

# WINTER 2016



... to protect the land forever



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## KEEPING OUR PROMISE

# TOLAY CREEK RANCH TO BECOME A PARK

BY SHERI CARDO



*Our Tolay Creek Ranch will double the size of Tolay Lake Regional Park when it opens to the general public next year. Photo by Scott Hess Photography.*

**W**e have a big present for Sonoma County this holiday season: Tolay Creek Ranch! By year-end, your land trust plans to donate this stunning 1,665-acre ranch to our local parks partner to double the size of Tolay Lake Regional Park in the southern part of the county. Acquire, restore, then transfer: This has been our plan since we purchased the ranch at the end of 2007.

"We bought Tolay Creek Ranch

knowing that we wanted to add it to the adjacent park," says stewardship director Bob Neale. "At the same time, we committed to doing significant natural resource and restoration work as well — work that needed to be completed before the property could become parkland."

That work started with developing the Tolay Creek Riparian Enhancement Plan, an example of our commitment to making lasting conservation impacts.

The Plan identified the need to change the way the land was managed so that the creek and adjacent lands could function more naturally. With the help of Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW) and thousands of schoolchildren, we planted several thousand native plants and trees to reduce erosion and provide places for wildlife to live, and also constructed livestock fencing to protect these areas.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## IT'S UP TO US

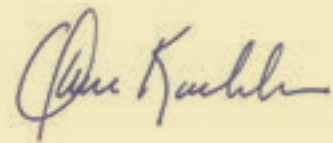
We are the organization for people who want to save places close to home — and that's *you*. As we've celebrated Sonoma Land Trust's 40<sup>th</sup> year, our publications have highlighted the stories of our founders — individuals who created the Land Trust and charted the course for protecting what makes our county special. Now, it's up to us.

During the year, I had the good fortune of talking with many Sonoma Land Trust supporters attending our events and outings. At each gathering, from one conversation to the next, I was struck by how fortunate we are that our local land trust community has individuals like you who are saving places through your generosity of time, talent or treasure.

We stand on your shoulders — the strength and energy to take on the next 40 years comes from you. Locally, the stakes for land conservation are even higher now and come with a greater sense of urgency. As we act for the future, we deepen our commitment to protecting and stewarding Sonoma County's open landscapes. We pledge to preserve and enhance the resilience of our ecosystems in the face of a changing climate and increasing demands for clean water. We set our sights on sharing the love of the land with a wider number of people who call Sonoma County home.

In this newsletter, you'll learn about our challenge to raise an additional \$500,000 to honor the legacy of two individuals

who took action to save the land they loved. This is an opportunity for us to continue protecting the special places of our incomparable county. Please give generously this year to preserve what we love right here at home.



Dave



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### Good work takes good partners

Our acquisitions staff worked together with our colleagues at Sonoma County Regional Parks and the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to purchase the land, and the District holds a conservation easement over the property that was written to anticipate the future park. Our stewardship staff have also conducted several studies and provided input on the development of Regional Parks' master plan for the combined Tolay Lake and Tolay Creek park.

"Protecting Tolay Creek Ranch and preparing it to become a park has been a true collaboration with both Regional Parks and the District — a prime example of the public-private partnership we often seek," adds Bob. "Our staffs have worked together a long time and we know how to leverage our resources and bring great projects to fruition for our community."

"In spite of what appears to be a close but losing vote on Measure J, we plan to open Tolay Lake to the general public by the latter half of 2017," says Regional Parks director Caryl Hart. "Without the funding that Measure J would have provided, amenities will be limited, but we look forward to working with our partners to someday add the services and features identified in the master plan."

### Finding the perfect match

Acquiring and then transferring land to an organization that will realize our conservation goals allows your land trust to remain agile and ready for the next land deal without increasing our stewardship responsibilities. And always, in transferring property, we ensure that our partners have the commitment and capacity to carry out our promises to our donors and the land.

"When we purchase a property, closing the deal is just the beginning of protecting a special place," says conservation director Wendy Eliot. "We work with our conservation partners to ensure that, after transfer, the land and its natural systems, such as water and wildlife habitat, will be carefully managed and restored over time."

