions of public and private funds to save thousands of acres of Sonoma County’s age-old treasures of coastline, mountains, oak woodlands and meadows. Ralph won our deep admiration and affection.

Making a difference — conservation on a landscape scale

Under Ralph Benson’s leadership over the last 12 years, thanks to our members and volunteers, and with able partners, such as the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, California Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, The Wildlands Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Save the Redwoods League, and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, large iconic landscapes throughout Sonoma County will remain intact for all of us to enjoy today and for the pleasure and health of the generations that follow.

Nearly the entire southern tip of Sonoma County has been protected as permanent open space, including the 1,665-acre Tolay Creek Ranch (formerly Roche Ranch), now sporting thousands of willows along the creek. It will be turned over to Sonoma County Regional Parks in 2015 to be added to Tolay Lake Regional Park, which will become the largest regional park in the county.

Sonoma Land Trust’s purchase of the 5,630-acre Jenner Headlands in 2009 was augmented in 2013 with the purchase of the 238-acre Pole Mountain property, connecting the Headlands with Sonoma Land Trust’s 500-acre Little Black Mountain Preserve for a 6,368-acre swath of protected land from the coast to Cazadero. Here, one sees from the top of Pole Mountain over the Jenner Headlands to the coast.

Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.
for the great good work he has done for our wonderful county, and we give him our best wishes for his future.”
— Mary and Dick Hafner, Community leaders and longtime board member (Mary)

“Ralph is the face of Sonoma Land Trust, exemplifying the thoughtfulness, earnestness and dedication we expect from it. But because of his leadership, we have reason to celebrate the wonder and beauty of the land we have preserved in Sonoma County for all time.”
— Susan Gorin, 1st District Sonoma County Supervisor

“Going to Rally [national land trust conference] with Ralph as your executive director is like going to the prom with the hottest date.”
— Aimee Carroll Crawford, Former acquisitions staffperson

“Guided by Ralph’s bold vision and effective leadership, the Sonoma Land Trust has become one of the Bay Area’s most consequential conservation organizations, permanently protecting a wide range of Sonoma’s beautiful landscapes and advancing environmental stewardship from the tidal marshes of the baylands to the redwood forests on the North Coast.”
— David Loeb, Bay Nature editor

“Ralph’s prior decades of national conservation experience proved invaluable in expanding North Bay protected lands during his 12 years at Sonoma Land Trust, enabling the local organization to complete projects of national significance, such as the acquisition of the Jenner Headlands and the restoration of Sears Point tidal marsh.”
— Jared Huffman, U.S. House of Representatives

“Ralph Benson is that rare practical man who is also a game-changing visionary. A century from now, when people step outside and marvel at the Bay Area’s natural wonders, Ralph’s achievements will still be everywhere in view.”
— Ralph Jake Warner, Nolo Press founder and former Save the Bay board member

“Ralph Benson brought vision, integrity and a deep understanding of conservation to the Sonoma Land Trust. He helped it become one of the best regional land trusts in California and, together, we did great things for Sonoma County.”
— Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer, California State Coastal Conservancy

“Ralph Benson has had a transformative effect on Sonoma County’s landscape. We will miss his grace and his broad support for anything that involves saving land for future generations.”
— Caryl Hart, Director, Sonoma County Regional Parks

And now, a tribute of my own as the Land Trust’s longest-tenured employee at 31 years and counting. It’s been such a privilege to serve SLT’s mission during this time with Ralph, to see the high regard in which he is held by donors and partners, and to observe his unfailing kindness and humor throughout the years. Ralph’s vision, commitment and practicality have brought Sonoma Land Trust to a secure and celebrated position that I couldn’t have imagined in earlier days. So I’ve decided to do some naming in his honor: The Ralph years are Sonoma Land Trust’s “Golden Age.” Happy retirement, Ralph.

Reta Lockert is SLT’s donor relations director.
Celebrating, honoring and remembering

From November 1, 2013 through October 31, 2014, the following supporters of Sonoma Land Trust made gifts honoring or commemorating exceptional friends and family members, and in celebration of special events. As always, we are grateful that our work of protecting the land forever is chosen as a symbol of appreciation and continuity.

