



# TODAY

... to protect the land forever | May 2019

## Landmark decision for conservation law



Every day, our members and partners stand with us to conserve the natural world. That support is never more appreciated than those few occasions when we need to go to court. Last month, Superior Court Judge Patrick Broderick upheld Sonoma Land Trust's authority to protect natural resources through conservation easements, enforcing key law used by land trusts to permanently protect land from development. In the case of *Sonoma Land Trust v Thompson*, the judge found that the current landowners had "knowingly and intentionally" violated a conservation easement placed on their Bennett Valley property (which we call the Drake Conservation Easement) by attempting to relocate three heritage oak trees, killing the trees and destroying a portion of protected ecosystem in the process. Stewardship director Bob Neale sums up the case well: "We made a promise to Kathy Drake when we took the easement on. We made a promise to the land, and we made a promise and an agreement with our community that we're going to do these things we say we're going to do. That's a commitment we take seriously, and that's why we went through this whole thing."

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### Bear Canyon bear



We were thrilled to see a black bear captured on critter cam at our (aptly named) Bear Canyon Wildlands Preserve. Yes, this is a deer, but watch through to the end ... you'll be glad you did!

[Watch the video](#)

### Roseland Prep & Pole Mountain



Last month, our community programs department partnered with the Roseland Collegiate Prep Science Club to bring a group of 18 students up the north slope of Pole Mountain! We thoroughly enjoyed introducing them to this

## Working together to protect land for wildlife and ag



Our partner, the [Sonoma County Ag + Open Space District](#), has just protected more than 1,200 acres in east Santa Rosa by purchasing two conservation easements over the land. Sonoma Land Trust assisted with this project by contributing a \$720,000 grant we received from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to protect land in the [Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor](#). In addition to protecting wildlife habitat, the easements provide a buffer to the adjacent Hood Mountain and Sugarloaf park complex, protect stream headwaters and ensure that agricultural operations will continue. Our new land acquisition program manager, Sara Press, had the unique opportunity to manage this project from start to finish, beginning during her time working at Ag + Open Space. "It was a pleasure working with this longtime Sonoma County family to keep their ranch intact and protect the land," she says. "Thanks to the great partnership between Sonoma Land Trust and Ag + Open Space, I was able to remain as project manager and complete the transaction – what a positive outcome for everyone involved!"

## Family Fun Day

## Celebrate with us at Child in the Wild!

Be future conservationists of our planet!

[Check out photos](#)

## Volunteers needed



Come explore the wild section of Tolay Lake Regional Park. Stewardship workdays are happening through August and we need your help. To join **Team Tolay**, contact Karen Arrington at [karen@sonomalandtrust.org](mailto:karen@sonomalandtrust.org) or (707) 526-6930, ext. 101.

## Board changes



*Duncan Higgons*

We are pleased to welcome Duncan Higgons to our board of directors. Duncan has an extensive background in conservation and is a leader in the biotech industry. We also say a fond good-bye to board members Pete Mattson, Hal Hinkle and Neal Fishman. Thank you for your service to the land!

## Kind traveling





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*The Banana Slug String Band.*

Join us for an afternoon of fun and free activities on June 9 at Howarth Park in celebration of nature, parks and the future Santa Rosa Southeast Greenway. **Child in the Wild: Family Fun Day** will feature performances by the Banana Slug String Band, De Colores: Music of the Americas, and Safari Encounters, an interactive educational program introducing kids to live wild animals — plus a bounce house, hula hoops, tumbling mats, and more! Children will also enjoy nature-oriented activities led by partners in the Southeast Greenway project, and members of the public can learn more about the Greenway, a planned 47-acre urban greenway park and open space that will connect Howarth Park to nearby high-density urban neighborhoods. The event takes place from 1 to 4pm at the Howarth Park Lawn and Gazebo located at [630 Summerfield Avenue in Santa Rosa](#).

[Learn more here](#)

## Planning for sea level rise by the bay



As sea level rises, Sonoma County's bay shoreline will experience great change. Lands behind levees will become more expensive to protect, as will transportation infrastructure. Existing marshes may have trouble staying above water. Planning for the future is paramount and

support Sonoma Land Trust. El Dorado Hotel in Sonoma has made Sonoma Land Trust the beneficiary of their ongoing, sustainable fundraising efforts on [kindtraveler.com](#). Kind Traveler, a public-benefit corporation, is the travel industry's first socially conscious "give + get" hotel booking platform, empowering everyday travelers to become a force for good!

[Learn more](#)

## News about our projects

SPRING 2019

Inside this issue

- Our love affair with Tolay and Sears Point
- The path forward for SDC
- Connecting past, present and future



...to protect the land forever



**WILD FOREVER—LAND TRUST RECEIVES GIFT OF NEW PRESERVE**

BY HEATHER AUSTIN

It's rare that Sonoma Land Trust gets the opportunity to protect land that is truly wild. But at the close of 2018, we received such an unexpected gift: the area of rugged, largely untouched wilderness in the heart of the Mayacamas (officially of Headwaters, donated by Dick and Gretchen Grant). The project, which closed access to December, became our 40<sup>th</sup> preserve and is named "Star Canyon Wildlands."

Sonoma Land Trust conservation director, "The high quality of the habitat and natural resources on this land make it a natural fit for protection. We are very grateful for this contribution to conservation in Sonoma County."

This rugged landscape is special not only because it boasts understated natural resources, but it also forms an important link between the Land Trust's Bear Canyon Conservation Easement to the west and a complex of 10,000 acres of protected land to the east—including Ag+ Open Space, McCord.

"We are delighted and honored that the Grants chose Sonoma Land Trust to steward this gift of a property," says Wendy Elton.

*(Continued on page 12)*

Read about our newest preserve, a path forward for the Sonoma Developmental Center, and our ongoing love affair with Tolay and Sears Point.

[Read it here](#)

## Welcome, Kendall

work with partners to develop a restoration strategy for the Lower Sonoma Creek Baylands. On May 22, we were awarded a new grant from the CA Wildlife Conservation Board's [Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program](#) to work with [Sonoma Resource Conservation District](#), [San Francisco Estuary Institute](#) and [Point Blue](#) on an Adaptation and Resilience Plan for the Petaluma River Baylands. This is vital conservation work that will address issues of climate change, ecology, economy, transportation and human well-being.

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Join us in welcoming Kendall Gutt as our new Bay Camp director! Kendall is a recent graduate of SSU's Geography and Environment: Sustainable Communities program and was a naturalist with Sonoma County Regional Parks. *Glad you're here, Kendall!*

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## GIS and the land

Mapping is crucial to protecting the land — which is why we're so thankful to have [ESRI](#) as a source for professional map tools. The owners, Jack and Laura Dangermond, are conservationists at their core. Read about their recent remarkable efforts to protect this [California coastal preserve](#).

Questions or comments? Email Sheri Cardo, managing editor.  
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