Over the past 40 years, SLT has acquired a number of properties that we have transferred to state, federal and local agencies and private organizations for public recreation. Regional Parks is one of our closest partners. We know they have the capacity and expertise to provide quality public recreation while caring for the land and its resources.

Other Sonoma Land Trust acquisitions that we transferred for public recreation and natural resource protection include:

- Sears Point and Haire Ranches along the bay to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Jenner Headlands and Estero Ranch along the coast to The Wildlands Conservancy
- Curreri and Spaulding properties to Regional Parks
- Red Hill (which includes the Pomo Trail) along the coast to State Parks

"Our partnership with the federal government is one of our most satisfying in that the federal Refuge system's goals of protecting wildlife habitat and providing public education align well with our goals," says Wendy.

### To have and to hold

There will always be properties that it makes sense for Sonoma Land Trust to keep because they fulfill one or more of

our key initiatives. Fragile properties like Pitkin Marsh, home to very rare native plants, like the white sedge. Historical properties like Glen Oaks Ranch, with its 150-year-old stone mansion and prime location in the center of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor. Connected properties that reduce the impacts of climate change on native plants and animals, such as Little Black Mountain Preserve, which links Pole Mountain with the Jenner Headlands. Laufenburg and Live Oaks Ranches, which protect the headwaters and downstream stretches of Bidwell Creek, critical habitat for steelhead trout, coho salmon and freshwater shrimp. And more.

ACQUIRING AND THEN  
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GOALS ALLOWS YOUR LAND  
TRUST TO REMAIN AGILE AND  
READY FOR THE NEXT DEAL.

The lands we retain are part of our Resource Preserve System. These preserves are representative of our county's many diverse landscapes. They are sites where we demonstrate our stewardship activities, and they serve as gateways for research, learning, outdoor activities and public service. You'll be hearing more about our new Resource Preserve System Plan next year.

For now, thanks to the support of our donors, we have in our sights the protection of 700 acres of wild land on the Sonoma Developmental Center property (next to Jack London State Historic Park) and the 725-acre McCormick Ranch (next to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park). We're doing what we do best by working to acquire and protect these remarkable properties. Then it will be our park partners' turn.

*Sheri Cardo is SLT's communications director.*





## THE NEXT 40 YEARS DEPEND ON YOU!

BY NICOLE NA

WHY? BECAUSE IT TAKES PEOPLE TO PRESERVE PLACES. PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME.

PEOPLE LIKE SONOMA LAND TRUST'S EARLY SUPPORTERS BETTY BURRIDGE AND ERNESTINE "ERNE" SMITH,

WHO CONTRIBUTED TO PRESERVING OUR LANDS IN THE 1970S.



Sadly, we lost both Betty, at age 84, and Ernie, at age 100, this year. Betty and Ernie were generous during their lifetimes and both also made significant provisions for the Land Trust in their estate plans — together totaling more than \$500,000.

Will you consider joining us in honoring their legacy and matching their generosity to help us raise another \$500,000 before the end of the year? Our success will enable us to continue to protect this incredible place, which drew Betty, Ernie, you and me here.

In 1976, our organization's founders saw the county changing and knew that

the fate of the places they love — the coastal redwoods, oak woodlands, farms and wilderness — depended on them. Thousands of us have joined them since 1976, protecting more land than they ever thought possible. Today, we have protected 50,000 acres, including some of the county's most cherished natural landmarks, from the Jenner Headlands to Sears Point.

What will the county look like in the next 40 years? That depends on you. Right now, our remaining lands are more threatened than ever. We are actively working to protect 6,300 acres of landscapes we hold dear, with more opportunities on the horizon.

We hope that you'll connect with our founders' stories about the land (below) and reflect on your own. Look back and imagine the potential our founders saw in this beautiful place we call home — the potential for more and more buildings on the land or the potential for permanently wild spaces that feed our spirits and clean our water and air. Then take the next 40 years into your own hands by helping to match Betty and Ernie's generosity. Together, we can preserve the wonder of Sonoma County and the special places that drew us here.

