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# California Farmland Conservancy Program

# Focus on Farmland



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## This edition of Focus on Farmland features:

- CFCP Funds Projects in Santa Cruz, Solano and Marin Counties
- Central Valley Land Trust Council Formed
- New Edition of *The Conservation Easement Handbook* Available
- CFCP Easement Monitoring Requirements
- CFCP Staff Updates & Upcoming Events

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## CFCP Provides Funds for Sand Hill Bluff Acquisition Along Santa Cruz Coast

The nonprofit organization Agri-Culture, in cooperation with the Trust for Public Land and multiple funders, recently completed a unique conservation project along the coast in Santa Cruz County. The project incorporates the conservation of important agricultural lands with preserving archaeological resources and increasing coastal access. Just off Highway One north of the City of Santa Cruz, the 154-acre Sand Hill Bluff property is between the 7,000-acre Coast Dairies and Wilder Ranch State Park.

A \$2 million grant from the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), matched by a \$2 million grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, allowed Agri-Culture to purchase 64 acres of the property. Currently used for the production of Brussels sprouts, the property is highly productive and supported by reliable irrigation water. CFCP statute requires that Agri-Culture must resell the property to a private landowner, subject to the terms of an agricultural conservation easement. The CFCP and Coastal

Conservancy will be reimbursed with the sale proceeds.



The Sand Hill Bluff property along the Santa Cruz coast. Photo by Sam Roberts.

The 90 acres of the property closest to the shoreline was acquired by the Department of Parks and Recreation, using additional funds from Proposition 40, the Caltrans Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. A significant portion of these acres will continue to be leased to farmers. In combination with other land already protected in the area, a considerable amount of coastal agricultural property has now been preserved in Santa Cruz County. In addition, State Parks is working to preserve a 5,000-year-

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old archaeological site on the property, traceable to the Ohlone Indians. Sand Hill Bluff is also one of the last links in a chain of acquisitions adding up to more than 13 miles of coastline and nearly 12,000 acres of land that will provide public access to the Santa Cruz coast.

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## **CFCP Grants Help Solano Land Trust Protect Putah Creek Ranch and Pleasants Valley Ranch**

In June, the Solano Land Trust purchased an agricultural conservation easement on 283 acres of outstanding farmland near Winters. The CFCP and federal Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program each contributed \$425,000 toward the purchase of the easement. Putah Creek Ranch is located along a 1.2-mile frontage of the south bank of Putah Creek between Winters and Davis, in an area designated by the Solano Land Trust as a high-priority preservation area. Organic walnut orchards, grape rootstock and field crops such as sunflowers and lima beans occupy the acreage. The ranch also is used as a demonstration farm for innovative practices, such as riparian plant restoration and a tailwater pond that prevents excessive silt and nutrients from entering the creek.

“We teach primarily high school students about sustainable agriculture practices,” ranch owner Craig McNamara said. “They are our future community leaders, and most of them have very little introduction into the process of how food gets on the table, let alone sustainable practices. We help them fill their educational toolbox with environmentally sound ideas. Adds McNamara, “As we looked at our piece of land, we realized that while we could probably sell several estate properties for a million dollars each, it was important to keep it in agricultural production as well as having the educational program. That’s why we decided to pursue an agricultural conservation easement.”



*A dinner was held on Putah Creek Ranch in June to celebrate the acquisition of an agricultural conservation easement on the property.*

In addition to the Putah Creek Ranch easement, the CFCP recently assisted Solano Land Trust with the acquisition of another easement. Martell Ranch contains 156 acres of irrigable farmland and 379 acres of rangeland, primarily used for grazing. The CFCP provided \$515,000 in grant funds on the farmland portion, while the Wildlife Conservation Board’s Rangeland, Grazing Land and Grassland Protection Program assisted with a \$1,008,000 grant on the rangeland. Both grants were matched with a donation from the landowner. Located in Pleasants Valley, Martell Ranch is just under five miles from the City of Vacaville. It adjoins a ranch already protected by an easement, bringing the total protected land in the area to more than 1,000 acres. A century-old olive orchard sits on a portion of the ranch, and two of the largest valley oaks remaining in the county exist on the ranch. Two creeks meander through the property.

Founded in 1986, the Solano Land Trust seeks to preserve and protect farmlands and open spaces throughout Solano County. SLT holds easements on eleven properties totaling 5,000 acres and valued in excess of \$5.8 million. In addition, the trust owns more than 10,300 acres of farmlands, ranchlands, wetlands, and open spaces with a value in excess of \$15.4 million. Almost all of these lands are in agricultural production.

