Two More Properties Now Permanently Protected

Though the financial disruption that has dealt a blow to our country's economy has been felt in our organizational capacity, the Land Trust has maintained stability and has still been able to complete significant achievements over the past six months. The closing of the Grizzly Mountain Ranch conservation easement marked two milestones – our first donated conservation easement and our first in Trinity County. The closing of escrow on the McNamara Dairy property in March opened new doors to working with the Orick community. Three Six Rivers to the Sea conservation easements are nearing completion, and will place over 16,500 acres under permanent protection, thereby preserving vital upland wildlife habitat and natural resource sustainability for long-time area ranching families.

Grizzly Mountain Ranch Conservation Easement

Overlooking the rural community of Zenia, in Trinity County, the Grizzly Mountain Ranch covers nearly 1,200 acres of forests, rangeland, and oak woodlands. Fourth-generation landowner Ross Burgess contacted the Land Trust in mid-2008 with an interest in donating a conservation easement by year's end. With assistance from the US Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, NRLT staff worked with Mr. Burgess to complete all of the required title and appraisal work and drafted an easement that matched his management and conservation goals. The easement was recorded in Trinity County one day before the end of the year!

As a result, the Grizzly Mountain Ranch will forever be protected from subdivision and will promote sustainable management practices. The oak woodlands that grace the hillsides of the ranch are afforded specific protections, and the steelhead-bearing streams will be sheltered from practices that may degrade

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The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the California Council of Land Trusts.

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From the Executive Director

Spring is often heralded as a time of growth and renewal. In advance of this seasonal change, the Northcoast Regional Land Trust has experienced both in healthy doses. Through two recent successes, the Land Trust’s portfolio of conserved properties has grown by protecting another 1,208 acres of working ranchlands, bringing our current total to more than 9,000 acres. The Grizzly Mountain Ranch in Trinity County is now permanently protected with a conservation easement that was donated by landowner Ross Burgess. In addition, the Land Trust is now the proud owner of a dairy in the picturesque Redwood Creek estuary in the community of Orick.

Other Land Trust successes include the completion of a draft Conservation Action Plan. This document will help us develop a more robust and sophisticated approach to conserving land and water on the North Coast. The North Coast Dialogues project continues to evolve and grow as a community initiative. We continue to collaborate with regional stakeholders in developing resource and land use goals that will provide a framework for economic and environmental sustainability in our region.

As you can see, the Northcoast Regional Land Trust is quickly growing into the regional resource envisioned by its founders. However, spring also signifies a time of change. Early in 2009, Kevin McKernan decided to resign as Executive Director. The long daily commute from Crescent City was the primary reason for Kevin’s decision. We will sorely miss his presence in the office, but are grateful for his significant contributions. Kevin successfully negotiated acquisition of the McNamara Dairy following four years of intermittent and often contentious dialogue. He also broadened our presence in Del Norte County, including conversations with the Wetherell family as they explore land conservation options for their dairy on the banks of the Smith River. Kevin also implemented a far more professional accounting system and completed the first audit successfully for the Land Trust. Though we are saddened by his departure, we are strongly committed to maintaining the momentum that Kevin cultivated during his tenure.

After working for more than a year on numerous projects, I am excited to assume the role of Interim Executive Director for the Land Trust. Raised in Fieldbrook, with a family history spanning five generations in Humboldt County, I feel strongly committed to the people and landscapes of this place. I have a diverse background from restoring native vegetation in Monterey County to directing field biology projects in West Africa to teaching in higher education here at home. I think I speak for everyone in the Land Trust office in saying that we are invigorated by our recent accomplishments and look forward to many more successes in the months to come.
North Coast Dialogues Advances Vision

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust and its network of collaborators are creating a Working Lands Strategy as part of a 100-year visioning project called the North Coast Dialogues. The Dialogues began as a collaborative, multi-stakeholder conversation designed to help our community determine the best way to maintain working lands into the future. Long-term vision statements developed by consensus (see below) now provide a foundation for addressing key working lands issues together.