Lulu and Jimmy Abernathy in honor of Web and Elizabeth Marquez
Stephen Abrams honoring the Sonoma Land Trust staff for protecting Pole Mountain and Jenner Headlands
Terry and Yale Abrams honoring Jennifer Laaback on her birthday
Stuart P. Pivnick, PhD and Alice L. Akawie in honor of Shirley Akawie
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald C. Allan in honor of Matt Allan
Mr. and Mrs. Jack S. Allison in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Katie Alvord in memory of Pat Wiggins
Menahem and Jennifer Anderman in honor of Sonoma’s land and animals
Pete and Barbara Anderson in memory of Paul W. Purdom
Ivan Andreatsen in memory of Barbara Iverson
Marge Anthony in memory of Janann Strand
Peter E. Babcock in honor of Ralph Benson
Chris and Phyllis Beldenhofer in memory of Barbara Iverson
Corry Barr in memory of Norah Barr
Frank and Carolyn Batchelor in honor of Dean and Nancy Hanson
Dick and Nancy Batson in memory of Dr. Lois M. Roberts
Barbara and Hugo Bauer in memory of Barbara Iverson
Meg Beeler and Tom von Tersch in memory of Irving and Hela Norman
Joyce and Brian Bender in honor of burrowing owls of Sonoma County
Eloise and David Bennett in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Walter and Lu Benson in memory of Remo Patri, John Beckman and Bernice Roth Spalding
Gordon and Tamara Boultem in memory of Ms. Beatrice Volpone
Paul and Karen Bowles in memory of Joel Horstein
Jane and Bernie Brenner in celebration of Ralph Benson
Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Broshe in honor of Harry and Dee Richardson
Bree Ellen Brotsko and D. Cabell Vest in honor of Elizabeth Murray and Webster Marquez in celebration of their March 2014 wedding
Kent Brown in honor of Bob Hasenick’s birthday
Charles and Barbara Bugg in celebration of Ralph Benson
Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Broshe in honor of Harry and Dee Richardson
Ann Butler in honor of Greg Hayes
Lucie and Stanley Bynum in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez’s marriage
Grant Campbell in memory of Paul Purdom
Martha Campbell in memory of Rae Hudspeth and Janann Strand
Lynne and Dick Carlile in honor of Tim Temple and Davide Maronati
Robert Cerniglia in celebration of our 55th wedding anniversary
Barbara Chapman in honor of Vanessa Nicole Chapman
Theodore and Lynda Chenoweth in memory of Barbara K. McLaclin, a scholar of Roman and Greek history and a great binder
Marie G. Clark in memory of Janann Strand
Connie Coddington in memory of Pat Wiggins
Nancy Cohrs in memory of Janann Fleming Strand
Community Foundation Sonoma County in memory of David Smith
Dolores Conklin in memory of Barbara Iverson
Christina and Jamey Courtney in memory of Janann Fleming Strand
Elizabeth and Martin Covington given in memory of Charles Schulz
Diane Cox in memory of Thomas E. Cox and the 60 years we spent together
Kelsey Cummings in memory of John Cummings
Michael and Lynn Davis in honor of Harry and Dee Richardson
Suzanne L. Dibble and Jeanne F. DeJoseph in celebration of the marriage of Kat Himmel and Rochia Holmquist
Rita Dempsey in memory of Derek Covert
Jeff Diamond and Amy Zimmer in honor of Berta Kaliski
David Donnenfield in memory of Debby Hahn
G.M. and J.B. Dorame in memory of Pat Wiggins
George and Cynthia Doubleday in honor of David Smith
Kay and Thomas Douglas in memory of Janann Strand
Mary Alice Drum in honor of the Purcell Family
Steve and Pat Edelstein thanking Tony and John for giving their valuable time and providing information about projects and walking a portion of the ranch
Ken Egel in memory of Leo and Pauline Egel
Bettina A. Eichel in memory of Barbara Iverson
Pat and Ted Eliot in honor of Wendy Eliot, in memory of Mickey Cooke's Flora (beloved horse of a lifetime), in memory of Pat Wiggins
Wendy Eliot and Michael Fitzgibbon in honor of Claire Russell
Marion and Merritt Elmore in memory of Edith Beach
Trudy Evans in honor of Web and Elizabeth Marquez
Emily Evors honoring Cathie and Pitch Johnson, and Mr. and Mrs. William Draper III
Lynette Feeney-Burns tribute to Alden Gilchrist
Ellin and Robert Firth in memory of Paul Purdom Ronald and Tracey Fitzgerald in memory of Janann Fleming Strand
Jack Fitzsimmons in memory of Gladys Bokamper Fitzsimmons
Avalyn Taylor and Tarn Fox in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Charles and Perry Freeman honoring Amanda and Chris Peiffer
Thomas and Betty Freitag in memory of Janann Fleming Strand
Anne French in honor of Susan Smile, MD, on her birthday
David Friedland in memory of Waldo C. Friedland
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen M. Friedman in honor of Lauren and Scott Dixon
Carol Friis in honor of Cameron Evangelho
Jo Anne and A.H. Gaede, Jr. in honor of the marriage of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Joe and Shawna Gannon in honor of Tyler Gannon
Joan Geary in memory of Paul Purdom
Therese Geary in memory of Jack Taylor
Maria Bernadette Gibb in memory of Janann Strand from Hutch, Bernie and Eddie
Pete and Suzy Gilbert in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Christina Ginsburg in memory of Mark Ginsburg on his birthday
Alexander and Judith Glass in honor of Wendy Zukas
Dohn and Beryl Glitz in celebration of the marriage of Shiloh and Liz Strong
Paul Goguen and Melissa Dowling in honor of Julie Atwood
Hubert and Alpha Goings in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Rusty and Carolyn Goldsmith in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Mark Goldstein in celebration of the matching grant from Bill Jasper
Joe and Susan Gorin in honor of Pat and Ted Eliot
Laura Graham in memory of Pat Wiggins and Guy Shappy
Patrick G. Grattan and Karen White in honor of Lloyd Harwood
Graystone Consulting in memory of Barbara Iverson
Jennifer and Shane Greenwood in honor of James Nelson on his 70th birthday
Bill and Betsy Gresham in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Parke and Sarah Hafner in honor of Mary Hafner
Karen Hales in memory of Stan and Diane Hales on their 47th wedding anniversary
Dorothy Hansen in memory of Niels Hansen
Beth Harper in honor of Larry Barnett
Jack and Deya Harper in memory of Joel Horstein
Ellis Harris in memory of Barbara Iverson
Elisabeth Hawthorne in memory of Barbara Iverson
Healdsburg Senior Center in memory of Barbara Iverson
Scott and Claudia Hein in memory of Rich Stallcup
Justin and Sonya Heltsh celebrating the wedding of Elizabeth Murray and Webster Marquez
Jo Anne Hewitt in memory of Roz Sandler
Kate Hill in honor of my mother, Jean Hurd
Susan Hirsch and Susan Leal in honor of Joshua Rymer and Tim Frazier
Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Howard in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Millie and Billy Hulse in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Ljubica Ikovic in memory of Janann Strand
Betty Jackson in honor of Web and Elizabeth Marquez
Kathy Jelin in honor of Karl and Linda Moldrem
Angelica Jochim in honor of Penelope Cays
Michael and Martha Kahn in memory of David Sullivan Smith
Margaret E. Kaplan in honor of Anne Fitzgerald's birthday
Nancy Karl in honor of Kristine Acquino
Carol and Don Kenyon in memory of David Sullivan Smith
Grace Kietzmann in memory of David Smith
Charlotte King in honor of Web and Elizabeth Marquez
Mary Kay and John Klyce in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Mirka Knaster and Larry Jacobs in memory of Martha and Sidney Jacobs, in honor of David Moulton and Laura Martinez
Rosamond Lagomarsino honoring Pam and Bill Pabst, and Bill and Carol Gadbois
Chuck and Marcia Lavine in memory of Barbara Iverson
Anthony B. Lier, DDS, MS in memory of Janann Strand
Shelley and Frank Lindstrom, Jr. in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Patricia L. List in memory of Phyllis Lindberg
David Loeb for Ralph Benson’s 10th anniversary
Ruth Lombard and Trymon Hunter honoring Kathleen Mugele on her birthday
Steve Long in honor of Linda Long
Mary Lyons in memory of Patricia Leary
Melania Mahoney honoring Jon and Kathy Scheiblich
David L. Smith and Yvonne Martin honoring Ben and Thomas for earning their Eagle Scout badges
Carol and Clifford Marvel in memory of Noel Christian
Kate and Zach Mather in honor of the marriage of Elizabeth Murray and Webster Marquez
Andy and Sophie Mattson in honor of Pete Mattson (2)
Elizabeth McCarthy and Marko Castor in memory of Pat Wiggins
Lawrence McCune in memory of Paul Purdom
Molly McDermott in memory of Janann Fleming Strand who celebrated life in joy and land in conservation
Jane McDonough in memory of Cheryl Spector
Winton and Margaret McKibben in honor of John Lehman
Jean McWhorter in memory of Barbara Iverson
Major Eugene Meade, USA-Retired in memory of EMI Meade
Wayne and Helen Mehl in memory of David S. Smith
Dianne Metzger in memory of Barbara Iverson
