

Envisioning the future...



SONOMA LAND TRUST
2010 Annual Report

Dear Friends,

An annual report is really a thank you letter.

At the Sonoma Land Trust, we are blessed with an extraordinarily loyal group of members. It is our hope that every one of you who is acknowledged in this report feels both a sense of pride for all we have done together to protect the beautiful landscapes of Sonoma County and a sense of possibility for what we can do in the future. There is so much more to be done.



Ralph Benson and Denny Van Ness

As this annual report goes to press, there is a lot of trouble in the world. The horrific ramifications of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami are unfolding, as are the epic and complex political changes in the Middle East. This year may shape up to be a pivotal time in world affairs. As compassionate citizens, there may not be a lot most of us can do to affect these momentous events — but we can tend our garden here at home.

Who among us does not take joy and solace in knowing the scenic Sonoma Coast is protected forever and that our redwood forests are on the rebound? Or in watching the interplay of oak woodlands and vineyards that is so much a part of our Sonoma landscape? We are no longer shrinking the Bay; rather, at Sears Point, we are restoring more than 1,000 acres of tidal wetlands and securing the protection of nearly all of the land at the southern tip of Sonoma County for open space, agriculture, functioning nature and recreation. This is the work your generous support makes possible.

Last year, we developed a five-year plan for Sonoma Land Trust. We emphasized three sets of values in doing our work:

- ♦ innovation and risk-taking
- ♦ collaboration and partnerships
- ♦ professionalism, financial strength and integrity.

And we set four goals:

- ♦ Permanently protect the rural landscapes of Sonoma County
- ♦ Connect people with the land
- ♦ Be a well-managed, financially sound organization
- ♦ Attract and retain motivated, respected and effective board members, staff and volunteers.

This is the kind of organization we want to build. This is the kind of work that will go forward with your support.

Thank you very much.

Denny Van Ness, Board Chair

Ralph Benson, Executive Director

COVER PHOTO: Late winter fog shrouds Bald Mountain Ranch in beauty. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.

CENTERSPREAD PHOTO: The rare serpentine wildflower field on the Jenner Headlands in full bloom. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.



Fifth-grade students from SunRidge Charter School visited SLT's Estero Americano Preserve last fall as part of LandPaths' IOOBY (In Our Own BackYard) program to learn about shorebirds, waterfowl and the raptor migration. Photo by Lance Kuehne Photography.

Protecting land protects us all

Saving land is all about the future: the future of our quality of life, the future of our children and grandchildren, and the future of our planet. As the climate continues to change in ways we really can't anticipate, protecting land may be the single most important action we can take to prepare and adjust. The more natural land that is available, the more options all species will have for adaptation. Including our own.

When the Sonoma Land Trust takes ownership of a new property or places a conservation easement on a parcel of land, we are not just extinguishing development rights — we are ensuring the land will be kept free to do what it does best. Land performs many ecological services: it provides homes for animals and plants, it nurtures trees that clean the air, it has rivers and creeks that give us clean water, it serves as a scenic backdrop to our lives in the more congested cities, and it provides space for us to hike and think and refuel our busy brains. Perhaps most importantly, experiencing open, wild land gives children access to the wildness within themselves. It infuses them with a sense of awe at nature's beauty and complexity. It connects them to the

earth and to what is possible and what is necessary. It gives them a sense of place in the world.

A VIEW TO THE FUTURE

In 2010, the Sonoma Land Trust board of directors and staff undertook an in-depth strategic planning process to map our course for the next several years, culminating in our "2011–2015 Five-Year Plan." Along with continuing to move swiftly to protect the remaining rural landscapes of our county, two new driving forces emerged: to incorporate the science of climate change into our conservation practice and to develop a new program to connect more people to the land. Both will be critical to fulfilling the mission of the Sonoma Land Trust.

Three properties were added to the Land Trust's portfolio of protected lands last year, bringing the organization's total protected acreage to more than 26,000. Each of the acquisitions is significant, in part, because it is either adjacent to or nearby other protected lands, thus furthering a key Land Trust objective of linking up properties to create habitat connectivity for our native wildlife.

BALD MOUNTAIN RANCH — HIGH AND MIGHTY

If you've driven along Highway 12, you've undoubtedly appreciated the breathtaking, high ridge along the eastern side of the Sonoma Valley. Bald Mountain Ranch is part of that backdrop and sports a scenic landscape designation by the County because the ranch is visible to travelers in both the Sonoma and Napa Valleys.

