

FALL 2006

NORTHCOAST REGIONAL LAND TRUST



An Iaqua Spring (oil on linen board)

Michelle Murphy-Ferguson

First Two Ranches Protected in Six Rivers to the Sea Initiative

When the Northcoast Regional Land Trust says it's concerned about protecting the North Coast's environment and economy, we are talking about working with people to protect a natural resource: People who work and love the land...people who recreate and live on this land...people who are stewards of this land and the plants and animals that inhabit it. In some ways, what NRLT and our project partners are doing is something wholly unprecedented on the North Coast. And we are finding that new ways of doing things and working with diverse constituents is absolutely

essential for the future of our far northern California coastal landscape.

NRLT's recent successful protection of more than 6,000 acres of working ranchland in Humboldt County—The Iaqua and Price Creek Ranches—will ensure that this land is never subdivided and developed into housing, but instead will stay open, with continued grazing, hunting, and timber management – activities that are historically and currently important to the North Coast economy. Other restrictions in the easements are road building, large clearcuts, and

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Letter from the Executive Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Petruzzi".

First of Many

I arrived as the executive director of the Northcoast Regional Land Trust about four months ago. Much of my short time here has been spent meeting with our incredible supporters and amazing partners. I've enjoyed these meetings and the education they have provided me, but I know I have not yet connected with the majority of you. So I am especially excited for this first opportunity to talk to you all—even if only in print. And I welcome any feedback or questions from you as we blaze new conservation trails together.

I was lucky to join the NRLT team at such an electrifying time—just before we began to celebrate easements on two properties totaling more than 6,000 acres. These properties—Iaqua Ranch and Price Creek Ranch—represent the first phase of the Six Rivers to the Sea Initiative, and they were accomplished through the hard work of a broad coalition of partners. It is a time to celebrate, but I want to congratulate and thank the NRLT board and staff, and most importantly you, our supporters for providing the patronage to allow this to happen. We have succeeded in building an effective conservation community on the North Coast, and we have many more important protection efforts to achieve together.

For those who know nothing of me, I spent more than eight years working in Colorado while with Colorado State University. I was fortunate to work on land conservation projects in mountain west as a representative of the University. We worked on diverse projects with partners that included ranchers, farmers, academicians, environmentalists, politicians, agencies, Native American groups and non-profits. We accomplished a great deal, and I intend on applying what I learned from that experience here on the North Coast and establishing cooperative efforts with diverse groups.

Many supporters I have spoken to have graciously asked what we need to continue to do our work. Let me share some of my answers to them. First, as we are taking steps to add education programs, become involved with community sustainability issues, and play a role in building the dialogue around our resources, we will need additional funds. We have made some excellent progress in making our own organization sustainable, but will need your help to keep ourselves solvent. Over the last two years, NRLT has brought hundreds of thousands of dollars into the region for the direct purchase of conservation easements, the acquisition of special natural resource lands, and the restoration of native habitats. Yet we can function as a conduit for more conservation dollars into the region only if we maintain the staff and infrastructure necessary to do so. This is why your help is so vital in leveraging further conservation in our region. We have produced some great results and I hope that makes you all comfortable that your donations are being well spent.

Next, we need more people involved. We need volunteers to represent us at events and others to serve on committees doing some of the work our limited human resources are preventing us from addressing. Third, we need you to 'talk' about us with your friends and neighbors. Be our ambassadors out there. Maximize your gifts and labor by getting others involved, and share with us the names of those you would like us to contact or send additional information. Feel free to contact me <j.petruzzi@nrlt.org> or Linda Serrano <l.serrano@nrlt.org>, our Development Director, with feedback or any questions you might have.

With support from people like you, a committed and talented staff and board, and the conservation ethic of landowners, we can contribute immensely to a future of healthy land and communities.

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Tempra Board, Development & Newsletter

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NRLT's Education Planning Begins

Whether it is the salmon habitat and sustainable agriculture lessons with fourth graders out at the Kokte property of the Jacoby Creek Land Trust, or the popular summer natural history hikes in the upper Mattole coordinated by Sanctuary Forest, land trusts of the North Coast have long been committed to education as part of their operations.

The purposes of devoting staff and volunteer resources to such endeavors become clear when considering our conservation missions—in order to protect the land and water resources of the area in perpetuity, we must have

devoted and educated stewards in the future.