Erin Miller in honor of the wedding of Elizabeth Murray and Webster Marquez and for generations to come
Gerald Missey in memory of Agnes S. McKernan
Cecilia Moelter in memory of John Moelter
Kathleen Mugele celebrating the birthdays of Sunflower and Iris, in celebration of the marriage of Marty McDonald and Sybel Murray, in celebration of the marriage of Susanne Otteman and Myrna Goodman, in honor of Sue Weingarten
Andrew Munchbach in honor of Dick and Mary Hafner
Robert and Patricia Myers in memory of Barbara Iverson
Dr. and Mrs. Alex M. Nading, Jr. in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Daniel Needham in honor of the Moylan Family
Elizabeth Newton and Tong Lai Ginn in honor of Annie Wolfine Newton
Bill and Pat Nichols in memory of Barb Iverson
Anne and Sam Oliver in honor of Web and Elizabeth Marquez
Maurine Olson in celebration of Maury Lapp and April King and their lives together
Sylvia Park in memory of Norah Kennedy Barr
Ellen Gill Pastore in honor of Will Bucklin and Lizzane Pastore
Johanna Patri in honor of John McCaul and “A Place to Roam: Protecting the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor”
Mr. and Mrs. William C. Patterson in honor of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Elke and Douglas Paul in memory of Janann Strand
Ilene and Don Paul in honor of the marriage of Angel Garganta and Michael Schwarz
James and Sherian Piper in memory of Sunny Bristol
Judith Prima in honor of Jan Reddick and Byron Schneider
Ellin and Ned Purdom in honor of Paul Wakefield Purdom
Chuck and Kati Quibell in memory of Charles and Mary E. Fox Quibell and Susan Quibell Simmons
Taylor and Daniel Rechtschaffen in celebration of our marriage
Scott and Marta Rich in memory of Evelyn Berger
Harry and Dee Richardson in memory of Pat Wiggins
Craig and Kathryn Ritchey in memory of David Smith
Regina and Richard Roney in memory of David Smith
David E. Root and Marilyn Wolf in honor of Helen Fellenbaum on her 90th birthday
David E. Root in honor of Marilyn Wolf
Richard and Anne Ruben in memory of Jonathan Ruben
Helen Rudee in memory of Pat Wiggins
Robin Doerr Russell in memory of John George Doerr
Arnold and Vida Santucci in memory of Barbara Iverson
Kate Sater in memory of Rex H. Sater
Scott Sauer in memory of Pat Wiggins
Ellen Scarr and Roberta Acker in memory of Lois M. Acker
Bonnie and Jim Schmidt in memory of Judy Tilt
Oren and Michelle Schmuker in honor of Elizabeth Murray and Webster Marquez wedding
Dr. and Mrs. Michael Shane in memory of Eric Demarest Shane
Elizabeth Sher and Philip Schnayerson in memory of Suzanne Girot
Leslie Shipnuck and Janet Wood in memory of Ethel and Bernard Shipnuck
Gary Simpson in memory of Paul Purdon
Nancy Skinner in honor of Web and Elizabeth Marquez
Gary J. Smith and Jamienne Studley in honor of Martha Kanter
David Solem in honor of Matthew D. Solem
Beverly Spencer in memory of Joel Hornstein
Irma F. St. John in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Web Marquez
Rebecca Stamey-White and Nick Lanza in celebration of the marriage of Webster Marquez and Elizabeth Murray
Susan and Arnold Steinman in honor of Suzanne Girot
Helen Stevens in honor of Lise Stevens
Linda Strand in memory of Janann Strand
John P. Strebel in memory of Ralph Benson, Sr. “Chief of the Fire” (2)
Bradford Taylor in honor of Taylor and Daniel Rechtschaffen
Andrea and Jeff Tobias in honor of Malcolm Lubliner
Christina Toms in memory of Art Toms
Kathleen Tuax in celebration of Ralph Benson’s tenure at Sonoma Land Trust
Sally Vella in memory of Ig Vella
Eric Walstad in honor of the San Francisco Randonneurs
Peter Warner in memory of Steve Norwich
Nancy Warren in memory of Barbara Iverson
Marilyn Watkins in memory of Joanna and Frank Huston
Nelson and Jane Weller in memory of David Smith
Sarah Whiting and Derek Graham celebrating the wedding of Elizabeth Murray and Webster Marquez
Lawrence A. Wilcox in honor of Rebecca Guarda’s milestone birth celebration
Donald Williams in memory of Duncan Williams
Elizabeth Witchey in memory of Barbara Iverson
Wendy Woolish in memory of Nancy Helmers
Mr. and Mrs. Peter T. Worthen in honor of the marriage of Elizabeth and Web Marquez
Thomas Yarish and Laure Campbell in memory of Capt. Donald C. Campbell, USN-Retired
Stephen and Jaqui Zwick in honor of Tom and Shirley Simone’s 50th wedding anniversary
Key corridor parcel acquired for parkland and wildlife