*Nicole Na is SLT's communications coordinator.*

#### **Lu Williamson Benson, first president**

If we don't try to keep the world livable, I don't know what life will be like when we reach 10 or 15 billion people and we don't have any clean drinking water or anything beautiful like our open spaces.

If you really want to protect something, the only way to do it is to preserve it in perpetuity. That "in perpetuity" thing was what hooked me. It wasn't subject to a change of mind, a plan, a rezoning, anything. As long as we have the United States of America, perpetuity couldn't change.

#### **Pam Buda, consultant to founding board**

I feel very fortunate to live in a place like this. Sonoma County's always been about the land. When I first moved here, I was just so taken by the physical beauty of the surrounding landscapes. The kind of people it attracts fosters a love of the land. The physical beauty and the diversity of the landscape make you extra motivated to save it.

Our culture today encourages such a short attention span, but it's interesting to look back over that many years and

see how sound the principles were to begin with. It's beautiful to see the Land Trust's work bear fruit. It's not done, of course. Land conservation is never done — but it's flourished.

#### **Bob Zinkhan, founding Board of Trustees member**

I had this transcendental moment in the spring of '73. I was working as an architect when I walked out from a paneling factory directly — and unexpectedly! — into a blooming pasture. I was surrounded by unfathomable nature. I'd never seen so many wildflowers and weeds and bees — it was this incredible, thriving microcosm. And I looked around at those hills. I get emotional recalling it — it was the moment that made me say, "This is the place." I couldn't believe my eyes.

#### **Marilyn Goode, founding Board of Trustees member**

When we had our first meetings, I thought a land trust was an interesting concept, but I didn't know much about it. I just had a fundamental love of the land ... and a

fundamental sense about what was happening to our county and valley, while realizing that we were just paving it over and breaking up the land ... and it broke my heart.

Expanding the little lifeboats that are left is so essential for our children — and for what makes us human beings. The only thing we can do to save this planet is to try to be conscious.

#### **Marty Griffin, founding Advisory Council member**

As a doctor in Sonoma, I commuted 30 miles every day to work. I loved that drive — it dropped down through Jack London country, through rolling hills and the beauty of the valley.

I think everybody should be a conservationist. The earth is run by complex interlocking ecosystems and thousands of species that make life on earth possible. But humankind is furiously destroying it and we can see evidence of that almost everywhere. We've lost half our biodiversity. The only way we can solve the problems of the earth is by coexisting — and working together to save it.

*Give the gift of forever ...* This holiday season, please consider giving gifts of Sonoma Land Trust memberships to family and friends!

# CELEBRATING, HONORING AND REMEMBERING

SONOMA LAND TRUST IS VERY APPRECIATIVE OF THE MANY PEOPLE WHO HONORED FRIENDS AND FAMILY BY MAKING TRIBUTE GIFTS OF ALL SIZES. WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE WHO MADE GIFTS BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND OCTOBER 31, 2016.