NRLT's contribution to helping people understand the working and wild lands of the area have included conservation workshops throughout our tri-county region, and direct work with Humboldt State University students. In an effort to share the conservation tools and options available in our area, NRLT workshops have brought together landowners, the general public, agency and county representatives, and legal council to present and encourage conservation applications. They have

also succeeded in generating dialogue and community around conservation between diverse stakeholders. Our work with HSU students has generated two valuable reports for conservation planning in Humboldt county, while also providing a rich research and learning opportunity for the senior planning students doing the work. NRLT is currently involved with a HSU service learning student, and is beginning to work with volunteer students and professionals from the University.

Continued on Page 6.



NRLT Welcomes New Staff

Mary Claire Kier, Office Manager (left) and Linda Serrano (right), Development Director

Linda Serrano

NRLT is pleased to welcome Linda Serrano as our new Development Director. Linda has more than eight years of direct experience with non-profit organizations in Oregon and Humboldt County, California. Raised and educated in New England, the West's raw beauty captured and keeps her living and thriving here on California's North Coast. Her work with the Northcoast Regional Land Trust focuses on building the organization's capacity in order to promote the values of protecting and preserving working landscapes, farms, forest, and grazing lands.

"One of the things that impresses me the most about the NRLT is the diversity on the Board of Directors," Linda says, "It's something you don't always see with conservation organizations." She also appreciates the team approach among the staff, in which everyone has a voice and is included in the decision-making

process. "There is a real sense of camaraderie and team work here." Linda brings her strong coordination and organizational skills to the land trust, as well as a dedication to the completion of our mission. She adds, "NRLT is working on projects that are of concern to every member of the community. We're helping to resolve issues that everyone needs to get behind and support." NRLT is thrilled to have Linda join our team.

Mary Claire Kier

NRLT would also like to welcome Mary Claire Kier as our new Office Manager. Mary Claire's roots were established on the North Coast nearly 150 years ago, when ancestors from three family branches began to arrive to log, to farm, and to build. "I cut my teeth on stewardship—it was a defining philosophy in my family, she adds. "I have always known that I've wanted to work towards the stewardship of the environment—the land and the critters that are on it."

Mary Claire has enjoyed a lifetime connection with nature and comes from a family committed to natural resource sustainability. Following her degree in fisheries at HSU, Mary Claire served as

an agency biologist and consultant to for-profit and non-profit conservation groups—while cheering on her husband, a North Coast jeweler and artist, and raising their two sweet boys.

She relishes supporting the NRLT staff in work that will endure and enrich the North Coast region. Most of all she says that she enjoys the people she works with and meeting everyone who is involved in the land trust. "Everyone seems extremely devoted to the organization and supports the philosophy that working lands need to keep working and open lands need to be protected."

Mary Claire's ability and desire to jump in and help in any aspect of the organization and work that needs to be done is a great help to the organization. She sums it up this way: "I have never been one to know my place." And we are glad for that!

Eel Canyon Farms

CAT KOSHKIN,
Attorney & Counselor at Law
Helping families preserve land
for the next generation

Six Rivers to the Sea Update

First Two Ranches Protected!

Continued from Page 1

home building. The easements are the first of several planned through NRLT's Six Rivers to the Sea Initiative, which seeks to protect the natural values and

productive capacity of working lands that connect the Six Rivers National Forest to the Pacific Coast.

Located in Kneeland, the Iaqua Ranch is in some ways a microcosm of the North

Coast landscape. It includes rolling grasslands, resplendent oak woodlands, conifer forests, miles of salmon-bearing streams, and scenic vistas. The Price Creek Ranch is located in the lower Eel River watershed, near Rio Dell, and boasts grasslands, meadows and ridgetop balds. The property is adjacent to the 4,000-acre Howe Creek conservation easement, and is also near the Bertha Russ Lytel Conservation Area. Protection of the Price Creek Ranch helps to create a contiguous network of open space and habitat, one of the ultimate visions of the Six Rivers to the Sea Initiative.

Conservation easements are deed restrictions landowners voluntarily place on their properties to protect natural resources, such as fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, or scenic views. These restrictions stay with the property even if it changes hands, ensuring permanent protection while allowing private ownership and productive use to continue.

The conservation easements are specifically designed to remove the threat of subdivision, while allowing for sustainable forestry and ranching operations that has been going on for generations. Landowners like Francis Carrington, owner of the Iaqua Ranch, and Arlin Grandy, owner of the Price Creek Ranch, are seeking ways to continue their operations on the land that they love, without seeing their property values skyrocket more every year—often due to speculation of

Price Creek Ranch Arlin Grandy



Arlin Grandy's grandparents bought 720 acres of the Price Creek Valley near the turn of the 20th century. With an interest in raising sheep on the verdant slopes of the valley, Arlin's grandfather either ringed (cut around the base) or cleared much of the timber (for \$1/thousand board feet in those days) in order to open up more grasslands. The result was a varied landscape of steep slopes, thick forests, rich riparian areas, and fertile grasslands across the valley.