Children have played on the oak-studded Curreri Family property for decades, the most recent generation on this swing shaped like a bull. And kids will continue to enjoy this beautiful landscape as it soon becomes part of neighboring Sonoma Valley Regional Park.

Located right in the “pinchpoint” of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor, Sonoma Land Trust purchased the 29-acre parcel for $1.1 million on October 30 with funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, and the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation. Immediately upon closing escrow, we transferred the title to Regional Parks.

“The Curreri property will be a sweet addition to Sonoma Valley Regional Park,” says Ralph Benson, Land Trust executive director. “We hope people will enjoy it forever.”

“We are thrilled to be able to add such a crucial piece of land to Sonoma Valley Regional Park, with its importance to wildlife movement, the viewshed and its significant beauty,” says Regional Parks director Caryl Hart.

Along with its value for wildlife, the Curreri property offers panoramic views of the Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Mountain, the Mayacamas Range, and San Pablo and San Francisco Bays. It also harbors iconic oak woodlands, as well as grasslands, a seasonal wetland and a year-round spring-fed pond.

The threat to this landscape being developed was real. Because the 29 acres have been maintained in their natural state, this property was highly vulnerable to estate and vineyard development, the dominant land uses in the area. Offering additional protection, the District will hold an innovative conservation easement, developed in partnership with the Land Trust, that will protect the property’s natural resources and its essential function as part of the wildlife corridor.

“For my family, this is a legacy issue,” says Paul Curreri, who rambled over the property as a child. “Our land is really more valuable as a place where children can connect with nature and wildlife can continue to roam.”