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## CFCP Funds Easement in Marin County's Chileno Valley

Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) recently purchased an agricultural conservation easement on the 981-acre Jacobsen Ranch, with assistance from a California Farmland Conservancy Program grant. Located within the scenic Chileno Valley of West Marin, the Jacobsen Ranch is one of the most productive ranches in the area. In an area threatened by conversion to ranchettes and country estates, the ranch supports 300 pair of registered Black Angus beef cattle. The ranch is the seventh contiguous ranch in



*Jacobsen Ranch owner Ruthelma Jacobsen and grandson John Goldbeck, founder of the J.G. Angus purebred beef operation. Photo by Dexter Roberts for Marin Agricultural Land Trust.*

Chileno Valley to be protected by a MALT easement, bringing the total number of protected acres in Chileno Valley to 5,090.

MALT purchased the easement with \$1,000,000 in funding from the CFCP and \$1,100,000 of its own funding. The CFCP's contribution was made with Proposition 12 bond funds, and is the fourth such grant from the CFCP to MALT.

Now celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, MALT is a member-supported nonprofit organization founded in 1980 to preserve Marin County farmlands. Its agricultural conservation easement program has preserved nearly 38,000 acres on 57 family farms and ranches.

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## Central Valley Land Trust Council Formed

A new regional land trust council has been formed in the Central Valley. The Central Valley Land Trust Council was initiated this January to increase capacity and give a voice to Central Valley land conservation efforts. The council's purpose includes providing training and technical expertise, special projects such as mapping protected lands in the valley, building capacity, expanding land conservation coverage, and increasing communication and networking opportunities. In July, the council conducted a mitigation workshop that brought together over 70 participants which included land trusts, planners and stakeholders to learn about developing successful mitigation programs in valley communities. The Central Valley Land Trust Council is also planning for the 2005 Land Trust Summit, which will be held October 28-29, and will provide land trusts and their board members with organizational and technical training in the land conservation arena. For more information regarding the council or the 2005 Land Trust Summit, please contact Theresa Kiehn at 209-522-5103.

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## New Edition of *The Conservation Easement Handbook* Published

The Land Trust Alliance and the Trust for Public Land have revised and expanded *The Conservation Easement Handbook*. Originally published in 1988, this new edition draws on 17 years of experience from more than a thousand American land trusts. The new edition offers practical how-to tips and checklists for land trust staff and board members, detailed drafting guidelines for attorneys, and many sample documents on a companion CD-ROM. The handbook is designed as a how-to manual and provides technical guidelines for drafting conservation easements and information on creating an easement program and developing a stewardship program. To order, visit <http://www.lta.org/publications/>.

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## CFCP Easement Monitoring Requirements

Easements funded through the California Farmland Protection Program (CFCP) should be monitored at least once per year. Organizations must forward a monitoring report to the Department by June 30 each year after the monitoring visit has taken place. The report provides the CFCP with valuable information on the property's current condition and alerts us to any potential issues. Thanks to all the organizations who have already sent in their reports. If you have not yet sent in your report, the Department has available a one-page model report for your optional use. If you use your own format, please limit your report to two pages and be sure to address monitoring methods, current land use and condition of the property, any potential violations and corrective actions taken, and any transfer of interest in the property.

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## CFCP Staff Updates

**CFCP Welcomes New Project Manager:** The CFCP is pleased to have **Kenneth Murray** join our team. Ken comes to the CFCP with many years of real estate transaction experience. Ken spent the last five years at CalTrans, where he assisted with developing the new 20-year California transportation plan. Prior to that, Ken spent 12 years at the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Authority where he worked on neighborhood-level residential and commercial real estate development and managed grants.



*Kenneth Murray*

**Catherine Caldwell Rushworth Leaves CFCP:** The CFCP said goodbye in April to long-term project manager **Catherine Caldwell Rushworth**, who has taken a new position with the state Department of Parks and Recreation. Catherine had been with the Department of Conservation since 1997 and joined the CFCP soon after the program's inception. Among her contributions over the years were the completion of many complex easement transactions, development of the CFCP's website, newsletter, and numerous other outreach materials, development of the CFCP model easement, and standardization of many grant administration processes. We wish her great success in her new position.

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## Upcoming Events

The **National Land Conservation Conference: Conservation in the Heartland**, organized by Land Trust Alliance, will be held in Madison, Wisconsin, from **October 14-17**. For details, visit [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org).

The **Central Valley Land Trust Council**, a program of the Great Valley Center, will hold the **2005 Land Trust Summit** on **October 28-29** in Tulare. For information, contact Theresa Kiehn at [theresa@greatvalley.org](mailto:theresa@greatvalley.org) or 209-522-5103.

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We hope you've found this issue of *Focus on Farmland* useful and informative. Please contact us with any questions or ideas you have for future editions. Feel free to forward this email to other interested parties.

If you wish to be added to or removed from this mailing list, email [cfcp@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:cfcp@conservation.ca.gov).

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