Humboldt dairy, Trinity ranch protected in land trust deals

John Driscoll
The Times-Standard

The North Coast Regional Land Trust has acquired the 77-acre McNamara dairy in Orick after four years of on-and-off negotiations.

The land trust intends to keep the property in agricultural production, with aims to protect wildlife habitat and provide for flood protection and public access. Negotiations for part of the 108-acre dairy were held with landowner Thomas McNamara, the California Coastal Conservancy, the Western River Conservancy and the land trust. In the end, McNamara opted to hold onto his residence and 31 acres.

The conservancy funded the entire $770,000 acquisition.

Land trust Executive Director Lindsay Magnuson said that the organization has been interested in the restoration potential of the property, which lies along Redwood Creek and has diverse but struggling salmon and steelhead runs. The acquisition suits the land trust’s mission to preserve working agricultural lands and habitat, Magnuson said. Grazing on the property will continue.

But Magnuson stressed that the land trust has no immediate big plans for the land, which is nestled among several other lower Redwood Creek properties facing difficult issues over flooding and levee protection.

“Our plan at the moment is to immerse ourselves with getting to know our neighbors,” Magnuson said.

See TRUST/A10

TRUST
FROM A1

The $10,000-an-acre price tag during earlier negotiations for the whole 108-acre property raised eyebrows from the conservancy board. But Magnuson said that the price is comparable to properties in the Arcata Bottoms and Ferndale, and has buildings and other improvements.

The land trust also acquired an easement on a 1,431-acre ranch in Zenia, south of Mad River in Trinity County. The land trust will manage the easement on the property — which is about three-quarters forested and a quarter oak and prairie — while landowner Ross Burgess will continue to work the land.

A fourth-generation rancher, Burgess placed the easement, he said, “to assure that Grizzly Mountain Ranch remains both economically and environmentally sustainable over the long term.”

The easement on Grizzly Mountain Ranch restricts development, subdivision and mineral extraction, but allows sustainable logging and cattle grazing. Its streams, which are tributaries to the Eel River, support threatened steelhead trout.