Around 1959 his grandfather died and he moved out to the Ranch to help his grandmother manage the farm operations. He bought his own CAT and was able to hire himself out for forestry jobs on the side—in between forestry jobs he selectively harvested from the Ranch. He and his brother inherited the Ranch when his grandmother died, and after buying out his brother's interest, he expanded the ranch up to roughly 1,480 acres.

The coyote became too numerous in the 1980's to continue managing the sheep, so he made the switch to raising cattle. Soon after his financial burdens grew so large, he had to sell a couple parcels, reducing the size of the ranch to today's 1,280 acres, which only partially lifted the weight of the debt. In order to keep the ranch and reduce his debt, he needed to find another solution. Selling a conservation easement was the solution he was looking for, and now his three children will continue the tradition of stewardship in the Price Creek Valley.

"I did the easement instead of selling the ranch, so I could keep it in my family."

**FIRST AMERICAN
TITLE COMPANY**

Iaqua Ranch Francis and Carole Carrington



(might need to replace photo with higher res. one)

Most people that travel through Iaqua Ranch on either one of the meandering county roads are struck by the spectacular beauty and North Coast character of the land. On his way to Bridgeville in the early 80's, Francis Carrington was enjoying the scene and the idyllic ranch house with a nearby spring, and decided that if the property ever came up for sale he would buy it.

When the chance finally came, Francis and Carole followed through with their intentions, and have enjoyed the land ever since. They currently raise approximately 200 beef cattle on the rolling grasslands, and modestly harvest timber for firewood and lumber.

They first heard about conservation easements in a regional newspaper, and first

considered the idea of placing a conservation easement on Iaqua Ranch after meeting with local conservationists. The decision to place an easement on the property was complicated. They had to consider many things, including their age, their estate, and the tax implications. "It would have been much more profitable if I sold off the pieces—it would have been millions of dollars in difference. But then there's the beauty of the ranch, and the way the ranch is. That's the reason we bought it—the particular beauty of the whole ranch. We eventually came to the opinion that we'd like to keep it that way."

The Carringtons are very happy with their decision, and with everyone's work in the process. "It's a great program, because if you want to ranch, or handle timber, or a place to hunt, it doesn't stop any of those activities, and yet you receive compensation for development rights. It's a win win situation."

the property's value once developed into a residential area. So landowners place a restriction on their land that reduces the property value—something unusual in a society that often places maximizing profits as its first priority.

Recognizing the importance of these ranches to fish, wildlife, and productive resources, the project was a collaboration of several state, federal, and local agencies, non-profit organizations, and individuals. The state's Wildlife Conservation Board,

the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CDF) Forest Legacy Program, together provided \$5.1 million towards the purchase of the easements. Carrington donated an additional \$635,000 in easement value. Support was also provided by Humboldt County and The Nature Conservancy. NRTL is supported by grants from agencies, foundations, including the Columbia Foundation, as well as more than 350 individual donors. This support has in part helped us to shepherd these

projects over the past three years. Though CDF will hold the easement, NRTL will take over long-term monitoring of the property to ensure adherence to the easement terms.

NRTL is currently working with five other local ranchland owners to place conservation easements on properties collectively covering more than 25,000 acres as part of the Six Rivers to the Sea Initiative. It is only through partnerships among many individuals and agencies that this level of conservation on the North Coast is possible.

North Coast Cleaning
Services, Inc.

THOMAS C. BRUNDAGE
Registered Geologist



(Emerald City
Logo to be
placed)

New Conservation Tax Incentives and the North Coast

New and improved tax incentives for landowners that make a qualified conservation contribution^a to organizations like NCRLT have recently been signed into law. There are significant changes in how to calculate potential income tax deductions for the donating landowner, and these changes could prove to be just the momentum needed for many of our North Coast farmers and ranchers. These new incentives are temporary, and apply only to gifts made in 2006 and 2007, so we encourage those that have been thinking of donating a conservation easement, or other contribution of land, to contact us and their tax council soon!

Simply stated, the old tax incentive rules allowed for a 30% income tax deduction per year over the period of five years, or until the deductible amount was exhausted. This often left many landowners with much of their contributed value unused, because they could not use the entire contribution up

at 30% in the course of five years. The new tax incentives, again simply stated, allow for a 50% income tax deduction per year over the course of 15 years. If you qualify as a farmer or rancher under the IRS rules^b, there is an even better incentive package in place, allowing for a 100% deduction over the course of the next 15 years.

These new incentives are the result of years of diligent work by land trusts and their supporters throughout the North Coast and nationwide, the Land Trust Alliance, and certain members of congress. Our own Congressman Mike Thompson (D-CA), who serves on the Ways and Means Committee, spearheaded efforts to create the new tax provision. "This new law is a big win for farmers and our environment," said Thompson. "Agriculture is a core component of our economy and our American heritage, and we have lost thousands of acres of agricultural lands to urban sprawl over the past decade.

It is imperative that we find new solutions for protecting these invaluable areas. Through this provision, we take an important step toward keeping urban development from destroying our farmlands and harming the environment."

The bill also tightens the rules in the appraisal process for all donated property, and it imposes stiff penalties on inflated appraisals. This is a welcome provision that will help protect the public interest, and prevent abuses.

NRLT encourages all landowners interested in donating property to contact a tax attorney for an analysis of these incentives, and how they can support your conservation objectives.

Endnotes: (a) "Qualified Conservation Contributions" are specifically defined under Section 170(h) of the tax code; (b) In general, a "Qualified Farmer or Rancher" under the new law is an individual (or corporation) whose farming or ranching income is more than 50% of her total income.

Join Us in Voting YES on Prop 84

The important conservation work of land trusts like NRLT requires a broad and abundant source of funding, from your generous donations, to government programs. The state of California faces enormous population growth in the coming years, with a projected 25 million new residents expected by 2040, and the state funding sources for land and water conservation are dwindling. The state currently spends less than 1% of the overall state budget on funding for these critical resources, which is woefully insufficient, especially in the face of such dramatic growth and pressure to convert our critical watersheds, agricultural lands, and scenic resources to permanent development.

California's Proposition 84, the Clean Water, Parks and Coastal Protection Bond, is a \$5.4 billion bond

measure designed to provide funding for conservation initiatives that protect our water supply, strengthen flood protection, and preserve California's parks, forests, lakes, rivers, beaches, bays, ocean and coastline. You will have an opportunity to vote on this vital boost to conservation efforts in the November 2006 statewide election.

Recognizing the need for appropriate use of such investments, the measure includes strict accountability provisions, including yearly independent audits and a citizen's oversight committee. NRLT has publicly endorsed Yes on 84, and is joined by a wide-ranging coalition of interests. We encourage our region to learn more on our website and vote for this crucial investment that balances the impending population growth with resource protection.

NRLT Plans New Education Program

Continued from Page 3

We are now breaking new ground in our commitments to education by assembling an *education planning committee* with the purpose of developing an education program for the land trust. With support from the Vera P. Viotor Trust, a fund of the Humboldt Area Foundation, NRLT will convene three meetings over the course of the next few months with community members of all ages in order to decipher the education needs and opportunities that we can fulfill. The results of those meetings will be the basis for the beginning of a long-term education program we intend on implementing in the following years.

If you have an interest in being on the committee, or have input you would like to share with the committee, please contact Erik Wilson at the NRLT office: e.wilson@ncrlt.org; 707.822.2242.

Thank You NRLT 2005-2006 Supporters!

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NRLT Mission

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is dedicated to protecting and enhancing our region's farms, forests, rangelands, and wild areas in perpetuity. Our vision of the future includes vibrant communities, sustainable economies and healthy landscapes.

Cover Art Michelle Murphy-Ferguson



Evening Siesta (oil on linen)

Michelle Murphy-Ferguson

A native of the North Coast, growing up in the Eel River Valley, Michelle Murphy-Ferguson has studied with local artists and abroad—at the Louvre in Paris, and at the Academy of Art in Florence. Michelle's paintings offer up an amazing variety of moods, and you can find more of her work at: www.mmfpaintings.com.

When NRLT approached Michelle about using one of her beautiful landscapes for our newsletter cover, she responded by visiting the Iaquia Ranch, part of our Six Rivers to the Sea Initiative, to create three lovely paintings, two of which are printed here.

In September, Michelle's works were shown in: Ashland, Oregon at the Crown Jewel, in Ferndale at Curley's Grill, and in Arcata at Living Styles.

For the Month of November, and for Arts Alive! in Eureka, her work will be shown at the Humboldt Carpet Gallery, 205 G Street, Eureka.

CHARLIE TRIPODI
THE LAND MAN

