







**AG +
OPEN
SPACE**
SONOMA COUNTY

LAND FOR LIFE

Land and Easement Stewardship Update

Board of Directors Workshop
September 19, 2023

AG + OPEN SPACE PROTECTED LANDS

-  Conservation Easement
-  Fee Title
-  Open Space Easement
-  Other Public or Protected Land

MENDOCINO

LAKE

NAPA

MARIN

South Fork Gualala River

Gualala River

Whegfield Creek

Gualala River

Big Sulphur Creek

Dry Creek

101

128

Russian River

Wapinitia Creek

HEALDSBURG

WINDSOR

SANTA ROSA

SEBASTOPIA

ROHNERT PARK

LOTATI

101

12

Savoca Creek

SONOMA

PETALUMA

Petaluma River

116

121

37

MULTIPLE BENEFITS

35,825

ACRES
OF LAND
SUITABLE
FOR
GRAZING

45

NEW PARKS
+
PRESERVES

17

MOUNTAINS
+
RIDGETOPS

77

PROPERTIES
PRODUCING LOCAL
CROPS, DAIRY
PRODUCTS, & WINE

14,332

ACRES
OF
REDWOOD
FOREST

OVER
122,000
ACRES
EQUIVALENT TO 12%
OF THE LAND IN
SONOMA COUNTY

99 MILES
OF STREAMS THAT
ARE HOME
TO ENDANGERED
SALMON & TROUT

5,911

ACRES OF
WETLANDS +
RIPARIAN HABITAT

OVER **95**
MILES OF
TRAILS OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC

57%

OF PROTECTED
PROPERTIES
WITHIN
COMMUNITIES
OR
SURROUNDING
GREENBELT
AREAS

64,898

ACRES OF
NATIVE
OAK WOODLAND
+ FOREST

38

COMMUNITY
OPEN SPACE
PROJECTS
IN CITIES +
UNINCORPORATED
COMMUNITIES

**64,823 ACRES IN THE
RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED,
A CRITICAL
DRINKING WATER SOURCE**

**6 LOCATIONS
PROVIDING
PUBLIC ACCESS
TO THE
RUSSIAN RIVER**



330 easement ownerships

- Over 122,000 acres
- Monitor each easement every 18 months (on the ground visits and remote 'visits')
- Resolve easement violations
- Respond to use requests and amendments
- Assist new landowners with understanding the easement
- *Stewardship Policy (2021)*

Observation 4



KASHIA COASTAL RESERVE



CLOUDY BEND



BAYER NEIGHBORHOOD PARK AND GARDENS



PRYOR RANCH



Twelve properties

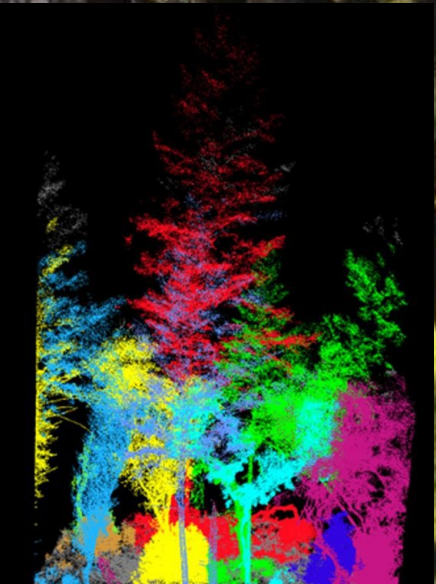
- 1,300 acres
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Vegetation management
- Habitat restoration
- Agricultural use – farming and grazing
- *Fee Lands Strategy Update (2021)*





- Fuels management
- Holistic forest health and biodiversity enhancement
- Climate change resilience and carbon sequestration
- Indigenous stewardship
- Prescribed and cultural burning
- Community engagement

FOREST MANAGEMENT



TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES



- Resources and guidance on best practices via trainings, workshops, conversations with staff and other experts
- Landowner resources hub on website, LandLine and other eNews
- We partner with the County, Resource Conservation Districts, and other community partners to provide broad support and information about funding opportunities
- Vegetation management program
- Public outings and youth education program

LOOKING FORWARD



TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

- 1990 – Measures A and C
- 2001 – Nichols Berman calculation, establish Stewardship Reserve Fund
- 2006 – Measure F
- 2007 – Measure F Sales Tax Revenue Bonds
- 2011 – Open Space Authority transition to the Fiscal Oversight Commission
- 2013 – Center for Natural Lands Management Stewardship Reserve calculation
- 2015 – Bond debt restructure, Fiscal Oversight Commission Minute Order 13
- 2021 – Vital Lands Initiative adopted
- 2023 – Center for Natural Lands Management revision to calculation
- 2023 – Macias, Gini & O’Connell assessment of endowment and investment options
- 2023 – Fiscal Oversight Commission/Advisory Committee Endowment Subcommittee
- 2024 – Bond debt repayment period ends
- 2031 – Start of new sales tax measure with Ag + Open Space reauthorization

AG + OPEN SPACE ENDOWMENT MODEL



Center for Natural
Lands Management

	Current portfolio (330 easement ownerships, 12 fee properties)	Anticipated 2031 portfolio (450 easement ownerships)
Annual cost	\$2.9m	\$2.5m
Interest Rate	Endowment Fund Balance	Endowment Fund Balance
2%	\$143m	\$124m
4%	\$72m	\$62m
6%	\$48m	\$41m

Model Components:

- Estimated annual cost for **Easement Stewardship**
- Actual annual cost for **Fee Land Management** (average annual cost over past 3 fiscal years, includes staff time and contract services)
- **Legal and Administrative Costs**

- Need to achieve an investment strategy with longer term goals and objectives that result in potential greater returns
- Macias, Gini & O'Connell, LLP, assessed how Ag + Open Space might depart from statutory investment requirements outlined in Government Code Section 53600-53610, including comparisons to pension and post-retirement benefit systems
- Recommended District pursue legislative change to broaden range of options for a higher earnings rate (to earn more than 2% maximum available with County Treasury) and then develop accompanying investment policy for the Endowment Fund

ENDOWMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND FISCAL OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

- Reviewed and support the endowment calculation
- Reviewed and support implementation of Fiscal Oversight Commission's Minute Order 13
- Reviewed and support recommendation to work with State partners on legislative change to allow for diversification of investment options



RECOMMENDED ACTION

- A. Receive Land and Easement Stewardship Overview and Update;
- B. Authorize and direct the General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to work with the Sonoma County Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector to establish an endowment fund to support Ag + Open Space stewardship activities beyond the end of Measure F, if the measure is not reauthorized; and
- C. Direct the General Manager to work with state representatives to propose State legislation to allow the endowment fund to earn a higher interest rate than is currently available as part of the County's investment pool.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