**In Memory of Connie Beekley**

*Pamela Vanderbilt*

**In Memory of Bessie**

*Kathleen Mugele*

**In Memory of James C. Bigelow**

*Sheila Bigelow*

**In Memory of Kalliope**

**Evangeline Boling**

*Leonard Mott*

*Robert Rottmayer*

**In Celebration of Louis Bottarini**

*Don and Lee Van Giesen*

**In Memory of B.P. "Sonny"**

**Boudreaux, Jr.**

*David Boudreaux*

**In Memory of Thomas Bova**

*Sally Vella*

**In Memory of H. Fred Burger**

*Stephen C. Burger*

**In Memory of Bennett Burke**

*Elizabeth Lane*

**In Memory of Betty Burridge**

*Earle and Susan Cummings*

*Pat and Ted Eliot*

*Jack and Deyea Harper*

*Ralph and Marcia Johnson*

*John and Carole Kolnes*

*Lucy Kortum*

*Peter and Olivia Leveque*

*Joan and Richard Merriss*

*Kathleen Mugele*

*Mike Nelligan*

*Harry and Dee Richardson*

*Teresita Salter-Haag*

*Don and Marilyn Toms*

**In Celebration of Canyon Laurel**

*Kathleen Mugele*

**In Celebration of Jim Clark**

*Cristina Wadsworth*

**In Memory of Ann Miller**

**Cormack**

*Kenneth and Karen Adelson*

*Robert Cormack*

*Judith Davis*

*Lynn and Joe Drake*

*Jodi Epstein*

*Martha and Kenneth Fischer*

*Patricia Kim-Gable and Scott  
Gable*

*David Kohlmeister and Amy*

*Mortensen*

*Lauren Scholnick*

**In Memory of Richard E. Cowan**

*Shirley Cowan*

**In Memory of Denise Elliott**

*Dwight and Janet Tracy*

**In Celebration of Mary Hafner**

*Grace Pollard Hafner*

*Nelson and Jane Weller*

**In Honor of R. Stanton Hales**

*Karen Hales*

**In Celebration of Sandi Hansen**

*Kathleen Mugele*

**In Celebration of Carol and**

**John Hauswirth**

*Terry Peckham*

**In Celebration of Trymon**

**Hunter's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

*Kathleen Mugele*

**In Memory of Dan Kraemer**

*Fay Gallus*

**In Memory of Bill Kortum, DVM**

*Thomas Isaak*

**In Memory of Vincent P. Lawton**

*Kathleen Lawton*

**In Memory of Kirsten Lindquist**

*Michael Hedley*

**In Celebration of Iris Lombard**

*Kathleen Mugele*

**In Honor of Steve Maass**

*Your Friends and Family at*

*Oliver's Markets*

**In Honor of Doug McConnell**

*Barbara Meislin*

**In Memory of Agnes McTernan**

*Gerald Missey*

**In Celebration of Michael Myers**

*Steve and Valerie Arelt*

**In Memory of Alice Nordquist**

*Annette and Craig Roth*

**In Memory of Yvonne Norrbom**

*Eric Norrbom*

**In Memory of Julius and**

**Bonnie Nuccio**

*Robin Doerr Russell*

**In Memory of Ed Oliva**

*Annette and Craig Roth*

**In Celebration of Sunflower**

**(Susanne Otteman)**

*Kathleen Mugele*

**In Celebration of Elizabeth**

**Anne Pastore**

*Ellen Gill Pastore*

**In Memory of Marianne**

**Schweitzer Perron**

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*The staff of the Charles M. Schulz*

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*Emelie Tolley*

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**of CB Singh and Trisha Rupani**

*Kathleen Mugele*

**In Memory of Frank T. Slavens**

*Gordon and Tamara Boultsbee*

**In Honor of Dr. Susan Smile's**

**Birthday**

*Anne French*

**In Memory of Matt Solem**

*The Solem Family*

**In Memory of Bob Stone**

*Patricia Beus Daffurn*

**In Honor of Kathy Taft**

*Barbara Meislin*

**In Celebration of Rick Theis'**

**70<sup>th</sup> birthday**

*John Wright*

**In Memory of Mary M. Traverso**

*Gordon and Tamara Boultsbee*

**In Celebration of Lorraine**

**Wedekind's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday**

*Sally Vella*

**In Honor of John Williamson**

*Deirdre Holbrook*

**In Memory of Harry J. Wojcik**

*Kathleen Mugele*

**In Memory of Bruce Wright**

*Sally Vella*

**In Celebration of the 2016**

**Writers' Retreat Guests**

*Jim Cole*

**In Celebration of Anne Wurr's**

**85<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

*Chloe Wurr*

*Juliet Wurr*

**In Memory of Dominic Ziegler**

*Linda Ciavonne*





## CITIZEN SCIENTISTS MONITOR BIRD LIFE AT SEARS POINT

BY NICOLE NA



Visitors to Sears Point today are greeted with a land and water-scape vastly different from that of the prior century when the land was diked for agriculture. Fast forward to the present and the flooded restoration site is brimming with a variety of different life forms — especially bird life! On any visit to the site, you will find a multitude of different birds foraging on the marsh mounds, diving in the channels at high tide and swirling in murmurations in the skies.

It's these birds that scientists and volunteers plan to carefully monitor over the next few decades as part of a recently launched citizen scientist bird monitoring program. (Citizen science refers to scientific research that is conducted, in whole or in part, by amateur or nonprofessional scientists.) As part of the requirements for our land use permits from regulatory agencies, Sonoma Land Trust must monitor a number of natural indicators at Sears Point that help gauge the health and status of the marsh. These include sedimentation patterns, wildlife, invasive species and marsh channel development. What sets birds apart as an

indicator is their relative visibility. "It's much easier to pinpoint the species and number of birds than it is to measure, for example, sediment levels," says Baylands program manager Julian Meisler. "Birds provide an easy visual gauge of the status of the marsh."

Bird monitoring is surprisingly informative. "The presence of certain species is a good indicator that things are proceeding in the right direction," Julian says. For example, if migratory birds, like western sandpipers or whimbrels, make their way to Sears Point in the winter months, it's a good sign that the budding marsh can provide the sustenance the birds need as they take a break from migratory journeys. The presence of diving ducks, like the canvasback, signals that there's enough deep and open water for those birds to eke out their living. Birds can even indicate the growth of Sears Point as tidal marsh habitat. Ultimately, if the endangered Ridgway's rail (formerly known as the California clapper rail) is spotted at the site — which, if all goes well, could be around 2040 — we'll know that Sears Point has

reached its zenith as a full-fledged tidal marsh.

Linda Felt, a volunteer docent at Sears Point and Glen Oaks Ranch, and Land Trust donor since 2005, has never before participated in a citizen science program and is excited. "As a novice birder, I'm looking forward to this wonderful opportunity to learn from experienced birders," Linda says. To become a citizen scientist bird monitor, volunteers must attend four hours of training and commit to quarterly monitoring sessions. While bird identification is mastered only by long hours of work in the field — practice makes perfect! — to Linda and our other volunteers, it's well worth it. "We're helping collect bird observation data that will be significant in understanding how birds at Sears Point respond to the changes that will occur in the newly restored tidal marsh over time," says Linda — a task that will prove highly valuable in years to come.

If you are interested in being a citizen scientist at Sears Point, please contact volunteer manager Karen Arrington at [karen@sonomalandtrust.org](mailto:karen@sonomalandtrust.org).



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*Happy Holidays*

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## **CRAFTING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS SPECTACULAR LANDSCAPE**

# **ADVOCATING AN ECOLOGICAL VISION FOR SDC AND THE SONOMA VALLEY**

BY JOHN MCCAULL

Last year, when the State announced its intent to close the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) in 2018, the plan encouragingly mentioned SDC's "incredible natural resources" as a reason "to work with the community to identify how the property can best be utilized." Starting early next year, the State will launch a \$2 million reuse planning and site assessment process to help determine the next steps for this 125-year-old institution, its infrastructure and its 700 acres of open space.

With the future of SDC still hanging in the balance, your land trust is bringing together leading scientists, land use experts and local residents to craft a vision for the future of this spectacular landscape. We look forward to engaging all parties with the State in a

creative and thoughtful conversation about the best use of the property. Know that we will be advocating for a reuse plan that benefits all the people of the Sonoma Valley, and that features and prioritizes protecting the property's watersheds and the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor as the guiding principle for planning the future of SDC.

We expect many ideas will be generated for how SDC's 200-acre developed campus and the undeveloped land surrounding it can be used. Make sure your viewpoints are heard. To stay apprised of the process, visit our blog at [transformsdc.com](http://transformsdc.com) and register to receive updates.

*John McCaull is a land acquisition program manager at Sonoma Land Trust.*

## **OUR MISSION**

*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 AND CONSERVATION;
- ACQUIRING LAND AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS;
- PRACTICING STEWARDSHIP, INCLUDING THE RESTORATION OF CONSERVATION PROPERTIES; AND
- PROMOTING A SENSE OF PLACE AND A LAND ETHIC THROUGH ACTIVITIES, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH.