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LAND TRUST OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SELECTS ACCOMPLISHED NATURE CONSERVANCY LEADER AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JULY 28, 2021—Santa Cruz, CA – The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, the largest land conservation nonprofit in Santa Cruz County, today announced the selection of Felton resident Sarah Newkirk as its new Executive Director, succeeding former Executive Director Stephen Slade, who retired this year after fifteen years with the Land Trust.

A conservation strategist and consensus-builder, Sarah comes to the Land Trust with 16 years of experience at The Nature Conservancy, advancing land conservation and climate change resilience. During her tenure at The Nature Conservancy, Sarah created and led the Coastal Strategy in New York and California, where she directed scientific assessments and developed strategic priorities. Her work on the Coastal Strategy program focused on climate change and sea-level rise, cultivation of public and private funding sources, and oversight of land acquisition and the restoration of coastal habitats.

“Sarah brings local, state, and national perspective to the work of the Land Trust and assumes the helm at a pivotal moment of growth for the organization,” said Donna Murphy, Land Trust Board Chair. “We’re excited about our future with Sarah as Executive Director, as she applies her experience and ideas in ways that build on and complement the phenomenal success the Land Trust has achieved over the past few decades.”

As Executive Director, Sarah will be instrumental in leading implementation of the Land Trust’s strategic plan, including the Nature Connection Campaign. The campaign aims to raise \$21 million in donations and \$20 million in grants to fund several projects, including the protection of Rocks Ranch and the building of 10 miles of trails through San Vicente Redwoods.

“I am thrilled Sarah will be joining the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County as its new executive director,” said Donna Meyers, Santa Cruz mayor and longtime conservation consultant in the region. “Sarah has been a colleague for many years, including through her previous work with The Nature Conservancy. Her experience nationally and in California is a perfect fit for partners like the City of Santa Cruz that view climate change, wildfire risk, and coastal adaptation strategies as important priorities for our community.”

“It is an honor to have been selected for this important leadership position and I’m excited by the opportunity to help protect an area I dearly love,” said Newkirk. “The Land Trust

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Sarah Newkirk

benefits tremendously from its exceptional staff, generous donors, and strong partnerships throughout our community – these will be key ingredients for success as we grow and evolve as a regional conservation leader.”

Sarah’s experience at The Nature Conservancy includes service as director of disaster resilience. In that role, Sarah’s priority was protecting natural areas around communities and initiated a first-of-its-kind strategic partnership between The Nature Conservancy and FEMA to mobilize federal investment in conservation through hazard mitigation grant programs.

Prior to The Nature Conservancy, Sarah served as California water quality programs manager at The Ocean Conservancy, a fellow with the Stanford Fisheries Policy Project at Stanford Law School, and a Schwarz public policy fellow at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Sarah holds a J.D. (magna cum laude) from Pace University School of Law, and a M.S. in Marine Environmental Science.

About the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County

The mission of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is to protect, care for, and connect people to the extraordinary lands that make this area special. Since its founding in 1978, the Land Trust has raised \$100 million in funding for conservation and has protected more than 14,000 acres. Learn more at landtrustsantacruz.org

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