



LAND TRUST

OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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LAND TRUST BUYS STAR CREEK RANCH *1,200 Acres in Pajaro Hills East of Watsonville*

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County acquired the 1,200-acre Star Creek Ranch in the Pajaro Hills east of Watsonville. The project marks the Land Trust's first major acquisition in the 24,000-acre Pajaro Hills, which separate Santa Cruz County from southern Santa Clara County.

"These hills are a natural greenbelt between Santa Cruz County and the urban growth spreading down Highway 101," said Land Trust Executive Director, Terry Corwin. "They will forever be home to mountain lions, bobcats and steelhead trout, and will one day be open to people who can experience this old slice of California."

Project Director, Dan Medeiros, has been on the ranch dozens of times since the Land Trust began work on the project three years ago. "I'm so thrilled to have completed this project. Star Creek Ranch is such an awesome property, and now it is protected forever," said Medeiros.

Star Creek Ranch is a critical wildlife linkage between the Santa Cruz Mountains to the north and the Gabilan and Diablo ranges to the south and east. More than six creeks and springs originate on the property, including an important Steelhead spawning stream. As part of the greater Pajaro Valley watershed, the property is vital to groundwater recharge.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, main use of the property has been timber harvesting. In 1850 lumber extracted and milled on the property was used to build San Juan Bautista. Throughout 1920s and 1930s the property hosted 25 cent per night campsites, and in the 1940s and 1950s there was a Girl Scout camp along Star Creek, after which the property was named.

Roughly a third of the Star Creek Ranch is redwood forest. The Land Trust plans to sustainably harvest redwoods, as it has done for 36 years at its 400-acre Byrne-Milliron Forest outside Corralitos. Funds generated from harvests will go toward stewardship of the property and maintenance of the additional 11,850 acres of land under the Land Trust's care.

Corwin said that the next step for the Land Trust is to develop a public access plan. She said the group will look at building a camp for non-profit groups, allowing restricted hunting and continued grazing, and building an eventual park as neighboring properties are protected.

Funding for the acquisition came from a variety of sources, including \$2.5 million from the state Wildlife Conservation Board. Corwin said the Land Trust will use \$1.47 million from its \$13.5 million Capital Campaign to help fund the acquisition and stewardship of the property, which will include a donation from the previous landowners, Pete Pulis and Steve Miller. Kevin Knowles of Conservation Land Group represented Pulis and Miller on the transaction.

In the past 18 months the Land Trust has raised \$12.9 million to protect 10,000 acres. Land Trust President Robert Stephens said the Land Trust was trying to raise the final \$575,000 by January 15th.

Additional funding for the project also came through the Living Landscape Initiative Challenge Grant Program of Resources Legacy Fund, which is funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

As part of its 10,000 Acres Campaign, the Land Trust has already protected an apple orchard in the Pajaro Valley, 18 acres of rare Sand Parkland, and, with its Living Landscape Initiative partners, the Land Trust helped protect the 8,500-acre CEMEX Redwoods Forest in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

To see photos and maps of the 10,000 acres the Land Trust plans to protect by the end of the year visit: www.LandTrustSantaCruz.org.

About the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County

Formed in 1978 by local residents concerned about protecting the lands that make Santa Cruz County special, the Land Trust has protected more than 11,850 acres by working with willing landowners and conservation partners. The trust protects both working lands, like farms and timberland, and natural lands with high conservation value – thus protecting water supplies, wildlife habitats, and open space.

About Wildlife Conservation Board

The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) was created by legislation in 1947 to administer a capital outlay program for wildlife conservation and related public recreation. Originally created within the California Department of Natural Resources, and later placed with the Department of Fish and Game, WCB is a separate and independent Board with authority and funding to carry out an acquisition and development program for wildlife conservation (California Fish and Game Code 1300, et seq.). WCB consists of the President of the Fish and Game Commission, the Director of the Department of Fish and Game and the Director of the Department of Finance. Legislation that created WCB also established a Legislative Advisory Committee consisting of three members of the Senate and three members of the Assembly, which meet with WCB, providing legislative oversight.

The primary responsibilities of WCB are to select, authorize and allocate funds for the purchase of land and waters suitable for recreation purposes and the preservation, protection and restoration of wildlife habitat. WCB approves and funds projects that set aside lands within the State for such purposes, through acquisition or other means, to meet these objectives. WCB can also authorize the construction of facilities for recreational purposes on property in which it has a proprietary interest.

WCB's three main functions are land acquisition, habitat restoration and development of wildlife oriented public access facilities, which are carried out through its [PROGRAMS](#).

About Living Landscape Initiative

The Living Landscape Initiative is a collaborative effort among five land conservation organizations in and around Silicon Valley. Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, The Nature Conservancy, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), Save the Redwoods League and Sempervirens Fund are all working together to protect the unique natural benefits and striking beauty that nourish the area's social and economic vitality. By creating a sustainable living landscape, the Initiative seeks to enhance our lives by promoting clean air and water, local farming and working lands, biodiversity and habitat protection for wildlife, and public enjoyment of natural lands. To learn more, visit www.livinglandscapeinitiative.org.