

Land Trust of Santa Cruz County

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Land Trust Launches 20-Year Conservation Blueprint

SANTA CRUZ, CA -- The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County announced today that it has received funding to develop a 20-year blueprint for conservation in the county. The plan will combine a comprehensive scientific analysis with extensive community input to identify the highest priorities for conservation in the county.

Funding for the 18-month long process comes from a \$488,000 grant provided by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County has provided \$15,000 to fund a series of community forums expected to take place next fall. Public input also will be solicited through an interactive website.

The plan is intended to guide the Land Trust's work over the next 20 years. It will also be made available to other conservation organizations working in Santa Cruz County.

"This is a visionary project," said Terry Corwin, the Executive Director of the Land Trust. "Our goal is to look generations ahead and ask what we as a county want to save for future generations."

The Land Trust has appointed Andrea Mackenzie as the Project Director. Mackenzie has served as the General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District since 2000. The District has protected more than 75,000 acres of land, including 33,000 acres of farmland, since 1992.

Corwin said Mackenzie was selected because of her experience in creating a shared conservation vision in Sonoma County. "She has experience doing conservation planning and understands the importance of community support," said Corwin.

Mackenzie directed the Sonoma district's 2006 campaign to renew its 1/4 cent sales tax, which funds its land protection program. The voters approved the tax

renewal by 75%. "It's all about combining vision and funding," Corwin said. "Ultimately, it's a question of what we as a community want to protect."

Corwin said that two-thirds of Santa Cruz County has no permanent protection, noting that 11% of the county is already developed and 22% is park land, leaving the remainder without permanent protection. "We are a few miles away from the 4th largest metropolitan area in the country," Corwin said. "We know we face long-term development pressure and the question is what are we going to do to protect ourselves from this pressure."

The science planning process will include the methods used for the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties by the Upland Habitat Goals Project. This process uses existing and new data supplemented by expert opinion to identify areas of high conservation value. The project will produce maps designed to aid the public, conservation organizations, and public agencies in developing conservation plans.

Lance Linares, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, said the foundation was delighted to support the community forums. "Seeking community input and hearing diverse viewpoints is an important step in any public process."

In addition to Mackenzie, the planning team for the project includes Matt Freeman, the Land Trust Director of Conservation, Santa Cruz consultant Jodi McGraw, and Ryan Branciforte of the Bay Area Open Space Council.

Background on the Land Trust

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County protects working lands, like farms and timberland, and natural lands with high conservation values – thus protecting water supplies, wildlife habitats, and open space. The Land Trust has protected 2,200 acres of land and worked with partners to protect another 10,000 acres. It expects to protect another 1,000 acres this year. More information is available at www.LandTrustSantaCruz.org.