



**LAND
TRUST**
OF SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**LAND TRUST RELEASES CONSERVATION BLUEPRINT
25-year Blueprint to Protect Habitat, Water, Farms
Private Landowners the Key to Protection Plan**

(Santa Cruz, CA) The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County released today a report on how to protect the county's natural resources over the next 25 years. The "Conservation Blueprint" assesses the health of the county's environment and makes recommendations on actions.

The report finds that, "The health of Santa Cruz County's plants, animals, habitats, and water is in decline." It cites the overdraft of the county's aquifers and the fact that 18 of the county's streams and rivers fail to meet Federal Clean Water Act standards. The county also has 13 rare plant and 13 rare animal species that are listed as federally threatened or endangered.

"The county certainly looks beautiful, but that beauty can blind us to the unseen threats," said Land Trust Executive Director Terry Corwin. Corwin said the county is projected to add another 35,000 people over the next 25 years – placing new pressures on water supplies and wildlife habitat. The Blueprint cites research showing that under current zoning another 17,000 housing units can be built in the county, many of them in rural areas.

To address these and other threats, the report recommends additional protection of up to 50,000 acres of land – 20% of the county. The Blueprint identifies eight priority areas for additional protection. Priority is given to those areas where multiple benefits can be achieved, including protecting water supply and quality, biodiversity, recreation and working lands like farm, ranch and timber lands.

One of the key recommendations of the Blueprint is that the Land Trust and other conservation organizations don't need to buy land to protect it. The Land Trust recommends increased use of voluntary easements and incentives that leave productive land in private hands and on the tax rolls. Corwin said such conservation tools can be a cost

effective way of protecting natural resources and the goods and jobs working lands provide.

The Conservation Blueprint is the result of two years of work guided by a seven-member Steering Committee. The Land Trust consulted over 110 experts in preparing the report and held four community forums throughout the county. The 200 page report comes with 24 maps, all of it on the Land Trust's website.

The Conservation Blueprint has drawn support from across the county's political spectrum. Former California Secretary of State Bruce McPherson called it a "balanced, realistic approach." State Senator Joe Simitian praised the Blueprint for identifying "priorities and cost-effective tools to achieve them." Santa Cruz developer George Ow, Jr. said the Blueprint "will make Santa Cruz a better place for ourselves, our children, their children, and for all future generations."

For more information about the Blueprint and to order copies visit www.LandTrustSantaCruz.org. The Land Trust will also present a summary of the Blueprint on Thursday, June 2, from 5:30pm to 7:30pm at the Simpkins Swim Center in Live Oak.

About the Land Trust

The Land Trust was founded in 1978 and protects and cares for the spectacular beauty and natural resources that make Santa Cruz County special. They protect working lands, like farms and timber lands, and natural lands – thus protecting water supplies, wildlife habitat, and open space.

Members of the Conservation Blueprint Steering Committee

Karen Christensen, Executive Director, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County

Betsy Herbert, Watershed Analyst, San Lorenzo Valley Water District and Sempervirens Fund Board Member

Jim Rider, Apple Grower, Bruce Rider & Sons, and Land Trust of Santa Cruz County Board Member

John Ricker, Water Resources Division Manager, Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Services

Joe Schultz, Director, Santa Cruz County Parks and Recreation Department

Steve Staub, Forester, Staub Forestry and Environmental Consulting

Chris Wilmers, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, UC Santa Cruz

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