Despite this being a year unlike any other, Sonoma Land Trust has persevered and has many accomplishments to celebrate along with innovative plans that we hope will inspire you. Thank you for being part of our community of conservationists who make our work possible. We know that together, with your support, we can continue to protect the natural splendor and unique biodiversity of Sonoma County.

According to the latest science, we have only a short period of time—a decade—to take the necessary actions to secure Sonoma County’s future in the face of climate change. Bold and innovative action is needed right now—and Sonoma Land Trust is at the forefront.

Over the next year and beyond, we will be working to reduce the impacts of wildfires and floods, and to protect the incredible variety of plants, animals and landscapes for which our county is celebrated.

Help us meet our $1.2 Million Challenge for Nature!

By Melissa Bennett

After acquiring Fitzsimmons Ranch early next year, Sonoma Land Trust will donate this stunning 200-acre property to Regional Parks to become part of Hood Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve. Photo by Corby Hines.
Of all the critically important work that the Land Trust does to protect and preserve the natural systems that sustain life in Sonoma County, perhaps none is more important than fostering the next generation of land stewards. Restoring healthy fire and flood plains, securing room for wildlife and safeguarding watersheds won’t mean much without future stewards to sustain and care for the natural world.

That’s why Sonoma Land Trust is investing in new and innovative programming to nurture the next cohort of scientists, policymakers and, yes, plain old-fashioned tree huggers!

In the past, love for the land was passed from generation to generation through family camping and fishing trips, but these old traditions seem to be dying out. Maybe that’s not a bad thing in the end since those traditions rarely extended to children from all communities.

But we do need new ways of connecting young people to the land. Quite apart from worrisome childhood health and development statistics arising from this decline, there is a fundamental question as to who will be the next E.O. Wilson, the next Wangari Maathai. That’s why our newest program—the Conservation Council—is aimed at giving teens a feel for how applied science works. We are showing them not just theory, but how their work can influence the real world, and also encouraging them to consider STEM fields when they go to college.

Your support doesn’t just help us tackle climate change and grow our network of open spaces—it’s an investment in our community in every sense.

EAMON O’BRYNE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NATURE CAN HELP PROTECT US FROM CLIMATE CHANGE
The natural, undeveloped lands of Sonoma County are some of the best tools available to sequester carbon, increase biodiversity and fight the effects of climate change. That’s why Sonoma Land Trust—with your help—is working hard to protect key properties with rich forest, water and wildlife resources over the next 12 months: Two-Horse Ranch, Fitzsimmons Ranch, McCormick Ranch and Sonoma Mountain Vernal Pools. Conserving these significant natural places forever is only the first step. Together with our partners, we will ensure these lands and waterways are properly restored and managed for the future we are facing.

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE
Indigenous people living in this area before European settlement understood that fire is a natural part of our landscape. Today, we are re-learning that fire is an elemental tool for reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires and pollution. We are seeing our preserves’ habitats rebound and thrive after fire has passed over them, like at Glen Oaks Ranch. [See photos.] We are managing our forests with fire in mind and taking what we are learning to make our preserves throughout the county more resilient to wildfire and more protective to our surrounding communities.

BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCY IN THE BAYLANDS
With 55 miles of coastline and a southern border on San Francisco Bay, Sonoma County will experience severe impacts from sea level rise if we do nothing to adapt to our warming climate. The costs of inaction are steep—the threats are not only to key wetland habitat, but also to public and private property and infrastructure that will likely amount to tens of billions of dollars over the next 20 years.

Sonoma Land Trust is working to mitigate sea level rise by acquiring land in the Sonoma Baylands and restoring thousands of acres to tidal marshland. By reestablishing the mudflats and wetlands with natural sediment and native plants, we are creating buffers that will protect against sea level rise. We are also partnering with state and regional transportation agencies to ensure that the proposed redesign to Highway 37 supports continuing wetland restoration—to prevent flooding today and far into the future. We are sharing our expert knowledge and acting as nature’s advocate because we know that these science-based solutions are vital for our community to adapt to our changing climate.

During the holidays, we can secure the well-being of our communities—and their future—by supporting the land that sustains us. Inspired by the extraordinary trials that Sonoma County overcame this year, five Alumni Board Council members have issued an End-of-Year Challenge to raise $1,200,000 by December 31 to support our work. When you give today or before the end of the year, your gift will count toward the Challenge and make a tremendous impact. Please use the enclosed envelope or go to sonomalandtrust.org/give. If you’re able to help, we thank you!

Melissa Bennett is development program manager.
Providing nature programs to young people

By Mirella Ramos

As Sonoma Land Trust continues its work to protect vital landscapes, one thing remains evident—the future of conservation will depend on our youth. In an era in which the fight for both climate resiliency and equitable access to nature can no longer be deferred, the need to foster a connection to nature in today’s children and teens is more important than ever.

Since the 2017 start of our first youth program, Bay Camp (Campamento de la Bahía), a bilingual summer camp, your Land Trust has continued to create new program opportunities for young people. Working with schools and community partners, we’ve challenged ourselves to build on our success and serve youth equitably. The current pandemic brought a new challenge—what do we do when we can’t operate as usual? Inspired by nature’s resilience, we too flexed our resiliency muscles!

In part, we focused on bringing nature to both children and adults through online presentations, arts and crafts, games and more. We’ve created bilingual nature activities for youth and their families to interact with the nature closest to them—in their neighborhood. As we all continue to shelter in place, connecting to the natural world in whatever ways we can remains essential.

What on Earth is Slime?

Although we can’t take students out to the Sonoma Baylands right now, it hasn’t stopped us from connecting 3rd- and 4th-grade classes with the fascinating ecosystems at the San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge (our former bayside portion of Sears Point Ranch). Our field trip program SLIME (Students Learning in Marsh Environments) serves the four counties of the North Bay—Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma. By the end of this year, we will have served over 40 classes.

Through SLIME, we take students on virtual visits of the Land Trust’s 1,300 acres of restored wetlands. Our comprehensive curriculum includes conservation and restoration, marsh ecosystems and ecosystem services, and climate change and climate resilience. Through nature videos and photography, students discover the abundant life in the marshes of San Pablo Bay and the benefits they provide our communities. Teachers are given follow-up materials to engage their students in additional activities that further their connection with nature nearby. Virtually sharing our vital baylands with children provides a real-world example of landscape-scale restoration, creates connections to the land by linking the kids to their local watersheds, and inspires actions and behaviors that protect habitats.

Ms. Strong, a 4th-grade teacher in Fairfield, said about SLIME: “Thank you so much for joining our class. The students really enjoyed your presentation. As I mentioned, this certainly tied in great with what we are studying in science right now. The students will enjoy the additional activities you sent. Thank you again. It was certainly a fun day for the students!

A Conservation Council for Teens

The Conservation Council is an equity-based, youth-driven conservation research and youth development program for high school teens in Sonoma County. Despite the obstacles of 2020, we continued to explore new opportunities and, this summer, piloted this teen program.

Incorporating youth voices from the very start, we collaboratively designed the Conservation Council with a small cohort of local high schoolers. With over 100 applications and only nine positions to fill this year, we relied on science to help us in the selection process. We piloted a new review method that included using The Trust for Public Land’s mapping tool, ParkServe. Through the use of ParkServe, we were able to determine and prioritize applicants from park-poor neighborhoods and areas with high heat-island effects who we felt might benefit most from this program.

By prioritizing youth from these areas, we...
believe our program will empower these young people to investigate environmental justice issues in their communities and become stronger advocates for change.

Our council members are 78 percent BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), with over 60 percent of them living in communities affected by heat islands, and 33 percent living in areas of very high park need. Teens in the Conservation Council are provided stipends for their participation as well as necessary outdoor safety equipment, like waterproof hiking boots.

Sonoma Land Trust considers our lands as community assets and outdoor classrooms where children and adults of all ages can experience and learn about the natural and cultural resources found there. Our preserves have hosted studies into predator behavior, native animal surveys, Sudden Oak Death research and human impacts on wildlife, and are perfect places for the Conservation Council students to do their research.

