

Mendocino Land Trust Partners with California Farmland Conservancy Program to Preserve Family-Owned Agricultural Lands in Ukiah Valley

Mendocino Land Trust proudly announces the preservation of two family-owned agricultural properties in Ukiah Valley this December. Mendocino Land Trust received grant funds for the transactions from the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), bringing the first funding of its kind into Mendocino County for farmland protection. The County Board of Supervisors and the Ukiah City Council unanimously approved the land trust's conservation easement transactions in concept, which was required by the CFCP. With CFCP funding, the Land Trust purchased an agricultural conservation easement from Gobbi Street Vineyards, LLC to protect its 53-acre vineyard, located adjacent to Highway 101 in Ukiah. With additional CFCP funding for transaction costs, Mendocino Land Trust also accepted the donation of a conservation easement over the 156-acre Dark Horse Ranch from Paul Dolan & Sons, LLC.

"We are proud to have worked with the Dolan and Chevalier families to add these two easements to our map of protected lands that spans across Mendocino County," said Ann Cole, Executive Director of Mendocino Land Trust. "Under conservation easements held in perpetuity by Mendocino Land Trust, these two properties will forever retain their rural, agricultural character and be protected from urban development."

Paul Dolan, one of the owners of Dark Horse Ranch and Gobbi Street Vineyards, said, "It was a pleasure to work with the Mendocino Land Trust. Conservation easements are an ideal vehicle to ensure that our family lands will be preserved and enjoyed in their current state for many generations."

The CFCP was created in 1996 and provides grant funding for protection of farmland using agricultural conservation easements. As of August 2013, just over 56,000 acres of the state's best farmland have been permanently conserved with CFCP-funded easements. The two new easement projects in Ukiah Valley were identified by Mendocino Land Trust through a series of outreach and education sessions for farmers in 2012, which was also funded by CFCP.

"We congratulate Mendocino Land Trust, the Dolan family, and the Chevalier family on the creation of these conservation easements," Department of Conservation Director Mark Nechodom said. "We appreciate the work the land trust does to preserve the productive farmlands of Mendocino County and to help maintain a viable agricultural economy in the region. We're very pleased to be a partner in this effort."

The most traditional tool for conserving private land, a "conservation easement" is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently prohibits development of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Under an agricultural conservation easement, landowners continue to own and use their agricultural lands, and may sell or pass them on to heirs.

Mendocino Land Trust works county-wide to conserve important natural resources, including working farmlands and forests, wildlife habitat, open space, scenic vistas, watersheds, and to facilitate public access. For more information on these projects or to discuss conserving your land, please contact Project Manager Louisa Morris at the Mendocino Land Trust, (707) 962-0470, or lmorris@mendocinolandtrust.org.