We are currently conducting a landscape-level analysis of land use patterns and other factors related to the productive capacity of forestry, agriculture, and fisheries in Humboldt County. The purpose is to establish a shared understanding of the current patterns and trends as they relate to the long-term viability of these industries and the natural resources on which they depend. The analyses are intended to provide an objective basis for deciding what collaborative actions, if any, are needed to help maintain productive lands and waters over time.

We are planning to present the findings of the analysis at a public forum in the fall. That event will foster community discussion and hopefully new insights that guide us in developing quantitative resource and land use goals. We will then identify and prioritize conservation financing options, stewardship and regulatory incentives, and development options that support our goals.

This work is being guided by the North Coast Dialogues Steering Committee, conducted by the NRLT staff and its partners, and reviewed and revised by our diverse working group.

On a related note, the NRLT recently held two well-attended interactive workshops entitled Communities in Transition: Exploring the Link between Change and Strong Communities. These workshops introduced the Transitions Framework, a theory of change and human response to change, and explored how this lens can be used to build or maintain key elements of community strength. Participants had an opportunity to apply the thinking to current and ongoing changes occurring in our community. Based on the positive response we received, we are likely to host workshops on this topic again in the future.

To learn more about the North Coast Dialogues project, please visit our website at www.ncrlt.org or call Lindsay Magnuson at 822-2242.

COLLABORATIVE VISION STATEMENTS

For the next 100 years...

- Locally-based agriculture, forestry, and fisheries are integral to and positively contribute to Humboldt County’s economy, natural landscapes, and rural way of life and are supported by our entire community.

- Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries are economically and environmentally viable and sustainable.

- People are living and working on resource lands, using traditional and evolving knowledge of stewardship and management, providing opportunities for future generations.

- Resource lands, in addition to their economic value, provide fish and wildlife habitat, open space, and are recognized as essential to Humboldt County.

The Dialogues project is conducting a landscape-level analysis of land use patterns and other factors related to the viability of forestry, agriculture, and fisheries in Humboldt County.
vital habitat. Mr. Burgess will continue to sustainably manage the forests and rangelands on the ranch, as well as continue his low impact hydroelectric operation and diversification of non-timber forest products.

**McNamara Dairy Purchased**

Tom McNamara, an Orick native, had been raising dairy cows on his 77-acre ranch for close to 30 years. Located about a mile from the Pacific Ocean and lying on the north bank of Redwood Creek, the dairy receives cool ocean breezes and includes a spruce bog that provides habitat for multitudes of birds. Feeling that his interest in the business was waning, he put the property up for sale on the open market. Acting on this opportunity, and through a complicated, four-year negotiation involving Western Rivers Conservancy, an Oregon-based non-profit group, the California State Coastal Conservancy, and the Northcoast Regional Land Trust, the McNamara Dairy is now owned and managed by the Land Trust.

The Land Trust’s first goal as the new owner of the Dairy is to reach out to our Orick neighbors and become active members of the community. Though the long-term goal of this land purchase is to aid in the restoration of the Redwood Creek estuary, NRLT realizes that this must come through consensus with our neighbors and the many stakeholders in this effort, including Redwood National Park and the Redwood Creek Watershed Group. For now, NRLT is leasing the property to a local dairy producer, and is developing a management plan to improve the biological and agricultural resources on the property. We look forward to further dialogue with potential partners in the community, and hope to aid in an ongoing effort to improve the lives of the residents of Orick and the condition of the resources we share.
NOW PROTECTED IN PERPETUITY
Six Rivers to the Sea

After the successful closing of the Valley View Ranch conservation easement last year, the Land Trust is currently working toward the completion of three working forest and ranch conservation easements in Humboldt County. The Chalk Mountain and Charles Mountain Ranches, combined, ranked as the number two conservation project in the nation under the federal Forest Legacy Program for easement funding. Together, these two ranches encompass more than 15,000 acres of forests, salmon streams, and rangelands that will forever be protected as productive resource lands and open space, as opposed to being broken up into a rural residential subdivision. Appraisals are almost complete and fundraising continues.