The input of the first cohort of the Conservation Council was invaluable and helped us identify which studies the teens found most interesting, which of our preserves they connected with most strongly and which outdoor skills they wanted to learn. Across the board, pilot participants reported that they enjoyed the field trips and Zoom meetings, and felt safe with our COVID protocols. The words they used most often to describe their experiences were “educational,” “fun” and “exciting.”

These next couple of months will be busy for the next group of the Conservation Council as the teens plan and implement a biodiversity survey at Laufenburg Ranch through the use of wildlife cameras. The Land Trust will use their research results to gain a better understanding of the species present on the preserve and the animals’ use of the land, which will then be used to inform future land management and stewardship strategies.

By utilizing several of our nature preserves, the teens will have the opportunity to connect with a wide array of habitat types, like coastal prairies, marshes and oak woodlands. From steep hikes up the sides of mountains to flat, meandering trails along the bay, council members will improve their outdoor skills on varying terrains and increase their knowledge of the diverse landscapes of Sonoma County.

Whether we are meeting with teachers and students online or outdoors with the Conservation Council, your Land Trust is dedicated to connecting youth to all their communities—animals, plants, soils and waterways included!

Mirella Ramos serves as bilingual youth programs coordinator.

Heat Islands
Neighborhoods that lack sufficient parkland experience higher temperatures due to the lack of natural spaces that would otherwise provide shade and moisture. Caused by a decrease in natural spaces and an increase in urban infrastructure, such as roads and buildings, heat islands can cause an increase in energy consumption and, in extreme cases, heat-related illnesses and deaths. Low-income and BIPOC communities, which are usually impacted by environmental injustices, are likely to be affected the most by global warming.
CELEBRATING, HONORING AND REMEMBERING

The following donated gifts, made from April 1, 2019—October 31, 2020, honor exceptional individuals and celebrate special events. It’s a privilege for Sonoma Land Trust to receive these donations from the heart.

In Memory of Yale Abrams
Candice and Robert Dahlstet

In Honor of Tania Romanov Amochaev
Eva Aunchinloss
Joanna Doyle Brown and Christopher Brown
Eleanor Chang
Helen Goldsmith
Jacqueline Young

In Honor of Marie Andel
CSAA Insurance Group

In Memory of Willis “Bill” Andersen
Susan and Bill Arbios
Bob and Marcia Fosberg
Gwen Johnson
Melissa Johnson
Tom and Christine Peterson
Sally Tischler and Jim Newsome

In Honor of De Andersen and the late Bill Andersen
Elizabeth Denault
In Memory of Angel, the longhorn bull
Noel Quinn

In Memory of Gary Arkin
Robert and Dolores Zeni
In Memory of Dr. John Arnold
Benjamin Parmeter, MD

In Memory of Marion Ault
Jo Ann Ault-Bursick

In Memory of Olive Bavins
Norma Barratt

In Memory of Kathleen Del Bondio
Diane DeRoo and Michael Hogan

In Memory of Norma Barratt
In Memory of Olive Bavins
Anonymous
Chris Bennett
Lois Goggin
Beryl Kay
Reta Lockert
Barrie Simpson

In Memory of Ralph Benson, Sr., Chief of the Fire
John P. Streb
In Honor of Martin Bernal-Hafner
Grace Pollard Hafner
In Honor of Hugh Black
Kristi Black

In Memory of Gordon Belander
Benjamin Parmeter, MD
In Honor of Joan Bostarr
Allan McLane Chambless, Jr.
In Memory of Jack Breglio
Jeannette Breglio
In Memory of Bill and Mary Jane Brinton
Nancy Fee
In Honor of Dixon Browder
Carrie Browder
In Memory of Willis “Sam” Brown
Robert and Dolores Zeni

In Honor of Will Bucklin and
Lizanne Pastore
Ellen Gill Pastore
In Memory of Helen and Fred Burger
Stephen C. Burger
In Memory of Keith Caldwell
Lisa Caldwell
In Honor of Sheri Cardo
Anonymous
In Memory of Tom Cassidy
Candice and Robert Dahlstet
In Memory of Sanas Chambers
Hideaki Nishikura

In Honor of Lygia Charlton
Diane DeRoo and Michael Hogan
In Memory of the Cochran Family
Sally Nees
In Celebration of Joan F. Coleman
Ellyn Coleman and David Sparkman
In Memory of Phoebe Combs
Stephen Combs
In Memory of Al Couture
Anonymous
John Boarman
Geoffrey and Margaret Bolt
Michael and Ellen Douglas
Pat English and Vicki Ono
Shirley and Michael Gillotti
Nancy Hargreaves and Daniel Jennison
Robin Watters
Gary and Linda Wilkening
In Memory of Martin Covington
Elizabeth Covington
In Memory of John C. P.
Betty Boland
In Memory of Joan and Robert Davenport
Robert Sarkela
In Memory of Nancy Deacon
Diane DeRoo and Michael Hogan
In Memory of Kathleen Del Bondio
Nancy Abreu

In Memory of Claudia Owen Doerl
Robin Doerl Russel
In Celebration of Dogtoberfest
Ron and Sandy Dodge
In Memory of Alma O. Dollberg
Allen and Susan Dollberg
In Memory of Roger Dumas, Sr.
Stacy Duval and Greg Dumas
In Memory of Norris R. Dyer
Brigitte Dyer
In Memory of Patricia Eliot
The late Ted Eliot
In Memory of Ted and Pat Eliot
Anonymous
Ruth Arnold
Sheri Cardo
Beverly Cherners
Community Foundation Sonoma County
Diane “Mickey” S. Cooke
Sol Gittleman
Joe and Susan Gorin

Scott Hafner and Bill Glenn
Hart Family Fund
Lynne Joiner
Kyle Kirwan and Nancy Evers Kirwan
Daniel and Marilyn Kitterson
Dave and Sharon Koehler
Nancy and Tony Lilly
Kathleen Mugele
David and Willa Mundell
Harry and Dee Richardson
Denise Sobel and Tom Oczkowski
Valley of the Moon Alliance
Elaine Weihman
In Memory of Merrill Elmore
Andrew Elmore
In Honor of Elizabeth Estandian
Clifford and Valerie Butcher
In Memory of Fabio the Fabulous
Kathleen Mugele
In Memory of Faerghas the Great
Stephanie Beard
In Memory of Joe and Libby Fee
Nancy Fee
In Memory of Andrea Battit Fisher
Elizabeth Lane
In Memory of Tharese Foster
P. Doreen Proctor
In Memory of Donn Fredrick
Jana Andrus
In Memory of Shakti Gavain
Michael and Susan Gadoua
In Memory of Brian Gaylord
Steven Hill
In Memory of James Gibbons
Catherine Bayer
In Memory of Lynelle Giddings
Fredrick Giddings
In Memory of Katheryn Goldthorpe
Jack C. Goldthorpe
In Memory of Terry Hafner
Cristine Gondak
In Memory of Marion Gonsalves
Steve and Marianne Harder
In Honor of Paul and Judy Gray
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
In Memory of Ethel Gregor
Karen Hribar
In Honor of Marty and Joyce Griffin
Julia Clotther
In Memory of Gary Haag
Teresa Saltz-Haag
In Memory of Jean Haddad
Sandi Haddad
In Honor of the Hafner Family
Beverly Pratt

In Celebration of Dick Hafner’s
94th birthday
De Andersen and the late Bill Andersen
In Honor of Mary Hafner
The late Ted Eliot
Scott Hafner and Bill Glenn
In Memory of Robert Zeller
Nancy Fee

In Memory of Rose Iermorini
Travis and Carmel Brown
In Memory of Kim Jacobsen
Kimberly and John Getz
Steven Miyano
In Memory of The “Jai” Cat
Kathleen Mugele
In Memory of Calvert Johnson
Robert and Dolores Zeni
In Honor of Mac Jordan
Scott Jordan
In Honor of Allie and Kevin Jorde
James Herbert
In Honor of Kevin Jorde
Tom and Mary Anne Jorde
In Memory of Zelda Katchmarch-Michaels
Peggy Schultz
In Memory of Joseph Keeney
Barbara Spain
In Memory of John Neil Kirk
Ethel and Keith Kirk
In Memory of Jack Kirsch
Robert and Wendy Bergman
In Honor of Emily Klein
Hafner Vineyard
In Honor of Dave Koehler
Scott Hafner and Bill Glenn
In Memory of Bill Kortum
Peter and Olivia Leveque
In Celebration of Amanda Krauss
Timothy Krauss
In Memory of Capt. Sheldon D. Kully
Barbara Kully
In Memory of Terry Larson
Anonymous
Rosalinda and Jennifer Brady
In Memory of Jack Lawrence
Anonymous
Jessica Cohen

In Memory of Barbara Hartmann
Kathy Jelin
In Memory of Pat Hayes
Michael Hayes
Moyra and Loring Moy
In Memory of Rueben Holander
Judy and Rick Davis
In Honor of Ronald J. Helow
Horace Mann Educators Corporation
In Memory of Frank and Midge Herrick
Kathy Drake
In Memory of Joann Hieb
Mana P. DeBernardi
In Memory of Steven Nightower
Judy Scatchmoor and Roland Gangloff
In Celebration of Gary Hines
Carolyn Greene
In Memory of Patricia Hines
Ryan Hines
In Celebration of Ed Hoxworth
John Mysicka and Susan Eley
In Memory of Rose Iermorini
Travis and Carmel Brown
In Memory of Kim Jacobsen
Kimberly and John Getz
Steven Miyano
In Memory of The “Jai” Cat
Kathleen Mugele
In Memory of Calvert Johnson
Robert and Dolores Zeni
In Honor of Mac Jordan
Scott Jordan
In Honor of Allie and Kevin Jorde
James Herbert
In Honor of Kevin Jorde
Tom and Mary Anne Jorde
In Memory of Zelda Katchmarch-Michaels
Peggy Schultz
In Memory of Joseph Keeney
Barbara Spain
In Memory of John Neil Kirk
Ethel and Keith Kirk
In Memory of Jack Kirsch
Robert and Wendy Bergman
In Honor of Emily Klein
Hafner Vineyard
In Honor of Dave Koehler
Scott Hafner and Bill Glenn
In Memory of Bill Kortum
Peter and Olivia Leveque
In Celebration of Amanda Krauss
Timothy Krauss
In Memory of Capt. Sheldon D. Kully
Barbara Kully
In Memory of Terry Larson
Anonymous
Rosalinda and Jennifer Brady
In Memory of Jack Lawrence
Anonymous
Jessica Cohen
CONGRATULATIONS TO WENDY ELIOT!

In her 21 years as conservation director for Sonoma Land Trust, Wendy Eliot secured over $50 million dollars of funding and conducted complex negotiations to protect nearly 20,000 acres of parkland, wildlife habitat and working lands—from the Sonoma Baylands to Lake Sonoma to the coast. She advanced groundbreaking regional conservation strategies, including the regional Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor program, the Santa Rosa Southeast Greenway, and protection of over 5,000 acres of diked land along San Francisco Bay for restoration to counter the impacts from sea level rise and to protect vital habitat and human infrastructure.

Bay Nature will present the 2021 awards at a virtual event in April.

JOHN McCaulL BECOMES LAND ACQUISITION DIRECTOR

Upon Wendy’s retirement in October, John McCaull, who joined Sonoma Land Trust in 2013, was promoted to land acquisition director. John, an attorney and former lobbyist, has managed key projects, such as the Sonoma Developmental Center and McCormick Ranch, and coordinated our advocacy for funding measures, like AA for the Bay and M for Sonoma County Parks. Prior to joining Sonoma Land Trust, he served as state lobbyist for Sonoma County Ag + Open Space and Sonoma Water, as California State Director for American Farmland Trust and as California Legislative Director for the National Audubon Society.