Looking to the future, longtime conservationists Carter and Mary Thatcher long dreamt of preserving the natural beauty of their picturesque ranch situated next to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park. After Mary's death, Carter contacted the Land Trust about donating a



conservation easement, but, sadly, he passed away before it could be completed. Thankfully, his children shared their parents' land ethic and saw to it that their parents' wishes were carried out. By the end of 2010, the 420-acre family ranch spanning the Sonoma and Napa County line was protected as Carter and Mary had hoped, and the right to subdivide the property into five parcels was extinguished.

The name Bald Mountain was given to the ranch in honor of its bare 2,275-foot peak, which is sometimes called Little Bald

Mountain in deference to the taller Bald Mountain in the neighboring state park. We think a bald mountain of any height is sweet when it's protected forever.



Sandwiched between Sugarloaf Ridge State Park and Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve, Bald Mountain Ranch is extremely important for its connectivity value. The property's eight different habitat types and hilly topography will help species adapt to climate change. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.



Pitkin Marsh contains significant wetlands that support several federally endangered plant species, including white sedge (*Carex albida*), which is not known to exist anywhere else in the world. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.

**SASSIN PROPERTY —
A SMALL GEM OF BIODIVERSITY**

When the Land Trust was asked to protect the 28-acre Lower Pitkin Marsh in 2007, Jon Sassin offered to help in any way he could. Three years later, he expanded the protected area of the marsh by more than 20 percent by donating a conservation easement on his six-acre adjoining property. While it might seem small, six acres is huge in this case because Pitkin Marsh is a little pocket of biodiversity unlike anywhere else in the world.

Visible from Highway 116 between Graton and Forestville, the Sassin Property is primarily scenic open space and



natural habitat. Part of the property has been identified by the county as a “biotic resource” due to the presence of marshes, wetlands and Pitkin Creek, and part of the property serves as an important buffer between Lower Pitkin Marsh and nearby agricultural lands — thereby contributing directly to the ecological viability of the preserve.

With the integrity of Pitkin Marsh constantly threatened by the land-use changes surrounding it, it is vital that conservation lands continue to be added around it. The

Sassin conservation easement is another step in creating a larger, connected system that will be more resilient and better able to adapt to climate changes.



Adjacent to and nearby a number of protected properties, the wild and rugged Live Oaks Ranch offers important habitat connectivity and significant natural resources. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.

LIVE OAKS RANCH — A SLICE OF CALIFORNIA RANCHING PERFECTION

When Marie (“Rie”) Rogers passed away, she left a will designating the Sonoma Land Trust as the beneficiary of her beloved Live Oaks Ranch — 572 stunning acres straddling the Sonoma-Napa County line in the Mayacamas range above Knights Valley. Immediately adjacent to another large protected property, Hafey Ranch, and near Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial State Park, Pepperwood Preserve and the Land Trust’s own Laufenburg Ranch, Live Oaks Ranch adds significantly to the connectivity in the region.

The property also contains important natural resources, including the headwaters of Bidwell Creek (which also runs through Laufenburg Ranch). While most of the property is uncultivated and rugged, there is a working barn and a charming 1940s ranch home — complete with butter-yellow shutters and trim — that have been kept in mint condition.

While Rie’s longtime ranch caretakers will continue to live on the property in accordance with the terms of her will,



the Land Trust plans to offer student outings, guided hikes and volunteer workdays. SLT will also work with local partners, including the Land Trust of Napa County, to assess and manage Bidwell Creek’s fish and riparian habitat.

Live Oaks Ranch represents the largest bequest that the Sonoma Land Trust has received in its 35 years of operation. In fact, it was Rie’s friendship with neighbor Charlie Laufenburg that motivated him to leave his 176-acre ranch to the Trust in 1987 — and she then followed suit. Rie was

determined that her ranch would remain in its beautiful natural state forevermore.

Three biologically significant landscapes — three very generous contributions to the future of Sonoma County and all who live here. Gifts like these are essential for leaving a legacy of natural lands to perform their ecological services and inspire future generations. Thank you to these exceptional landowners who loved their lands and did right by them.

Instilling a love of the land

Land ... it moves us, inspires us, nourishes us. Which is why an integral part of Sonoma Land Trust's work is connecting people with the land. Last year, we provided more than 100 opportunities for individuals in Sonoma County to hike through lush fields of wildflowers and oak woodlands; to monitor beautiful, seldom-visited properties protected by conservation easements; to use their muscles to pull weeds and maintain trails; to bring their youthful enthusiasm to learn about nature; and to use their education and curiosity to research important scientific questions. In the process, our lands were better cared for and our souls were nurtured.

EXPANDED ON-THE-LAND OPPORTUNITIES

For the last several years, we've been offering public wildflower hikes at Sears Point Ranch because the fields of purple lupine, yellow Johnny jump-ups and other West Coast wildflowers are far too spectacular to keep under wraps. Then, in 2010, after acquiring the Jenner Headlands, we expanded our public outings further. Between hikes led by the Land Trust with The Wildlands Conservancy, and hikes offered by other partner groups — California Native Plant Society, CoastWalk, LandPaths (on behalf of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District), and Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods — more than 800 people got out on this magnificent new coastal property.

For those seeking a more intimate experience of the land, SLT continued offering conservation easement monitoring and stewardship workdays for volunteers. From erosion control projects and trail work to native seed propagation and invasive plant removal, our volunteers got to break a sweat and gain an insider's view of the challenges and joys of caring for the land.



Volunteers painstakingly pluck invasive plants at SLT's Pitkin Marsh Preserve to help the rare, native plants thrive. Photo by Tony Nelson.



The Hafners: (L-R) Parke, Mary, Sarah, Dick and Scott, with Lily, the family dog.

CELEBRATING A 15-YEAR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HAFNERS

Longtime supporter and former board member Mary Hafner describes her family's ties to the Sonoma Land Trust and how this mutual relationship nurtures the spirit:

"It was a generous gift membership from my longtime friend Anne Teller of Glen Ellen that introduced us to the Sonoma Land Trust. When I was asked to join the Board of Directors in 1995, the Land Trust had only 19 Evergreen donors. Today, there are 350 Evergreeners! Their contributions and those of many others help finance SLT initiatives that now protect thousands of acres of wonderful Sonoma County landscapes for everyone's enjoyment.

"In our Alexander Valley family, we help celebrate birthdays and anniversaries with monetary gifts to Land Trust preservation projects. Our family also has given wine for many Land Trust gatherings. We like to think of Hafner Vineyard wine as coming from the land to help preserve the land through Trust projects. As grape growers, we know that we are stewards of this land whose beauty here in Sonoma County we see and feel every day of our lives."



Managing Jenner Headlands' redwood forest to develop old-growth characteristics will provide greater habitat for threatened and endangered species. Photo by Stephen Joseph Photography.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FUTURE

Providing opportunities for children to experience the joy and value of our natural lands is a growing theme for the Land Trust. Toward this goal, we partner with a number of environmental education programs in the county. At our Glen Oaks Ranch Preserve, we continue to work with LandPaths' IOOBY (In Our Own BackYard) program, bringing children from Flowery School to the ranch to learn about nature and their place in it. Several times a year, you can find Bree "Bird" and Kara "Crayfish" leading the children in exploring the creek and planting native grasses.



Making casts of animal tracks at SLT's Estero Americano Preserve. Photo by Lance Kuehne Photography.

PUTTING LAND UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

We also make our preserves available as outdoor laboratories for academic study and research. Professors and students from local universities have conducted classes, used scat-sniffing dogs to perform research on bobcats, compiled a coastal grassland flora book and created our first cultural resources management plan. Birders, botanists and biologists have also been volunteering their expert skills to help us collect information about the plants and animals that make their homes on our lands.

ALL IN A YEAR'S WORK ON THE LAND

Stewardship of Toley Creek Ranch, Sears Point Ranch and the Jenner Headlands has been funded by the continuous generous support of the forward-looking Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. In 2010, several major stewardship efforts "got on the ground." At Toley Creek Ranch, creek restoration efforts continued as SLT added five miles of wildlife-friendly fencing along both sides of the creek. Well-managed cattle grazing serves as an important tool for controlling invasive weeds and grasses; this fencing will better control the cattle and keep them out of the creek where they put too much pressure on the native vegetation. In 2011, we will plant more than 1,000 willows along the creek, along with hundreds of other native shrubs and trees. After another year or two of restoration and stewardship, the Land Trust



will convey this property to Sonoma County Regional Parks to add to its Tolay Lake Regional Park — thereby doubling the size of the park!

The work that SLT has done at Tolay Creek — documenting the biological and cultural resources, developing grazing management and creek enhancement plans, and building fences and planting willows — will save Regional Parks several hundred thousand dollars and jumpstart their park planning process. This public-private partnership between the Land Trust and Regional Parks demonstrates how we can deliver important projects to the community in these challenging economic times and is just one of the reasons we work closely with many public and private conservation groups on our projects.

Getting acquainted with the complex and expansive Jenner Headlands kept quite a few people occupied in 2010. Stewardship staff from the Sonoma Land Trust and The Wildlands Conservancy, along with a bevy of biologists of land, water and wildlife, conducted natural resource surveys, all with the goal in mind of developing an integrated resource management plan. While they didn't encounter a lot of surprises, they did discover many more species of birds than expected, making the Jenner Headlands an excellent spot for recording the fall Pacific Coast raptor migration.

At Sears Point Ranch in 2010, we continued to build upon several years of planning. Last fall marked the groundbreaking



Dee and Harry Richardson

RICHARDSONS SHARE A STRONG COMMITMENT TO OPEN SPACE

Harry and Dee Richardson met in New York City where Dee was a nursing student and Harry was a medical resident. After Harry completed his training in internal medicine, hematology and oncology at UCSF, they moved to Santa Rosa in 1973 so Harry could practice medicine, and they could raise their children and enjoy Sonoma County.

Since 2005, Harry has served on the Sonoma Land Trust board of directors; he became chair of the development committee in 2007 to lead the board's fundraising efforts. He and Dee are part owners of an antique store in Railroad Square where Dee has been a strong advocate for historic preservation. They have been longtime Evergreen supporters of SLT, saying that preserving open space fits with their penchant for preserving anything old. "There's not much that's older than dirt!"

Both strongly believe that living in one of the most beautiful and geographically diverse spots on earth carries with it the individual responsibility to "preserve the view," the natural resources and the open space for future generations. They would like to see every county resident be a member of the Sonoma Land Trust. To underline their confidence in SLT's mission and strengths, they have designated a gift to our organization in their estate plan.

for the much anticipated Baylands Center, which will be completed by the summer of 2011. Design drawings were completed for the construction of as many as four red-legged frog breeding ponds in the Sears Point uplands. And the requisite environmental planning and permitting continued at full speed for the landscape-scale restoration of tidal marsh and seasonal wetlands set to begin construction in 2012. What a view it will be from the Baylands Center when it is all underway!

Donations advance key conservation projects

Two significant matching gifts, an extraordinary bequest and generous membership contributions fueled our work in 2010.

In 2010, our conservation efforts were propelled by the continued commitment of our steadfast supporters. Even in this tough economic climate, our efforts to save land have not tapered off. Rather, we are moving ahead faster and stronger than ever! Most donations received in 2010 went toward the \$18 million *Redwoods to the Bay — Saving Sonoma County's Signature Landscapes* campaign to accelerate the pace of land conservation in Sonoma County. And speed up it did! The backing of our membership, combined with a number of transformational contributions, made 2010 a remarkable year, and several projects are already in the works for 2011.



Donations of every size helped complete the match by the spring of 2010. Jean's donation and the match kept us on solid financial footing and enhanced our efforts to provide more outings and educational activities on our properties.

In November of last year, a wonderfully generous Sebastopol family that asked to remain anonymous surprised us with their offer to match all donations made by December 31 up to \$300,000. Our donors came through once again. Thank you for helping us meet both challenges and, in effect, doubling the impact of your gift. When we protect the natural landscapes of Sonoma County, we do many things: we provide ourselves with lovely, natural back-

MEMBERSHIP DONATIONS KEY TO SUCCESSFULLY MATCHING TWO PLEDGE DRIVES

In 2009, Jean Schulz pledged an extremely generous \$2 million matching gift to the Land Trust, saying, "I want our grandchildren and their children to be able to enjoy the same stunning vistas and experience land that is as ecologically healthy as what we see around us today."

drops, we make continued life possible for other species, we keep the air and water clean, and we allow for recreational and educational experiences for people of all ages. In short, saving land enhances our quality of life, our well-being and our health. That is what your support does.

Thank you for helping to protect the scenic, open and natural lands we love ...*forever!*



A bequest honoring land and life: Before Marie Rogers passed away, she designated the Sonoma Land Trust as the beneficiary of her cherished Live Oaks Ranch. "Rie" knew that her land trust would keep her ranch wild and free from development.

Photo by Lance Kuehne Photography.



Our diversified portfolio of conservation projects

ANCHOR PRESERVES

	<i>Acreage</i>
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

OTHER SLT-OWNED LANDS

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 White Rock Preserve	92

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

17 Airport Boulevard	50
18 Bald Mountain Ranch	420
19 Baylands: Lower Ranch	528
20 Baylands: Tolay Creek Riparian	36
21 Bear Canyon	96
22 Blucher Creek	7
23 Bohemia Ranch	937
24 Canelis Old-Growth Redwoods	1
25 Cuffeys Cove	1,068
26 Drake Family	34
27 Elarra	60
28 Enchanted Wood	8
29 Finley Creek	240
30 Fish Rock Ranch	7
31 Gird Creek	100
32 Knaus Forest at Nuns Canyon	36

	<i>Acreage</i>
33 Little Creek	40
34 Mason	18
35 Middle Reach	44
36 Mill Creek Old Growth	54
37 Morgan's Hill	22
38 Mother Gardens at OAEC	3
39 Nefertierra	78
40 Oak Hill Farm	677
41 OGA Little Creek	73
42 Old Hill Ranch	37
43 Quail Hill	81
44 Rancheria Creek Recesses	602
45 River Bend	32
46 Rock Fall Woods	31
47 Santa Rosa Creek Headwaters	162
48 Sassin	6
49 Summerfield Waldorf School	32
50 Sunrise Redwoods	20
51 Van Winkle Redwoods	46
52 Ward Creek	240
53 Watson Ranch	530
54 West Ridge Knolls	74
55 Wild Turkey Hill	8

OTHER COMPLETED PROJECTS

56 Baylands: Halperin Baylands	11
57 Baylands: Petaluma River Marsh	49
58 Baylands: Sonoma Baylands	348
59 Bel Marin Keys	1,500
60 Cloudy Bend	388
61 Harrison Grade Serpentine	32
62 Laguna de Santa Rosa	535
63 McCord Ranch	2,786
64 Red Hill	910
65 Rigler Preserve	370
66 Sonoma Mountain Ranch	283

Thank you!





Financial Statements

The amounts presented here are derived from the Sonoma Land Trust's financial statements for the years ending December 31, 2010 (not yet audited) and December 31, 2009 (audited). Copies of the audited financial statements are available upon request.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT DECEMBER 31

ASSETS	2010	2009
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 8,640,502	\$ 2,761,069
Investments	1,501,332	3,353,483
Contracts and other receivables	303,156	205,367
Pledges receivable	591,538	1,878,873
Deposits and other assets	64,271	88,149
Conservation lands and easements	66,453,737	65,176,009
Property and equipment, net	910,111	885,647
<i>Total Assets</i>	<i>\$ 78,464,647</i>	<i>\$ 74,348,597</i>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
<u>Liabilities</u>		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 340,689	\$ 197,306
Deferred income	282,546	386,078
Current maturities of long-term debt	3,508	6,090
Long-term non-recourse debt	—	12,952,744
<i>Total Liabilities</i>	<i>\$ 626,743</i>	<i>\$ 13,542,218</i>
<u>Net Assets</u>		
Unrestricted		
Available for operation	\$ 4,238,122	\$ 195,719
Board designated — conservation projects	707,869	709,149
Investment in conservation lands	66,453,735	52,226,773
Total unrestricted net assets	\$ 71,399,726	\$ 53,131,641
Temporarily restricted net assets	6,438,178	7,674,738
<i>Total Net Assets</i>	<i>\$ 77,837,904</i>	<i>\$ 60,806,379</i>
<i>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</i>	<i>\$ 78,464,647</i>	<i>\$ 74,348,597</i>

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31

REVENUE AND SUPPORT		
Contributions and grants	\$ 6,503,121	\$ 3,481,471
In-kind contributions	356,057	18,282
Project income	465,638	745,220
Investment income	143,988	260,691
Other gains	—	531,787
<i>Total Revenue and Support</i>	<i>\$ 7,477,804</i>	<i>\$ 5,037,451</i>
EXPENDITURES		
Projects and stewardship	\$ 2,144,369	\$ 1,673,405
Governance and administrative	708,045	524,340
Fundraising	540,926	390,543
<i>Total Expenditures</i>	<i>\$ 3,393,340</i>	<i>\$ 2,588,288</i>
Net income before land acquisitions & donations	\$ 4,084,464	\$ 2,449,163
Land acquisition contributions (net)	12,947,058	19,052,942
<i>Net income after land acquisition contributions & donations</i>	<i>\$ 17,031,522</i>	<i>\$ 21,502,105</i>

...to protect the land forever



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Editor/Writer: Sheri Cardo

Contributing Writers: Bob Neale, Beverly Scotland

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