Similarly, the Miller Forest conservation easement, near Willow Creek, will promote long-term sustainable forestry while protecting Port Orford Cedar (POC) groves and creeks that buffer adjacent US Forest Service POC management areas. This tree species is “at risk” and conservation measures on private lands will help protect these forests on public lands. Due to the state budget crisis, funding for this project is currently on hold, but a conservation plan, a POC resource assessment report, and a property appraisal are currently underway.

Seven Common Myths About Conservation Easements (and the real facts)

MYTH #1: Ownership of land is given up
FACT: Landowner retains ownership but sells or donates an interest in (easement on) the land.

MYTH #2: Land encumbered by a conservation easement can not be sold, mortgaged, or passed on to future generations
FACT: Because the landowner retains ownership, it can be passed down, sold or mortgaged like any other real property.

MYTH #3: Public access generally is required once you grant a conservation easement
FACT: An easement includes the right of reasonable access only to the holder of the easement, and only to monitor the easement. Public access can be written into an easement, but only if the landowner desires it.

MYTH #4: I can no longer run cattle, cut firewood, or log.
FACT: Conservation easements usually preserve, rather than prevent, historic uses. Many land trusts support selective timber harvest guided by timber management plans.

MYTH #5: An easement will tie the hands of my heirs
FACT: Although that is true, an easement will tie their hands far less than having to sell property to pay taxes! Landowners are encouraged to consult with their legal and financial advisors and to plan with their heirs to consider options.

MYTH #6: I can avoid property taxes
FACT: Because you remain the property owner, you remain liable for property taxes. In Humboldt County, our assessor has chosen NOT to reassess properties based on conservation easement valuation.

MYTH #7: Conservation easements are just tax dodges for the wealthy
FACT: Conservation easements are not merely “tax loopholes,” but provide an incentive to assist in reaching societal goals. They are a fair trade of property rights for conservation in perpetuity. And their greatest value is not to the rich, but to land-rich, cash-poor families who wish to maintain a family heritage.

LAY OF THE LAND

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust just started a new program called “Lay of the Land”. It’s a series of free, one-hour informational events which are designed to introduce our community to the general land trust model of conservation and disseminate information about our Land Trust in particular. The Lay of the Land presentations are full of visually stimulating information about the Northcoast Regional Land Trust’s work – its mission, purpose, accomplishments, goals – and vision for a sustainable North Coast future.

The presentation will include a seven-minute documentary which shares stories about “This Place We Call Home”, also the title of the film. Humboldt State University Professor Ann Alter (Department of Theatre, Film and Dance) and her Filmmaking III class interviewed different community members for their experience of living on the North Coast. Now in post-production, the film is designed to explore joy, inspiration, challenge, hardship, and love of the land from unique and diverse perspectives.

The film will be shown toward the end of the Lay of the Land presentation as a catalyst for dialogue, storytelling and sharing amongst participants. Everyone is welcome. You will receive your personal invitation within the next few months.
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Thanks to those who supported us from September 2008 through March 2009

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Feel good about protecting a place that you love.

With a legacy gift to the Northcoast Regional Land Trust, you can ensure that some of our most beautiful and important lands are protected. Benefits to you may also include:

- Reducing or eliminating estate tax
- Increasing your income
- Decreasing taxes
- Bypassing capital gains taxes

Leave a legacy of healthy land, clean water, and hope for North Coast generations. Contact your financial advisor for details on how to make your legacy gift. For basic information, please contact the NRLT at (707) 822-2242.

COVER ART - ALAN SANBORN

Alan Sanborn is an Arcata watercolorist who paints the landscape of Humboldt County, as well as landscapes of his native New England. He has exhibited fairly extensively nationally, but is best known for his images which grace the posters for the local Farmers’ Market every year. His favorite subject is the work of small organic family farmers, who bring abundance to the North Coast of California.

Alan can be reached at www.alansanbornart.com, or lala@arcatanet.com, or (707) 822-7958.

NRLT’s Mission

The Northcoast Regional Land Trust is dedicated to the protection and enhancement of farms, forests, rangelands, and wild areas in perpetuity. Our vision for the future includes vibrant communities, sustainable economies and healthy landscapes.

THANKS TO: