

FEE LANDS STRATEGY UPDATE



**AG +
OPEN
SPACE**
SONOMA COUNTY
LAND FOR LIFE

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COUNTY AG + OPEN SPACE FEE LANDS 5

FEBRUARY
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FEE LANDS STRATEGY UPDATE

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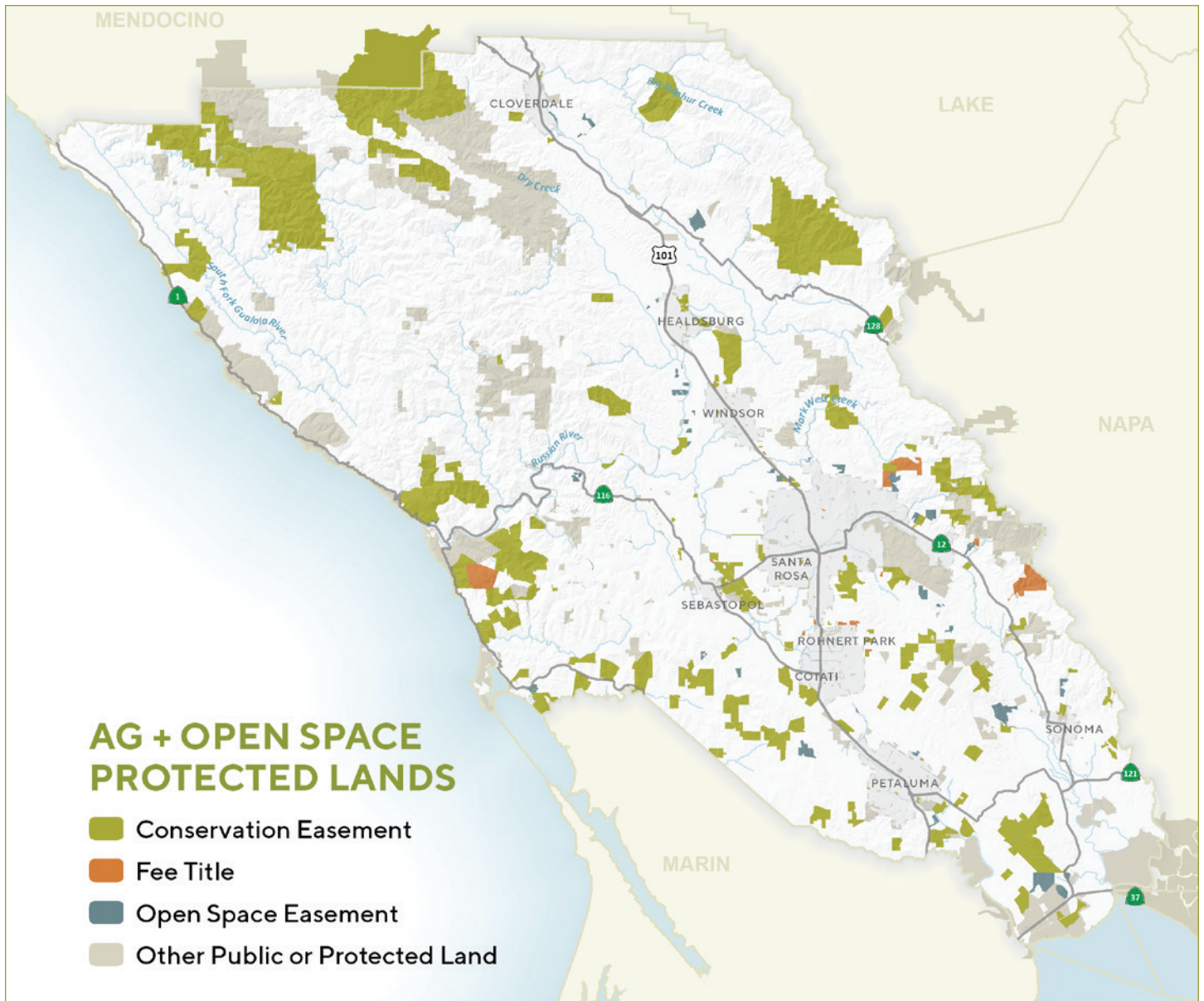


Figure 1

I. BACKGROUND

The voters of Sonoma County created the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (“Ag + Open Space”) in 1990 to permanently protect the diverse agricultural, natural resource, and scenic open space lands of Sonoma County for future generations.

Funding is provided through the collection of a ¼ percent sales tax. Ag + Open Space’s enabling legislation and Expenditure Plan direct Ag + Open Space to protect land primarily through acquisition and stewardship of conservation easements. In 2006, the Sonoma County voters reauthorized the sales tax through approval of Measure F, known as the *Sonoma County Open Space, Clean Water, and Farmland Protection Measure*. The 2006 Expenditure Plan describes how Ag + Open Space

may spend the voter-approved sales tax revenue. To date, Ag + Open Space has permanently protected more than 122,000 acres of land, more than 10% of the land area in Sonoma County, through acquisition of conservation easements (Figure 1). On January 26, 2021, the Board approved the *Ag + Open Space Vital Lands Initiative*, which will guide land protection activities in support of the Vital Lands Initiative goal areas focused on Agriculture, Community Identity, Healthy Communities, Water, and Wildlands over the next decade through to the end of Measure F.

Sometimes, Ag + Open Space must purchase land in fee to ensure its protection. Ag + Open Space’s current fee land holdings (Table 1 and Figure 2) include 3,765 acres comprised of mountaintops and ridgelines with spectacular views of the Sonoma coast and interior valleys, mixed evergreen forests,



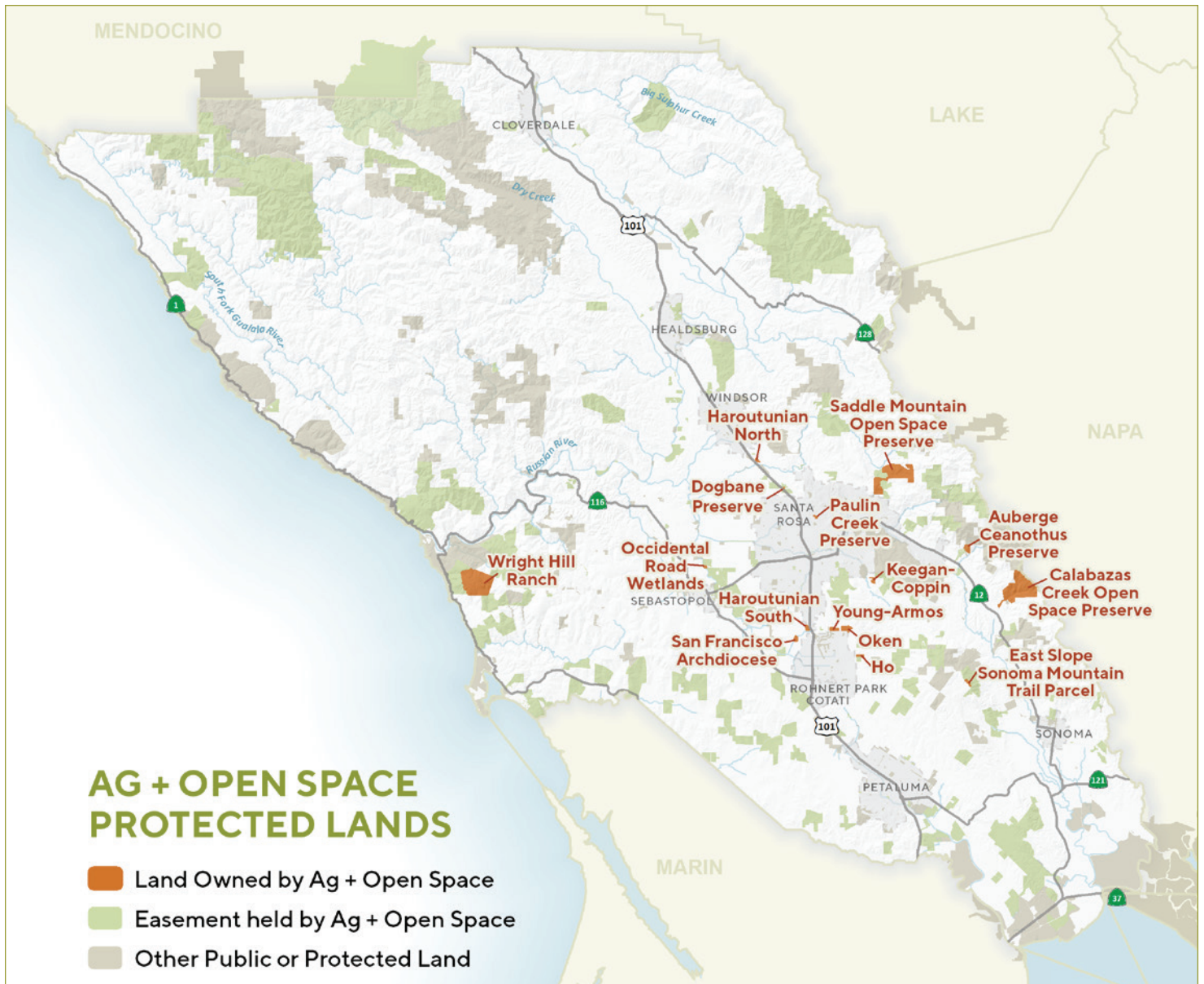


Figure 2

grasslands, riparian corridors critical to Coho salmon and steelhead trout populations, vernal pools and other wetlands that support California tiger salamander and special-status plant species, small farms and historic cattle ranches, culturally important plant populations, and open space properties that create a greenbelt around urban areas and allow groundwater recharge. Most fee properties support some type of agricultural use. Detailed information about each of Ag + Open Space’s current fee lands, including the original acquisition intent and key conservation values on each property, is provided as an Appendix.

Responsible stewardship of Ag + Open Space-owned properties is significantly more expensive per acre than stewardship of conservation easements, requiring substantial funding for land management and maintenance tasks. The

Ag + Open Space Board of Directors approved the initial District Fee Lands Strategy on November 20, 2012, which called for the transfer or sale of all fee properties within its land management portfolio. At that time, Ag + Open Space owned approximately 7,500 acres of land. Since then, Ag + Open Space has conveyed numerous properties, comprising approximately 3,700 acres, to various entities while retaining conservation easements and other related interests to ensure permanent protection of the Sonoma County taxpayers’ investment.

This update to the Fee Lands Strategy includes:

- **A description of Ag + Open Space’s current land management practices; and**
- **A strategy for conveying all Ag + Open Space fee lands by 2031, including a timeline for implementation.**



PROPERTY	ACRES	STATUS	AG USE	PUBLIC ACCESS	CONSERVATION VALUES	PERPETUAL CONSERVATION TOOL	DESIGNATED RECIPIENT ENTITY
Tier 1 – Properties with identified recipient entity or organization, confirmed via Board action (date)							
Haroutunian North (Nov 2012)	18	CE and affirmative ag agreement pending.	Cultivation-leased by vegetable farmer. Farm stand.	Farm stand	Ag, Scenic, Greenbelt	Transfer with CE, affirmative ag agreement	Private farmer
Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve (Feb 2017)	1290	Burned in 2017 Nuns Fire.	Leased by grazer	Volunteer patrol, outings	Natural Res, Scenic, Rec	Transfer with CE, Rec Covenant	County Regional Parks
Wright Hill Ranch (Feb 2017) Dedicated	1236	Historic house and buildings.	Leased by grazer	Outings	Natural Res, Scenic, Rec	Transfer with CE, Rec Covenant	County Regional Parks
East Slope Sonoma Mountain Trail Parcel (Oct 2013)	22	Trail constructed, operated by Jack London Park Partners	None due to access limitation.	Access through Jack London State Park, scheduled outings via Sonoma Ecology Center	Natural Res, Scenic, Rec	Transfer with CE, Rec Covenant	State Parks (Jack London)
Occidental Road Wetlands (Oct 2013)	16	Regional Parks regular maintenance checks, cleanup	Grazing planned	Outings, informal access	Natural Res, Scenic, Rec, Greenbelt	Quitclaim	County Regional Parks
Proposed additions to Tier 1 list, staff to recommend at upcoming Board meeting							
Keegan-Coppin	24	Damage due to fire break line constructed by CalFire for 2017 Nuns Fire.	Leased by grazer	Closed. Adjacent to Annadel State Pk	Natural Res, Scenic, Rec, Greenbelt	Transfer with CE, Rec Covenant	To be determined -Agricultural
Auberge Ceanothus Preserve	66	Burned in 2017 Nuns Fire	None due to access limitation.	Closed. Adjacent to Hood Reg Park	Natural Res, Scenic, Rec, Greenbelt	Quitclaim	To be determined -Agricultural

Table 1



Wright Hill Ranch



PROPERTY	ACRES	STATUS	AG USE	PUBLIC ACCESS	CONSERVATION VALUES	PERPETUAL CONSERVATION TOOL	DESIGNATED RECIPIENT ENTITY
Tier 2 - Recipient entity or organization not yet identified							
Ho. Dedicated	30	seasonal wetland and grassland habitat	Leased by grazer	None	Ag, Natural Res, Scenic, Greenbelt	potential resell with mandatory agricultural easement	To be determined -Agricultural
Oken	76	Riparian Restoration (fencing/ planting/ erosion repair) in process. Shelter/barn structure.	Leased by grazer	None	Ag, Natural Res, Scenic, Greenbelt	potential resell with mandatory agricultural easement	To be determined -Agricultural
Young-Armos	45	Agreement with neighbors on potential incubator farm design, do not have an organization willing to operate/ sponsor	Grazing planned for Summer 2020	Adjacent to Sonoma Water creek channel/City of Rohnert Park-operated multi-use trail	Ag, Natural Res, Scenic, Greenbelt	potential resell with mandatory agricultural easement	To be determined -Agricultural
Haroutunian South	21	vernal pools, confirmed presence of Sonoma sunshine and California tiger salamander	Grazing lease executed, to begin Summer 2020	Laguna Foundation-led research, survey outings	Ag, Natural Res, Scenic, Greenbelt	potential resell with mandatory agricultural easement	To be determined -Agricultural
San Francisco Archdiocese	28	vernal pool and grassland habitat, likely presence of California tiger salamander	two separate grazing leases (one on either side of Sonoma Water flood control channel)	Adjacent to Sonoma Water creek channel service road/multi-use trail	Ag, Natural Res, Scenic, Greenbelt	potential resell with mandatory agricultural easement	To be determined -Agricultural
Dogbane Preserve	3	Burned in 2017 Tubbs Fire, supports robust population of culturally important Dogbane plant	None due to toxicity of dogbane plant to livestock	Guided cultural outings and workdays	Natural Res, Scenic, Greenbelt	potential ownership transfer, retain conservation easement	To be determined -Cultural
Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve Dedicated	960	Board approval of Management Plan Sep 2019	Grazing planned for Spring 2021	Volunteer patrol, and guided outings and workdays	Natural Res, Scenic, Rec	potential ownership transfer, retain conservation easement and recreational covenant	To be determined -Recreational
Paulin Creek Preserve Dedicated	9	Conservation Corps North Bay under contract for vegetation management	None	Volunteer patrol, and guided outings and workdays	Natural Res, Rec	potential ownership transfer, retain conservation easement and recreational covenant	To be determined -Recreational
Dedicated refers to dedication to park and open space purposes under the California Public Resources Code.							

Table 1 (cont'd from pg 5)





II. LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Ag + Open Space manages its fee lands to protect the ecological integrity and conservation values of each property, in accordance with the original intent of the acquisition. The goal of our fee land management is to maintain infrastructure and manage natural resources until the property is conveyed to a new owner.

Responsible land management includes tasks associated with stewardship of natural resources, protection of public safety, maintenance of property infrastructure, and ensuring that the District meets all its legal responsibilities as a landowner.

Ag + Open Space staff and trained volunteers inspect each fee property on a regular basis to check current conditions and to identify necessary maintenance or adaptive management tasks.

Ag + Open Space uses a transparent competitive bid process for fee land service contracts, including any significant land stewardship tasks. This ensures that Ag + Open Space works with the service provider that can provide the best service possible for a competitive price. This may be a licensed contractor or other professional, a governmental agency, a non-governmental organization, or other service provider. Currently, Ag + Open Space contracts with a variety of entities to assist with the stewardship of fee properties.

Maintenance of Property Infrastructure

Immediately after acquiring a property in fee, Ag + Open Space inspects the property to document any existing safety issues, such as trespassing, illicit use, and dumping, so they can be promptly and appropriately addressed. Where necessary, the property boundary is confirmed, and perimeter fencing is installed, along with Ag + Open Space signage.

Infrastructure maintenance activities include repair of structures, fences and roads, water system maintenance,

erosion control, removal of trash and debris, and response to encampments and other trespass-related activities. Ag + Open Space assesses roads and other infrastructure for potential to cause erosion and adversely affect streams, wetlands, and other sensitive habitats within the watershed. Ag + Open Space consults with technical experts to inform adopted best management practices.

Ag + Open Space staff, volunteers, and consultants routinely monitor all fee land properties for evidence of trespass and unauthorized uses and activities, and staff takes prompt action to address any observed issues. Such action may include communication with neighbors and other property users, posting signage, cleaning up debris and repairing damage. In some cases, Ag + Open Space has developed specific protocols for addressing certain trespass and illegal uses. For example, when a trespass encampment is discovered on an Ag + Open Space property, the appropriate law enforcement agency is contacted. Law enforcement posts a notice telling the occupants of the encampment they must pack their belongings and remove themselves from the premises. After camp occupants have left the site, Ag + Open Space staff then immediately arranges for a maintenance contractor to assist with clearing out any debris left behind.

When volunteers or Ag + Open Space staff suspect that an active Cannabis grow operation is present on a property, local law enforcement is contacted immediately. All debris is removed as soon as the grow area can be safely accessed. Subsequent to discovering a trespass Cannabis operation Ag + Open Space staff may implement a variety of deterrence strategies, including installing signs indicating that the property is under surveillance and posting signs along the suspected access route to the grow operation. Known past grow sites are monitored for new activity in coordination with law enforcement agencies.

Natural Resources Management

Ag + Open Space manages its lands to preserve and enhance the health of natural ecosystems, paying particular attention to sensitive resources and habitats. Ag + Open Space collaborates with partner agencies and organizations to coordinate and plan regional-scale natural resource management, apply for shared funding, and gather and share the best available spatial data and local expertise to support natural resource management planning and project implementation throughout the County. Ag + Open Space manages natural resources on its fee-title properties primarily through habitat enhancement, mowing, understory thinning, prescribed burning, removal of invasive species, and grazing.

Habitat enhancement or restoration projects may be undertaken to improve conditions for sensitive species or habitats, or to repair and revegetate an eroded streambank to reduce sediment delivery to a watershed system.





Annual mowing occurs around structures and parking areas, along internal and access roads and the property perimeter (if appropriate), and in areas where mowing is the preferred method for invasive species removal. Mowing only occurs after Ag + Open Space staff or a qualified consultant conducts a nesting bird survey in the area to be mowed, to ensure no birds or nests are present. If nesting birds are present, an appropriate buffer zone is established and mowing is postponed within this zone until the birds fledge and leave the nest.

Ag + Open Space creates shaded fuel breaks through understory thinning and utilizes prescribed burning as tools where appropriate to reduce fuel loads while also enhancing habitat for native plants and animals. Shaded fuel breaks are typically developed along existing roads and are planned in coordination with Cal Fire to ensure their location is operationally effective and consistent with regional fuel break planning. Shaded fuel breaks retain overstory forest canopy while removing smaller understory material that may act as ladder fuels and contribute to higher fire intensity. While they can be effective in slowing or stopping the spread of a non-wind-driven wildfire, their primary purpose is to allow safe access and appropriately prepared conditions for firefighting personnel to access an area for suppression activities or to use as a control line for a prescribed burn. Ag + Open Space works with Registered Professional Foresters and tribal, biological, and cultural resource consultants as needed to ensure that shaded fuel breaks and other forest thinning activities are ecologically appropriate and avoid impacts to sensitive resources.

Ag + Open Space is planning to implement prescribed burns on some of its properties in coordination with Cal Fire. These activities are subject to the permitting requirements of Cal Fire, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, and other

regulatory agencies. Prescribed burns are intended to improve native species composition and habitat, reduce hazardous fuels, control invasive species, and improve and maintain resiliency of natural lands to wildfire, climate change, and other extreme events. Significant public outreach and community and tribal involvement are undertaken prior to any planned burn, and educational outings are planned in conjunction with prescribed burning to enable the community to learn about and observe the goals and effects of prescribed fire first hand.

Ag + Open Space takes aggressive action to identify and manage invasive species populations on its fee lands, prior to transferring a property to the next owner for permanent conservation. Any invasive species occurrences observed during routine monitoring visits are proactively managed in a manner tailored to the needs of each property. Control methods include but are not limited to: hand-pulling; seasonally timed mowing or grazing, including intensive rotational grazing; propane torch flaming during wet conditions; prescribed burning; and herbicide application. To the greatest extent possible, invasive plant control efforts are also designed to enhance habitat for native plants and animals and can include measures such as replanting with native vegetation to facilitate habitat restoration.

Ag + Open Space is committed to avoiding the use of synthetic pesticides in sensitive areas and, to support this commitment, has compiled all known information regarding sensitive species and habitats that occur on its fee properties. Ag + Open Space implements an integrated approach in which synthetic pesticides are used conservatively and only as necessary, and will not use a synthetic pesticide unless: 1) there is no other option available to control an extreme weed infestation, 2) the environmental benefit is clear and outweighs the



negative impacts of continued infestation, 3) only licensed professionals are involved in the application, 4) there is minimal risk of harmful exposure to humans or to sensitive resources, and 5) the application is part of an intentional strategy to transition over time to alternative methods of invasive species control such as mechanical removal, grazing, or prescribed burning.

If it is determined that a synthetic pesticide is appropriate to use in a specific situation, all precautions are taken to minimize exposure beyond the targeted species of concern. For example, if synthetic pesticides will be used near a road that may be accessed by authorized persons such as volunteer patrollers or Ag + Open Space contractors, signs will be posted at either end of the treated area to identify the date of treatment, chemical name, and “no-entry” period per the product label recommendations.

In addition to invasive plants, Ag + Open Space also monitors and manages for other pest types, including pathogens and insects. Ag + Open Space staff and contractors follow protocols to prevent the spread of pathogens such as Sudden Oak Death, and work with contractors to remove and relocate hives without the use of chemicals.

Agricultural Use

Ag + Open Space leases out a portion of most of its properties for grazing or vegetable farming. The majority of these leases are for grazing. Ag + Open Space uses grazing to reduce fuels, support local agricultural producers, and as a tool to manage invasive plant species and enhance habitat for native plants and animals. Ag + Open Space has worked with a Certified Rangeland Manager to assess the grazing potential for all of our fee lands. This assessment includes ranking the forage quality of vegetation, evaluating access to the property, determining adequate stocking rates, recommending suitable livestock



type, and advising on any need to limit grazing during particular seasons. Some Ag + Open Space-owned properties are difficult to access, lack infrastructure and water supply, have low forage production, or are subject to constraints related to sensitive habitats and protected species. Because of this, large-scale or property-wide grazing may not be suitable for some properties. However, Ag + Open Space endeavors to make grazing leases available whenever appropriate and may expand the use of short-duration, seasonally timed prescriptive grazing for vegetation and fuels management on a property-specific basis. Ag + Open Space will continue to engage with partner agencies, non-governmental organizations, and consultants that have expertise in livestock grazing and adaptive management approaches.

Public Access

Due to a lack of developed recreational infrastructure and amenities, and unsafe conditions for vehicular access to many of its properties, Ag + Open Space provides only limited public access to its fee lands. However, Ag + Open Space endeavors to make appropriate and safe public access available whenever possible.

Ag + Open Space contracts with service providers to offer numerous outings and educational programming each year on its fee land properties, as well as on some conservation easement properties. These outings range from nature hikes and bird walks to kayaking and family-themed tours of agricultural operations. Public outings are frequently enhanced by partnerships with other organizations such as community groups, agencies, schools, and tribes.

Property-specific volunteer patrol programs are in effect at Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve, Paulin Creek Preserve, and Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve. Approximately 550 trained volunteers currently participate in these programs, and trainings for new volunteers generally take place twice per year.

In addition, Ag + Open Space grants access to scientific or academic institutions interested in conducting research to inform natural resource protection. This research can assist Ag + Open Space with prioritizing management activities and enhancing best management practices on its properties.

III. FEE LANDS STRATEGY

When compared to conservation easement stewardship, fee land stewardship requires substantial funding for necessary land management and maintenance, and presents additional liability issues.

Fee land stewardship costs generally include one-time costs (capital improvements, habitat enhancements, and related planning) and annual costs (ongoing land management and the cost of providing interim public access) for as many years





as Ag + Open Space retains ownership. Ag + Open Space has retained ownership of many properties for longer periods than anticipated, because the agencies initially slated to own these properties (state and local park systems) have been less able to accept fee title transfers during recent years.

Once the current sales tax measure ends, there may not be a new funding source available to cover ongoing land management costs. To ensure continued financial stability, it is critical that Ag + Open Space convey all of its fee title lands to appropriate new owners by 2031.

Ag + Open Space has developed a tiered priority system for conveying fee lands. Tier 1 properties are those fee-owned lands for which a suitable future owner has been identified and for which there are the fewest impediments to transfer. Approximately 2,600 acres of Ag + Open Space fee properties are identified as Tier 1 properties that are currently slated for conveyance to another entity for long-term ownership, operations and maintenance. Tier 2 includes approximately 1,200 acres of properties that do not yet have an identified future owner. The Tier 2 properties are categorized into two groups, Agricultural Lands and Resource/Recreational Lands. Staff has identified the conservation values on these properties and is developing conservation tools and strategies for each property.

The Ag + Open Space Board of Directors has provided the following direction since their November 20, 2012, approval of the initial District Fee Lands Strategy document:

- On October 15, 2013, the Board directed Ag + Open Space to move Carrington Coast Ranch, Occidental Road Wetlands, and East Slope Sonoma Mountain Trail Parcel to Tier 1. The first two will be transferred to Regional Parks and the third is proposed for transfer to State Parks.
- On February 2, 2016, the Board updated its Initial Public Access, Operation and Maintenance Policy to clarify the implementation of the Expenditure Plan relating to operations and maintenance expenditures. Under this updated Policy, entities receiving transfer of fee title of a recreational property may be reimbursed for up to three years of eligible operations and maintenance expenses.
- On February 21, 2017, the Board directed Ag + Open Space to move Wright Hill Ranch and Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve to Tier 1, for transfer to Regional Parks.
- On January 26, 2021, the Board adopted the Ag + Open Space Vital Lands Initiative, which calls for transfer of all fee lands by 2031

Staff recommendations for transfer of Tier 2 properties will incorporate input from the Ag + Open Space Advisory Committee, Fiscal Oversight Commission, stakeholders, and the general public.



Conveyance Options

There are three primary conveyance options: transfer to a public entity for park or open space purposes, exchange for other property, and sale. Ag + Open Space's discretion to convey properties is limited by provisions of the California Government Code and the Public Resources Code, which restrict conveyance of property, particularly those properties that have been formally dedicated pursuant to the Public Resources Code to park or open space purposes. Table 1 indicates which Ag + Open Space properties have been dedicated in this manner.

Conveyance must also conform with existing partner and grant funding restrictions and the Sonoma County General Plan. It is standard, Ag + Open Space will retain a conservation easement that protects the identified conservation values of a property in perpetuity. Additional land conservation tools that may be utilized include trail easements, affirmative covenants, and/or deed restrictions.

Transfer to Public Entity for Park or Open Space Purposes

In this option, Ag + Open Space may transfer fee title to another public entity for park or open space purposes, while retaining a conservation easement.

Lands dedicated to open space may be transferred to a public entity provided that the entity undertakes the obligation (in a recorded instrument) to continue to use the property for park or open space use in perpetuity and to not convey the property without the consent of a majority of the voters of Sonoma County. (Public Resources Code section 5540.6)

Exchange with Public or Private Entity

Ag + Open Space may transfer fee title of a property to a public or private entity in exchange for other land or interests in other land of equal or greater value. If Ag + Open Space land has been dedicated to park or open space purposes, an exchange is only permitted by a unanimous vote of the Ag + Open Space Board of Directors following its determination that the land to be acquired is of equal or greater value and is necessary to be acquired for park or open-space purposes, or both. (Public Resources Code section 5540.5) Under state law, the property interest Ag + Open Space receives through the exchange must be adjacent to other Ag + Open Space property and Ag + Open Space can exchange up to 40 acres of dedicated land per year. (Public Resources Code section 5540.5 (c)) There are no size limits on exchanges of undedicated land.

Sale to Public or Private Entity

Ag + Open Space may sell land to a public or private entity. Typically, property sales are for the market-value of the property, taking into account the value of the conservation easement and any other interests in the property that Ag + Open Space retains. The value received by Ag + Open

Space may consist of cash compensation, a conservation easement, affirmative covenant, other interests in the land, or a combination thereof.

In cases when there is no real property interest retained (such as a conservation easement) as part of a sale of Ag + Open Space land, the sale process is subject to State surplus property law and procedures. These procedures require Ag + Open Space to offer properties for sale to specific public entities before proceeding with a sale to any single public or private buyer. If a conservation easement or other interest in the property is retained at the time, then Ag + Open Space is not required to offer the property to other public agencies prior to sale.

There are different rules for selling land that has been dedicated to park or open space purposes than for undedicated land. If the property has been dedicated to park or open space purposes, a sale to a private entity must be approved by a majority of Sonoma County voters or by a joint resolution of the State Legislature adopted after a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors. (Public Resources Code section 5540) If the property has been dedicated to park or open space purposes, a sale to a public agency is permitted under the same procedures as transfers to public agencies described above. (Public Resources Code section 5540.6)

Conveyance Process

The process to transfer a property begins with Ag + Open Space designing a conservation project that will ensure permanent preservation of the most important conservation resources on the property. Information from a resource assessment helps staff craft the terms of a conservation easement, and sometimes other legal documents, to establish perpetual conservation goals for the property. Staff also develop transfer, purchase, or sale agreements with the prospective new owners that govern how the transfer or sale will take place.



Conservation easements are perpetual documents, recorded to a property deed, that restrict what all future landowners can do on the property. This gives Ag + Open Space the right to monitor and enforce the terms of the conservation easement agreement. Conservation easements are sometimes accompanied by an affirmative covenant – another type of legal document that requires the future owners to take certain actions on the property, like opening the property for public recreation or ensuring that some portion is used for agriculture.

Transfer agreements and purchase and sale agreements govern how the property will be transferred from Ag + Open Space to its new owner. It generally includes key terms like timelines, purchase price (if applicable), conditions that have to be satisfied before transfer, and who will pay for certain closing costs. In some cases, limited, short-term payments for initial public access improvements, operations and maintenance of a transferred recreational property may be part of the transfer agreement.

At the same time that conservation and transaction documents are drafted, Ag + Open Space also prepares a baseline documentation report, which documents existing property conditions, uses, and infrastructure at the time of closing. These documents are used to assist staff in monitoring and enforcing the terms of the CE.

The conservation easement deed and any associated affirmative covenants or agreements are recorded at the Sonoma County Recorder's office at the time of transfer. Once fee title transfer is complete, Ag + Open Space stewardship of the conservation easement begins and continues in perpetuity. Easement

stewardship includes regularly monitoring the property and communicating with the landowner, processing landowner requests to undertake specific activities on the property, and following up on landowner compliance with easement terms. Ag + Open Space has the right to pursue legal action to enforce the terms of the easement, if necessary. Ag + Open Space Board of Directors has approved the Ag + Open Space Stewardship Policy that guides this work, in alignment with Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices.

Conveyance Timeline

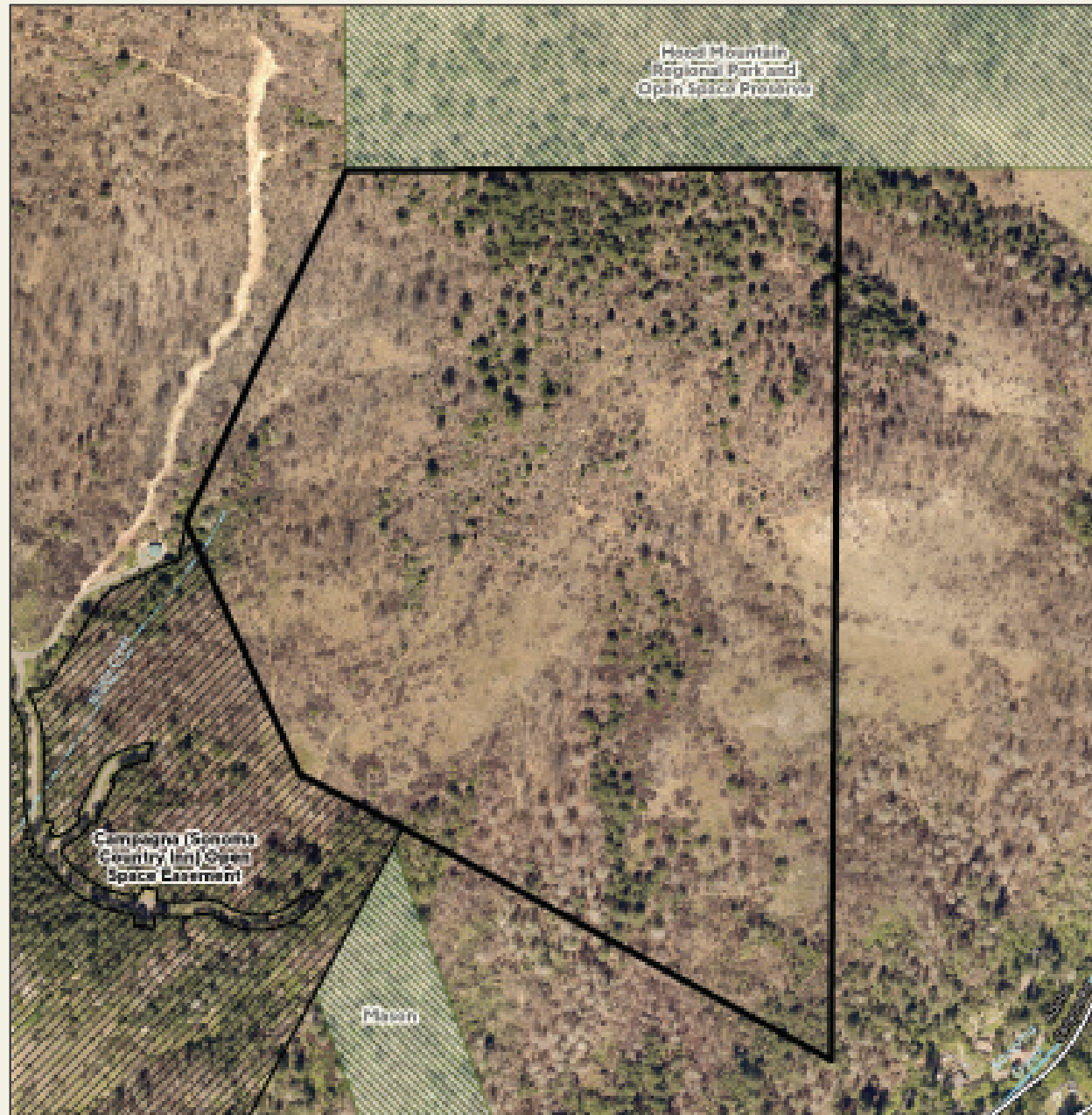
Implementation of the Fee Lands Strategy is anticipated to occur in phases. Exact timing of property transfers will depend on funding and staffing resources of both Ag + Open Space and the receiving entity. Each property-specific transaction will be brought back to the Board of Directors for independent consideration and approval.

Proposed timeline for conveyance of Tier 1 properties:

- 2021 Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve, Haroutunian North, and Wright Hill Ranch
- 2022 Auberge Ceanothus Preserve and Occidental Road Wetlands
- 2023 East Slope Sonoma Mountain Trail Parcel and Keegan-Coppin

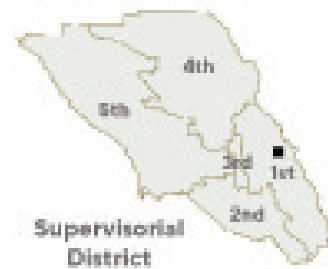
Conveyance of the Tier 2 properties will follow, and will be accomplished by 2031.





Auberge Ceanothus Preserve

- Perennial Waterway
- Intermittent Stream
- Road
- Property Boundary
- Other Ag + Open Space Holding
- Other Protected Land



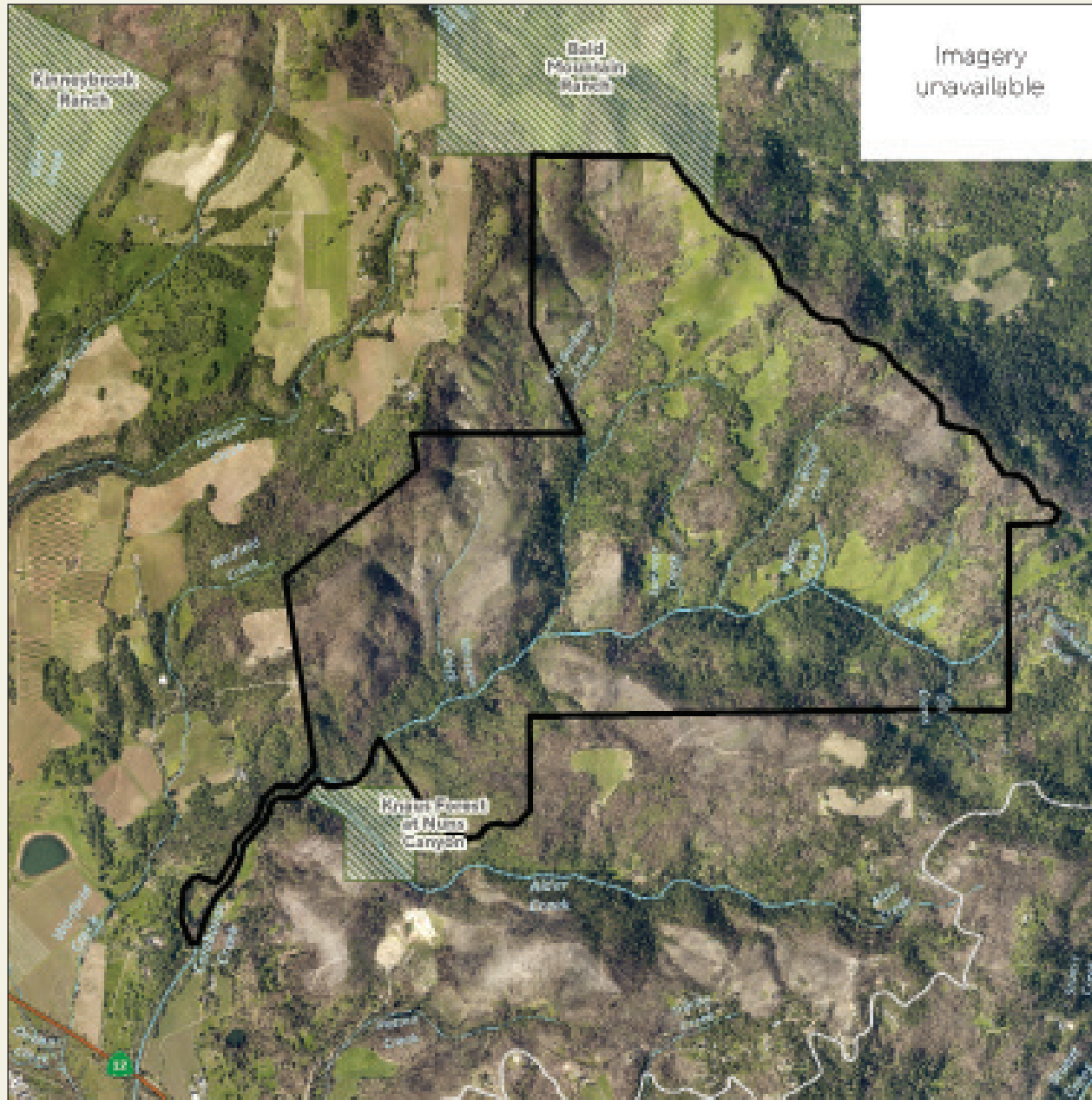
Auberge Ceanothus Preserve

- 65.5 acres
- Located near Kenwood, adjacent to Hood Mountain Regional Park & Open Space Preserve
- Date acquired: 12/20/2011
- Acquisition price: Donation

The former landowner of the Auberge Ceanothus Preserve donated the property as a condition of approval for a nearby development project. Ag + Open Space believes the property was intended for donation to Regional Parks, however due to clerical error, ownership

was transferred to Ag + Open Space. Ownership of the Preserve is scheduled for transfer to Regional Parks in 2022.

The Auberge Ceanothus Preserve borders Hood Mountain Regional Park & Open Space Preserve. The site supports a population of at least one rare plant species, Sonoma ceanothus (*Ceanothus sonomensis*), along with other chaparral plants, oaks, and wildflowers. The entirety of the property burned in the 2017 Nuns Fire at low to moderate intensity; no significant negative ecological impacts are expected.



Imagery unavailable

Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve

Perennial Waterway	Property Boundary
Intermittent Stream	Other Protected Land
Highway	
Road	

Scale: 0, 1,250, 2,500, 5,000 Feet



Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve

- 1290 acres
- Located near Glen Ellen, east of Highway 12
- Date acquired: 12/1/2004
- Acquisition price: \$9,115,000

Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve (Preserve) was purchased under the Recreation category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan. The acquisition was intended to protect unique natural habitats and scenic areas while providing for recreational opportunities.

Ownership of the Preserve was originally intended to transfer to State Parks (the property is included in the General Plan for Sugarloaf Ridge State Park), but State Parks later declined to receive the property. Currently, ownership of the Preserve is scheduled for transfer to Sonoma County Regional Parks by 2021.

A management plan was completed and adopted by the Ag + Open Space Board of Directors in 2017. In addition to providing natural habitats ranging from redwood forest to oak woodland to chaparral, Calabazas Creek is critical habitat for federally-listed threatened steelhead trout. Ag + Open Space has actively been treating yellow star thistle, French broom, and Himalayan blackberry infestations. A proposed trail will complete a portion of the Bay Area Ridge Trail. Ag + Open Space received

a \$100,000 planning grant from the Coastal Conservancy towards planning this Ridge Trail segment.

Ag + Open Space has established a Volunteer Patrol program on the Preserve. Trained volunteers patrol the Preserve's roads and trails and provide reports to Ag + Open Space on property conditions, invasive species, wildlife sightings, signs of trespass or unauthorized use, and maintenance needs such as downed trees across roadways or new signs of erosion.

Volunteer patrollers provide a valuable monitoring presence on the Preserve in addition to regular visits from our staff and consultants. Additionally, Ag + Open Space provides public outings on the Preserve. These outings typically highlight educational topics such as native flora and fauna, rare plants, local fire ecology, and aquatic ecology as well as Ag + Open Space's role in protecting Sonoma County's natural lands.

This property was entirely burned in the October 2017 Nuns Fire. Fire effects were generally ecologically positive and of low to moderate severity across the Preserve. Ag + Open Space is participating in the Sonoma Valley Wildlands Collaborative, a partnership created to coordinate regional vegetation and fuel management projects. Funded projects for the Preserve include shaded fuel breaks and targeted forest thinning, and a series of prescribed burns are being planned, in coordination with Cal Fire.



Dogbane Preserve

- Freeway
- Road
- Property Boundary
- Other Ag + Open Space Holding



Dogbane Preserve

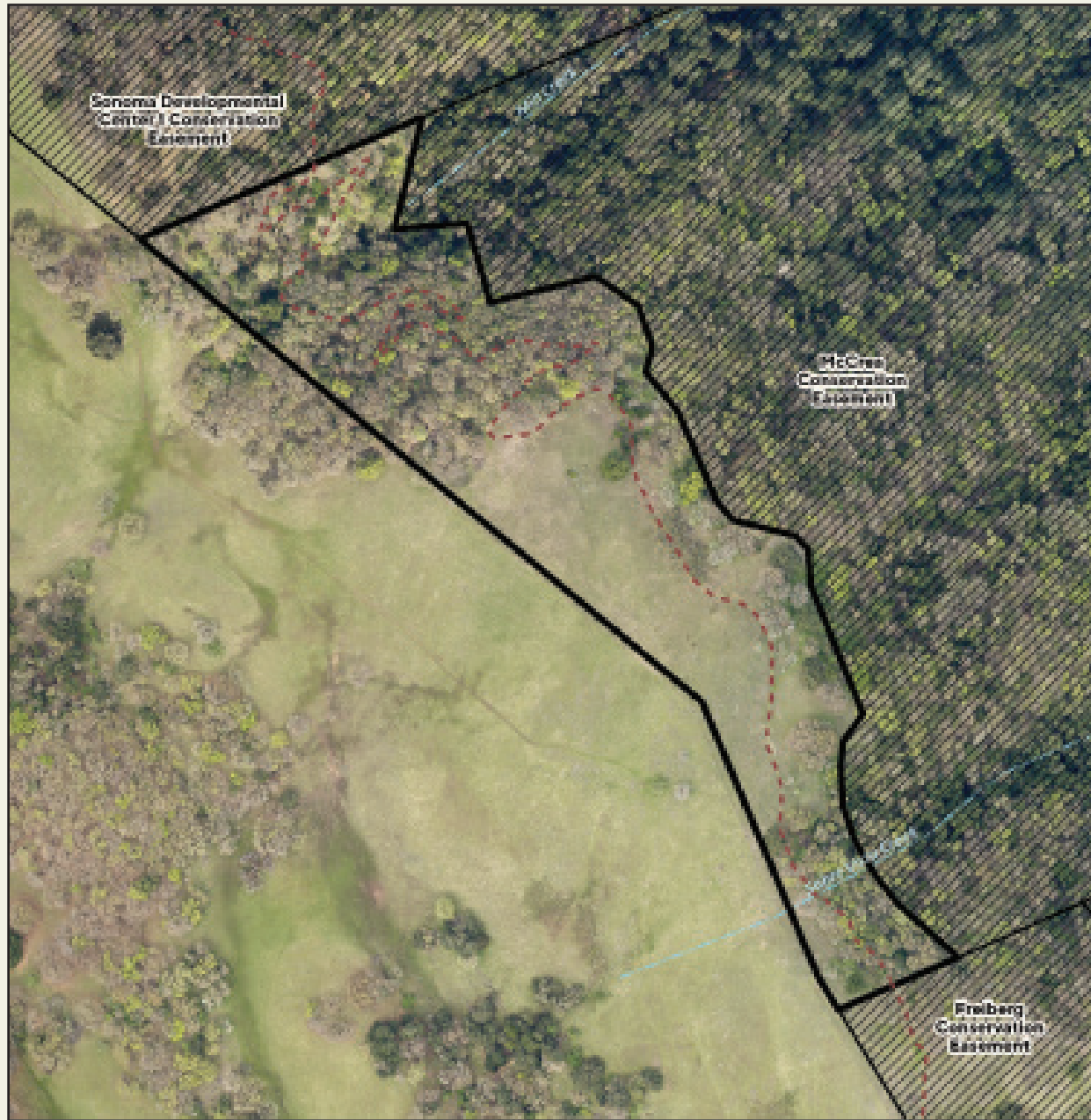
- 3.3 acres
- Located in northern Santa Rosa
- Date acquired: 12/9/1997
- Acquisition price: Donation

Dogbane Preserve was accepted under the Greenbelt category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan, and was protected for the preservation of the dogbane plant and the periodic harvesting of dogbane on the property.

Dogbane is an important cultural resource in this region. This area is a small remnant of what was once a widespread population of dogbane. For centuries, tribes and indigenous people have come from all over the state to harvest the plant for use in making cordage, nets, bags, and belts. Occasionally, they would use the cordage in baskets. Ag + Open Space has established an annual harvest and stewardship day, which includes cordage-making demonstrations and removal of non-native

blackberries. These harvest days offer an opportunity to highlight the cultural significance of the dogbane plant (*Apocynum cannabinum*), and gives participants the chance to help with removal of the highly invasive Himalayan blackberry.

Additionally, Ag + Open Space contracts for maintenance and vegetation management on this property. Vegetation management includes annual weed whipping of the perimeter and annual targeted mowing of the blackberry; in order to protect the dogbane, no widespread mowing is done. These stewardship activities have made a big impact on portions of the property, and the dogbane population is now quite robust. Annual and regular vegetation management is necessary to ensure its continued recovery. The property burned in the 2017 Tubbs Fire, and the fire appears to have stimulated an expansion of the dogbane population while allowing Ag + Open Space staff and volunteers the opportunity to remove resprouting invasive plants.



East Slope Sonoma Mountain Trail Parcel



East Slope Sonoma Mountain Trail Parcel

- 22.02 acres, 1.3 miles of trail
- Date acquired: 4/30/1997
- Located on the east slope of Sonoma Mountain
- Property and trail easements acquired through purchase, settlement agreement, and donation

Ag + Open Space worked with various project partners and private landowners to create a 1.3 mile trail for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians that connects to the existing Bay Area Ridge Trail segments in Jack London State Historic Park, the North Slope Sonoma Mountain Ridge Trail, and other publicly held lands.

The trail alignment crosses three private properties (with trail easements held by Ag + Open Space) and one Ag + Open Space–owned property. Elevations range from 1920 to 2180 feet, and on-site and nearby vegetation communities include oak woodland, mixed evergreen forest, redwood forest, California bay forest, seasonal wetlands, and annual and perennial grasslands.

Ag + Open Space received a \$55,000 grant from the Coastal Conservancy towards Bay Area Ridge Trail project planning. Jack London Park Partners manages the trail as part of its management of Jack London State Park.



Haroutunian North

Haroutunian North

- 18 acres
- Located in northern Santa Rosa
- Date acquired: 2/27/1998
- Acquisition price: \$395,000

This property was purchased under the Greenbelt/ Agricultural category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan, and was acquired to maintain the open space character and continue agricultural uses of the area.

Since March of 2002, Tierra Vegetables has leased this property for farming. Tierra Vegetables has become a popular farm stand/Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in the area.

Additionally, Tierra Vegetables hosts numerous school outings, pumpkin carving contests, and a variety of family-friendly farm gatherings.

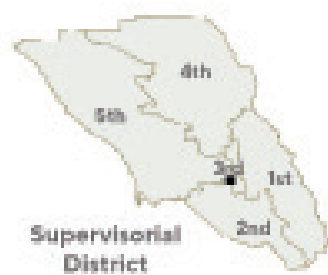
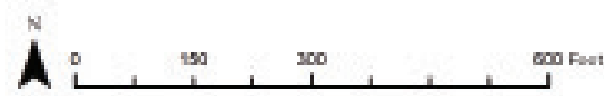
Improvements and studies of the property include completion of a boundary survey, various work on the agricultural well, and installation of a hedgerow along the northern property boundary.

In 2011, the Highway 101 widening project required California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to utilize approximately 2 acres of the property to construct a northbound on-ramp to Highway 101. This required the removal of the existing well serving the farm; as such, a new well was drilled and installed outside of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) ownership in July 2012. The old well has been abandoned according to County standards. Ag + Open Space negotiated with California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to pay for these costs as part of the parties' final settlement.



Haroutunian South

-  Perennial Waterway
-  Property Boundary
-  Freeway
-  Other Protected Land
-  Road



Haroutunian South

- 21 acres
- Located south of Santa Rosa
- Date acquired: 5/27/1995
- Acquisition price: \$169,200

Haroutunian South was purchased under the Greenbelt category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan, and was acquired for the protection of the greenbelt between Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park, and endangered/rare plants. The site includes grassy swales, natural vernal pools, native upland grassland species, live oak tree clusters, coyote brush, and remnants of a prune plum orchard.

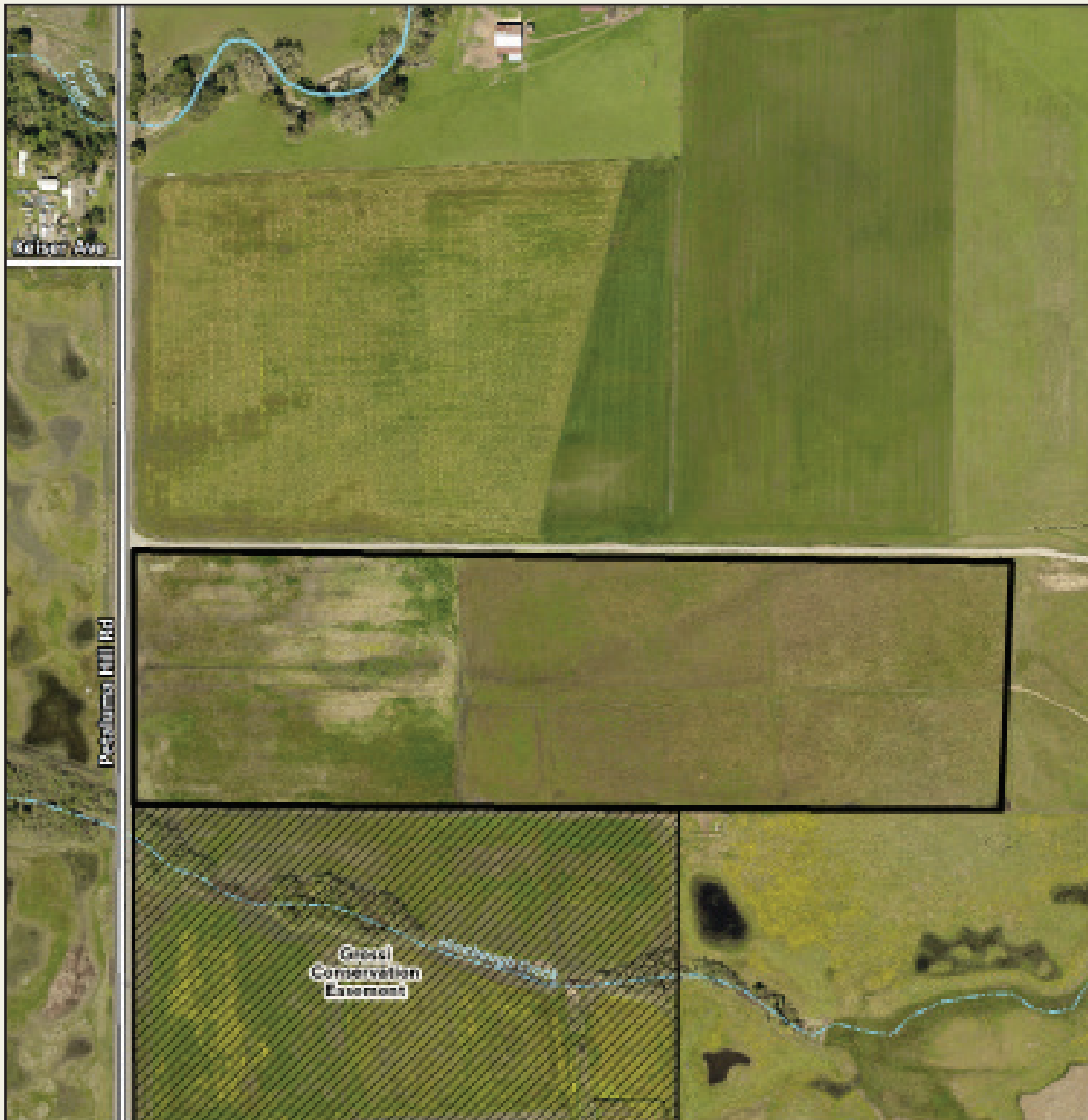
The property supports two endangered plant species, including a large population of Sonoma sunshine (*Blennosperma bakeri*) and smaller populations of Sebastopol meadowfoam (*Limnanthes vinculans*). California Linderiella/fairy shrimp (*Linderiella occidentalis*) has also been found on the property. These sensitive species all thrive under natural conditions in wetlands. There is also evidence that California Tiger Salamander (CTS), an endangered state and federally-protected amphibian that depends on vernal pools for reproduction, is present on the property.

Ag + Open Space has contracted with consultants to conduct numerous studies and surveys on the property since acquisition. These studies and surveys include botanical studies, a wetland assessment, and grazing

assessments. Scientific research is conducted periodically, mostly by the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation, or graduate students, to monitor the populations of the above-mentioned plant and animal species as well as the vernal pools. The property is one of several in the Santa Rosa Plain included in the Laguna Foundation's Adopt-a-Vernal-Pool endangered plant population study.

Invasive plants present on the property include Harding grass and teasel, among others. Ag + Open Space contracts out for maintenance and vegetation management, including addressing trespass and fuels management, on this property. Vegetation management includes annual mowing around the perimeter of the property.

Ag + Open Space has worked with a Certified Rangeland Manager to assess the property's vegetation, and determine the adequate stocking rate and appropriate type of livestock to graze the property. Beginning in May of 2020, a local cattle grazer will seasonally graze a small herd on the property to reduce fuels, improve vernal pool habitat quality, and benefit the native plant populations by removing the thick, invasive non-native plants that threaten and impede their growth. The grazing activities have been designed to address protection of the sensitive species present on site. Once grazing is established, there will be no need for annual mowing along the roads or property perimeter.



Ho

- Perennial Waterway
- - - Intermittent Stream
- Road
- Property Boundary
- Other Ag + Open Space Holding



Ho

- **30 acres**
- **Located east of Rohnert Park**
- **Date acquired: 5/4/2001**
- **Acquisition price: \$560,000**

The Ho Property was purchased under the Greenbelt category of the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan and is intended to allow agricultural use of the property and maintain its open space character. In 2001, a wetland assessment study was completed on the property, and it was determined the western third of the property,

approximately 10 acres, is a potential wetland area.

Ag + Open Space has contracted with a service provider to fence the perimeter of the property and fence off the section of the property with wetlands. Ag + Open Space has a license agreement with a neighbor to graze the property year round, with seasonal limitations within the wetland area.

Invasive plants present on the property include teasel, Harding grass, velvet grass, and thistle species. Because the property is grazed year round, there is no need for annual mowing around the property perimeter.



Keegan-Coppin

- Intermittent Stream
- Property Boundary
- Road
- Other Ag + Open Space Holding



Keegan-Coppin

- **24 acres**
- **Located in Bennett Valley, southeast of Santa Rosa**
- **Date acquired: 12/11/1997**
- **Acquisition price: \$550,000**

Keegan-Coppin was purchased under the Greenbelt category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan and was intended to allow agricultural use of the property and to maintain the open space character. Trione-Annadel State Park is adjacent to this property.

Ag + Open Space has worked with a Certified Rangeland Manager to assess the property's vegetation, and determine the adequate stocking rate and appropriate type of livestock to graze the property. Two horses and a bull graze the 24-acre property year round.

The property consists of grassland with a narrow band of oak woodland at the northern edge and several clusters of oaks, buckeyes, and other woody species in the southern part of the property. The southern half of the site is level to gently sloping and includes a swale that is saturated during the rainy season. Invasive plants present on the property include purple star thistle and gland weed. Ag + Open Space has been working with a consultant to treat the invasive thistle on portions of the property. Because the property is grazed year round, there is no need for annual mowing around the property perimeter. However, maintenance tasks such as fencing repair are occasionally needed. Ag + Open Space contracted with a service provider to improve and, in some areas, replace the property's boundary fence in September of 2019.



Occidental Road Wetlands

- Perennial Waterway
- - - Intermittent Stream
- Road
- Property Boundary
- Other Ag + Open Space Holding
- Other Protected Land

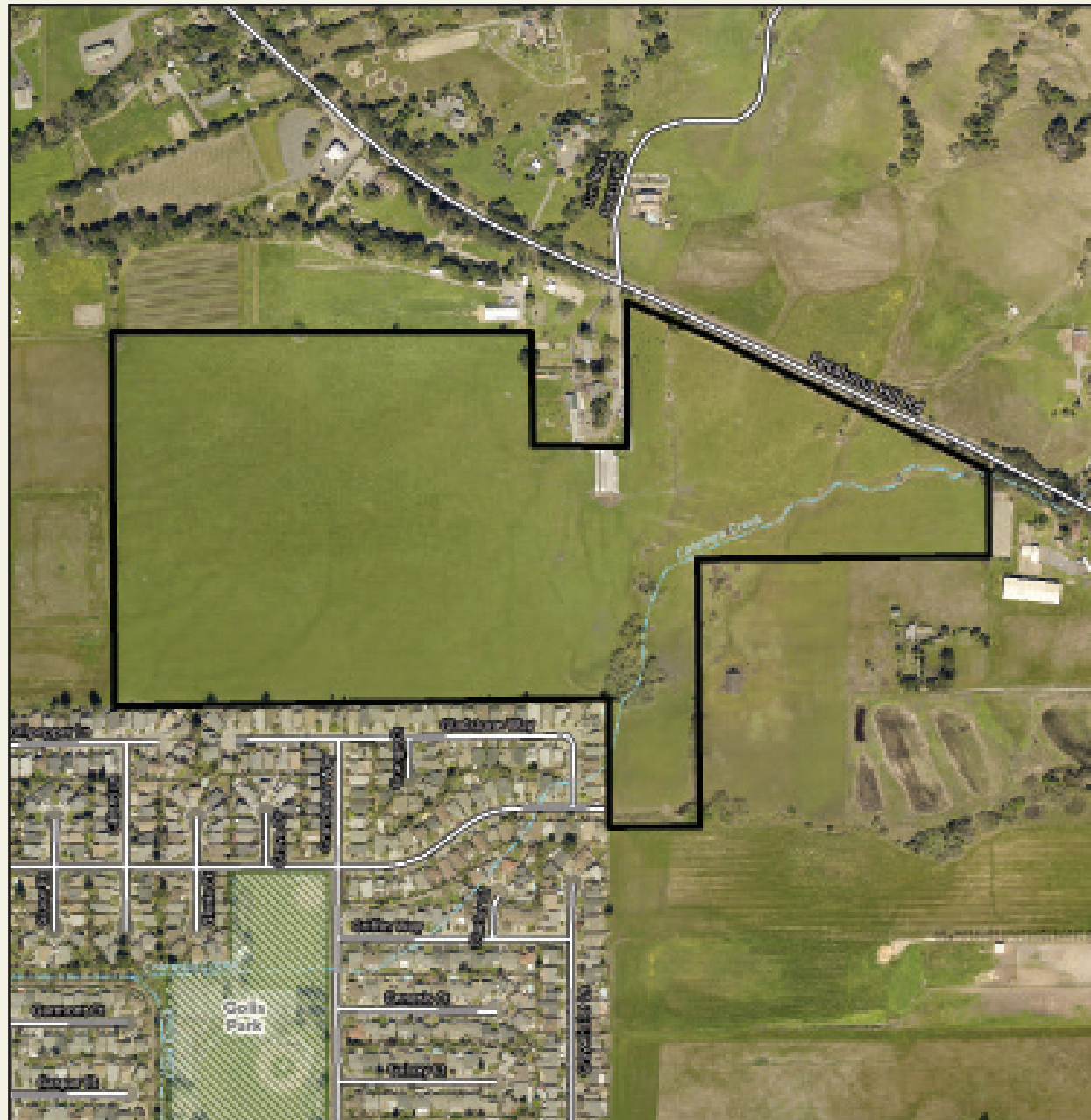


Occidental Road Wetlands

- 15 acres
- Located west of Santa Rosa
- Date acquired: 11/10/2008
- Acquisition price: Accepted fee title

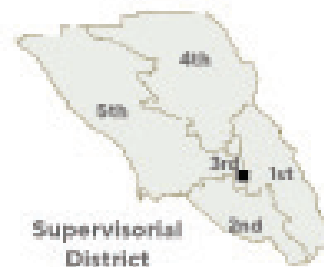
This property was accepted in fee title under the Recreation category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan. The acquisition was intended to protect riparian wetland habitats, and to promote restoration and public access in the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation completed restoration work on the property, as part of their work on the Middle Reach of the Laguna. This work was funded by a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy. Additionally, Ag + Open Space contracts for security patrols of the property and trash and debris removal.



Oken

-  Intermittent Stream
-  Road
-  Property Boundary
-  Other Protected Land



Oken

- **76 acres**
- **Located north of Rohnert Park**
- **Date acquired: 4/13/1998**
- **Acquisition price: \$890,000**

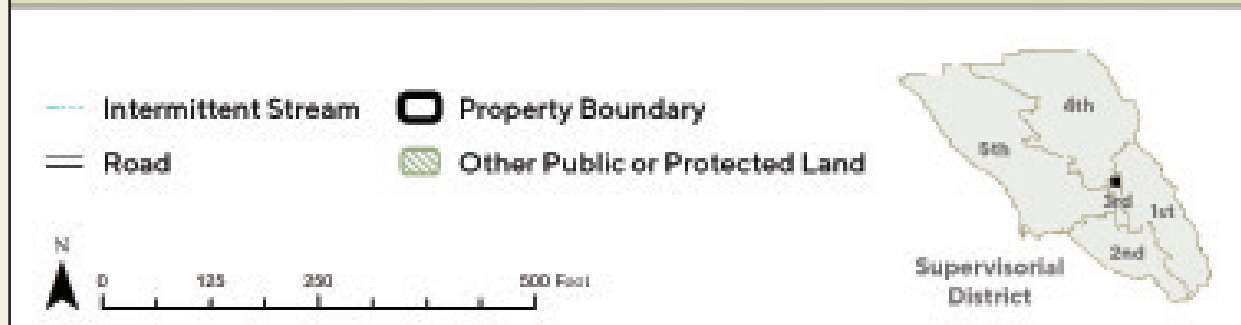
This property was purchased under the Greenbelt category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan. The acquisition was intended to allow agricultural use of the area and to maintain the property's open space character. Oken is currently grazed through a grazing lease. Wetlands and remnant riparian areas are present on the property, and the property is within the potential habitat range of the state and federally-protected California Tiger Salamander..

Ag + Open Space contracts for vegetation management on this property. Vegetation management includes annual mowing along the Petaluma Hill Road frontage, some mowing along property perimeters and drainages, and invasive thistle management.

Ag + Open Space is currently implementing a habitat restoration project on the property that will repair headcuts and eroded creek bank areas while re-establishing native riparian vegetation along the property's seasonal drainages. This project is intended to reduce sediment transport off the property and improve native plant and wildlife habitat while allowing for continued commercial agricultural use of the property.



Paulin Creek Preserve



Paulin Creek Preserve

- **9 acres**
- **Located in Santa Rosa**
- **Date acquired: 7/31/2002**
- **Acquisition price: \$1,575,000**

This property was purchased under the Recreation category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan, and was intended to preserve the existing natural conditions and provide public outdoor recreation.

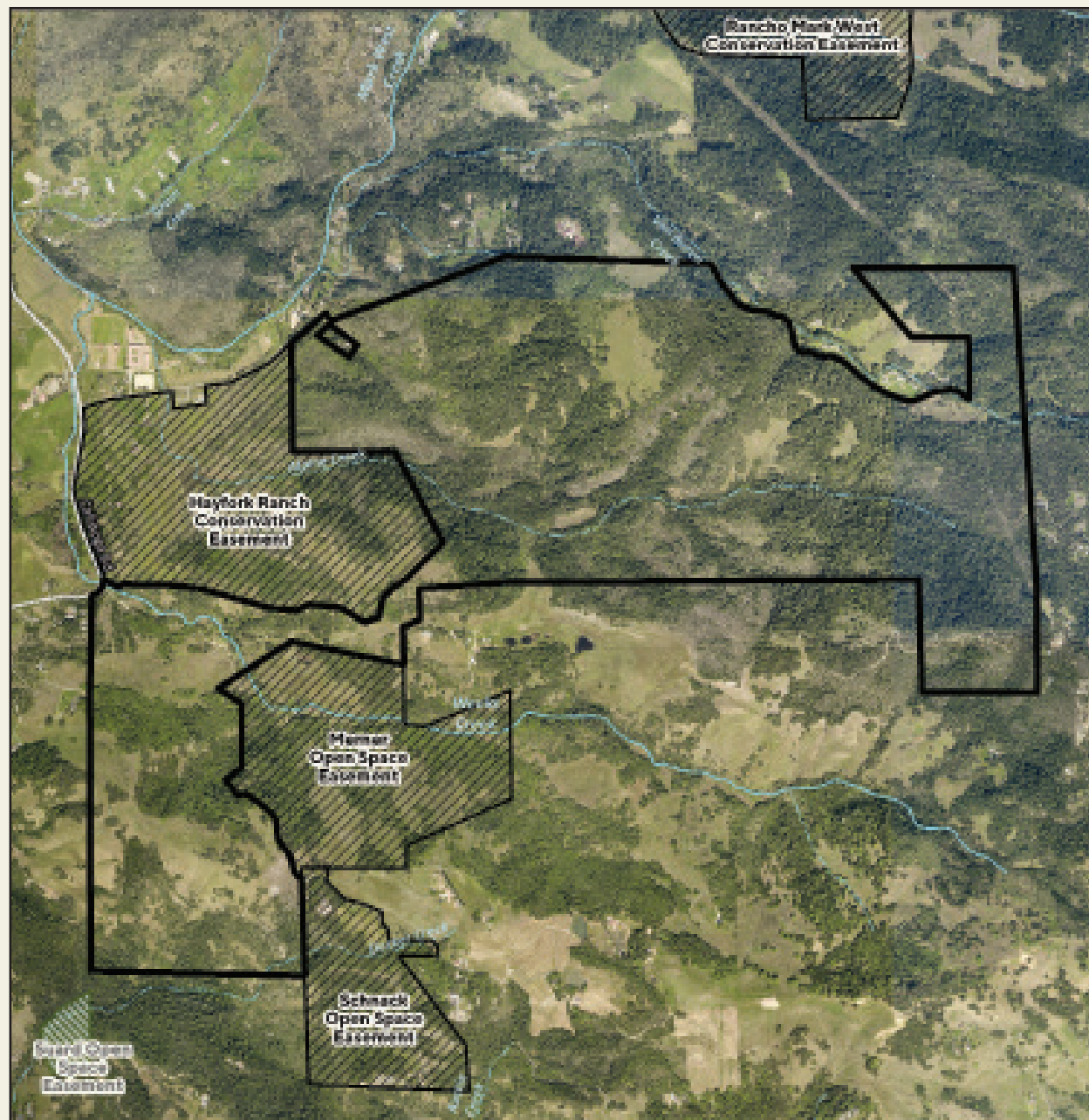
Adjacent to the 9 acres owned by Ag + Open Space are 10 acres owned by the County of Sonoma and 27 acres owned by Sonoma Water. These 46 acres include riparian woodland areas, a flood retention pond, oak woodlands and grasslands. Since this property lies within the City of Santa Rosa, the intention at the time of acquisition was that this property would be operated as a nature preserve and public park by Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks Department. At this time, there is not an identified recipient for fee title transfer of this property.

Ag + Open Space has established a volunteer patrol on the property, comprised primarily of neighbors. Trained volunteers patrol the trail that winds through all three

properties, and report any activity or property condition of concern. In addition, Ag + Open Space provides outings and workdays on the property. These outings vary from nature hikes to bird watching. The workdays involve clearing the trail and removing invasive plants.

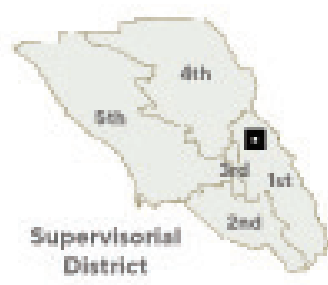
In 2003, Ag + Open Space developed a baseline documentation report for the property. This report documents the property conditions, natural features, and current uses and improvements. Ag + Open Space completed a Draft Management Plan for the 46 acres in 2006.

Ag + Open Space contracts for maintenance and vegetation management, including removal of debris, managing invasive plant species, and annual fire abatement mowing. Mowing occurs after consultants conduct a nesting bird survey on the property to ensure no birds or nests are present. Ag + Open Space has actively been treating the Preserve's most impactful and invasive species: French broom, English ivy, and Himalayan blackberry. Invasive species management services are provided by volunteers and through contract.



Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve

- Perennial Waterway
- Intermittent Stream
- Road
- Property Boundary
- Other Ag + Open Space Holding
- Other Protected Land



Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve

- 960 acres
- Located northeast of Santa Rosa, in the Mark West Creek watershed
- Date acquired: 1/13/2006
- Acquisition price: \$9,700,000; Ag + Open Space contribution \$8,700,000

Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve (Preserve) was purchased under the Natural Resources category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan. This scenic acquisition was intended to protect the natural resources on the Preserve, as well as contribute to protection of key properties within the Mark West Creek watershed. The Preserve contains portions of four creeks, including almost all of the Alpine Creek watershed, and provides habitat for eight special-status plant species, including federally endangered Clara Hunt's milk vetch, as well as several special-status wildlife species. steelhead trout, northern spotted owls, and western pond turtles have been documented on the property.

Ag + Open Space has an established a volunteer patrol program on the Preserve. Trained volunteers patrol the Preserve's roads and trails and provide reports to Ag + Open Space on property conditions, invasive species, wildlife sightings, signs of trespass or unauthorized use, and maintenance needs such as downed trees across roadways or new signs of erosion.

Volunteer patrollers provide a valuable monitoring presence. In addition, Ag + Open Space provides

public outings on the Preserve that typically highlight educational topics such as native flora and fauna, rare plants, local fire ecology, and aquatic ecology.

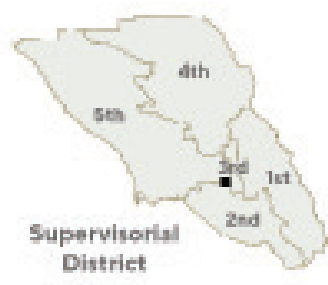
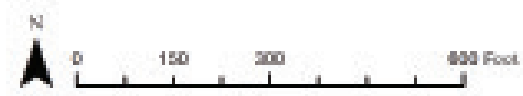
A \$1,000,000 grant was received from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) towards acquisition of this property. Requirements of the SCC grant include development of a Management Plan for the Preserve to assess and document its natural and cultural resources and the condition of its existing road network, and provide recommendations for natural resource protection and enhancement, to inform appropriate public access. The management plan was completed and adopted by the Board of Directors in October 2019.

Key management concerns include overcrowding in the Preserve's forests, encroachment of Douglas fir into oak woodland and sensitive chaparral communities, and loss of the Preserve's native grasslands to aggressive invasive species. Ag + Open Space is currently working with Cal Fire to plan and implement a series of fuel treatments, including shaded fuel breaks, targeted forest thinning, and prescribed burning. This will reduce hazardous fuels on the property; ensure safe access; ensure safe access for emergency personnel; improve forest health; reduce invasive species and pathogens; and improve grazing forage on the property while providing a potential buffer to northeastern Santa Rosa from future wildfires. Invasive species monitoring, mapping, and control is handled through contracts with qualified consultants and the long-term goal is to manage invasive species primarily through prescribed burning, targeted rotational grazing, and hand-pulling with minimal use of herbicides.



San Francisco Archdiocese

- Perennial Waterway
- Property Boundary
- Road



San Francisco Archdiocese

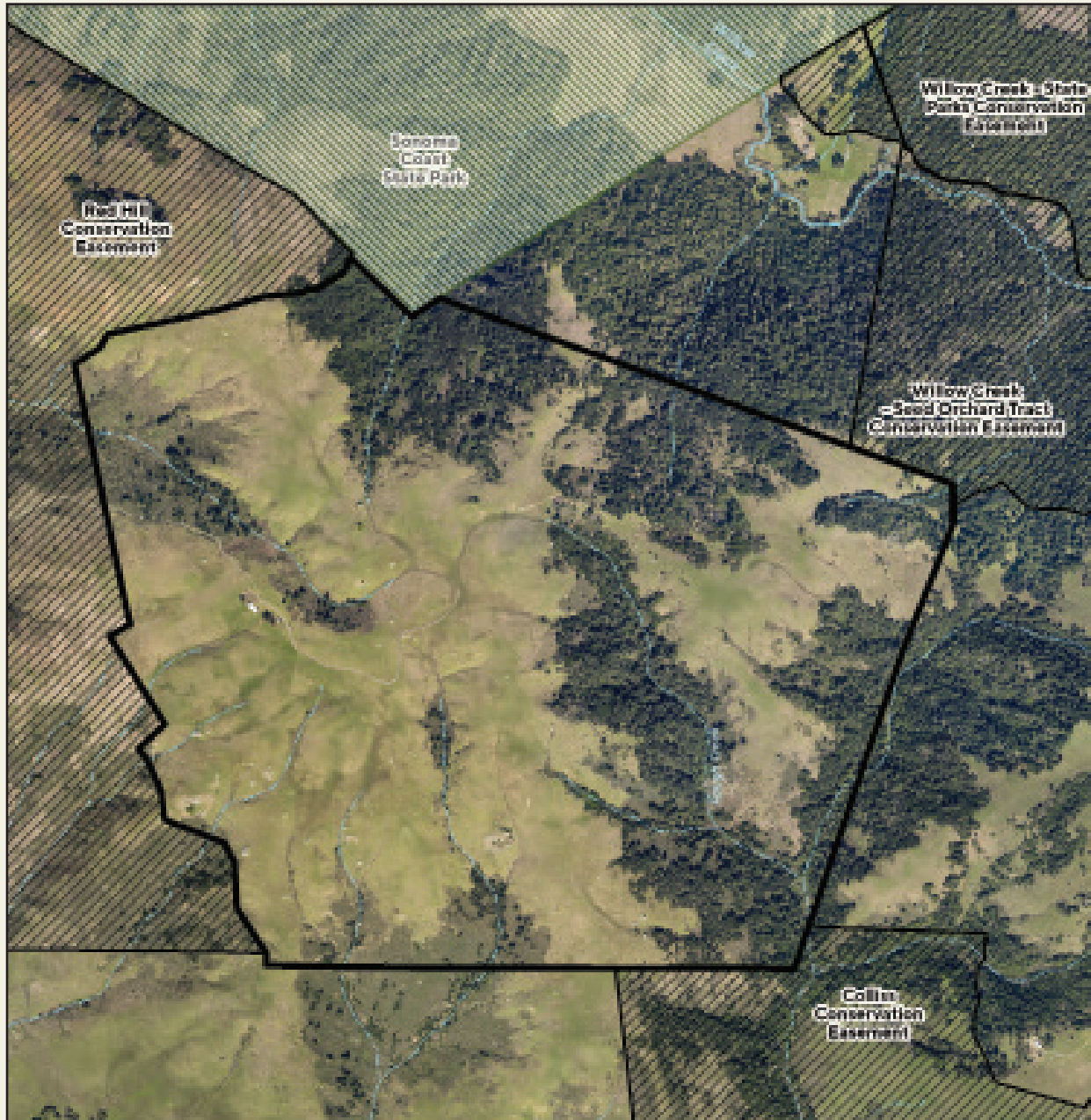
- **28 acres**
- **Located west of Rohnert Park**
- **Date acquired: 9/02/1994**
- **Acquisition price: \$133,000**

This property was purchased under the Greenbelt category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan. The acquisition was intended to maintain agricultural uses of the area, provide protection of wetlands and allow potential restoration of the land to limited agricultural uses.

The property consists of open grassland with a cluster of riparian woodlands at the northern end of the site and

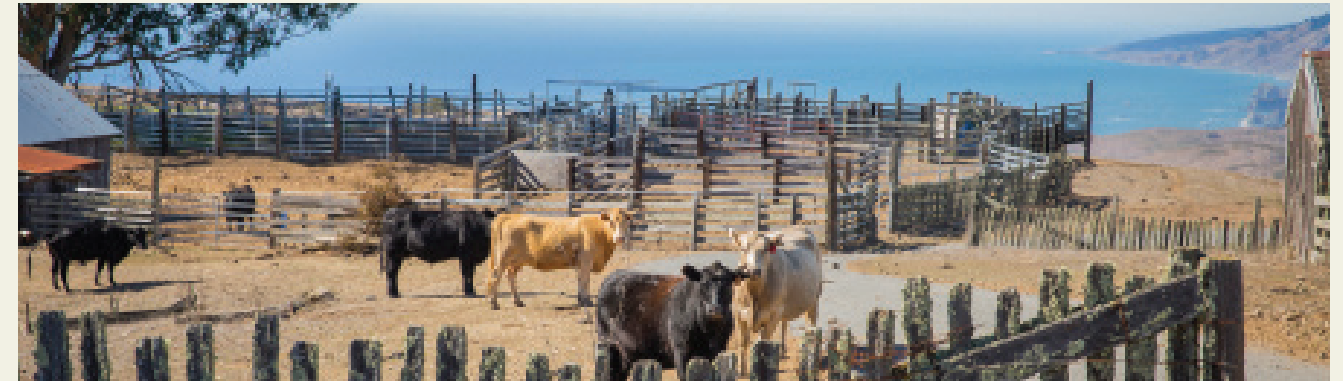
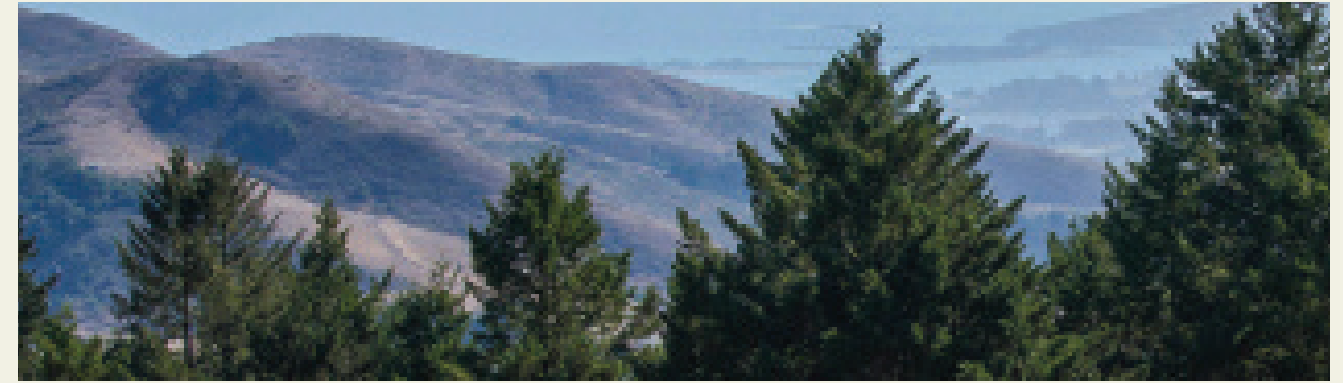
seasonal wetlands on the southern portion of property. Ag + Open Space worked with a certified rangeland manager to assess the property's vegetation and determine the adequate stocking rate, and appropriate type of livestock to graze the property. Cows graze the property's eastern parcel and thirteen sheep graze the western parcel.

Because the property is grazed year round, there is no need for annual mowing around the property perimeter. However, Ag + Open Space performs occasional maintenance tasks, such as debris and trash removal. Ag + Open Space contracted with a service provider to improve and, in some areas, replace the property boundary fence in September 2019.



Wright Hill Ranch

- Perennial Waterway
- Intermittent Stream
- Property Boundary
- Other Ag + Open Space Holding
- Other Protected Land



Wright Hill Ranch

- **1236 acres**
- **Located near the Sonoma Coast, south of Jenner**
- **Date acquired: 9/28/2007**
- **Acquisition price: \$5,600,000;**
Ag + Open Space's contribution: \$4,850,000

This property was acquired under the Recreation and Education categories in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan and was intended to protect the scenic woodlands, meadows, and critical habitats on the property, as well as allow appropriate low-intensity public outdoor recreation.

Ag + Open Space has established a Volunteer Patrol on the property. Trained volunteers patrol the roads and trails on the property, and report any observations of activities or property condition. Additionally, Ag + Open Space contracts with local non-profits for guided outings on the property. These outings vary from hikes to viewpoints of the Sonoma Coast, to bird walks and presentations on the history of the property.

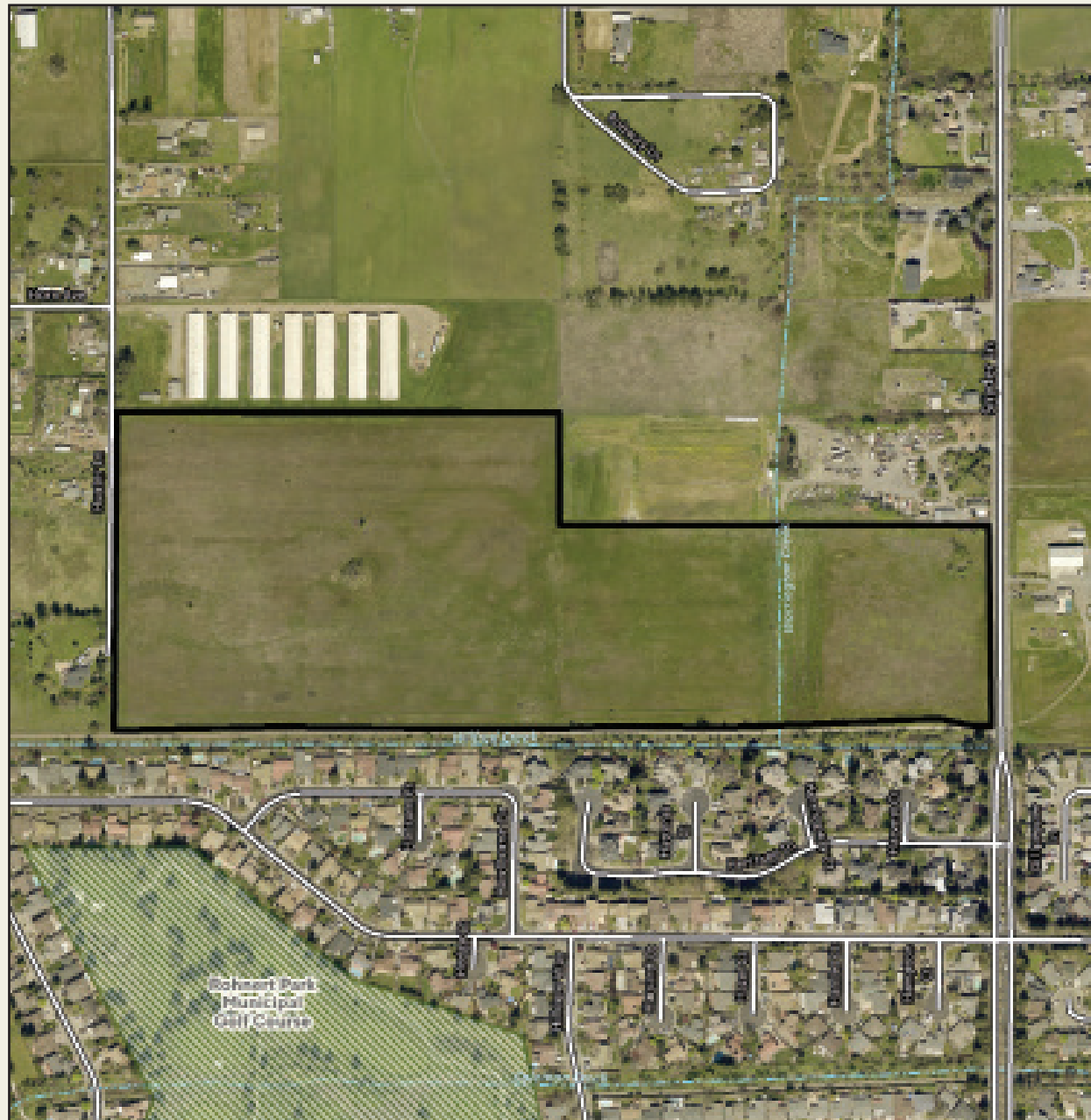
A grant for \$750,000 was received from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) towards acquisition of this property. One requirement of the SCC grant was the development of a Management Plan for the property that would assess and document existing conditions, and develop

recommendations for natural resource protection and enhancement, as well as for appropriate public access. In 2008, Ag + Open Space entered into a contract for the development of the Management Plan. The Ag + Open Space Board of Directors approved the Management Plan in 2017.

The Wright Hill Ranch property includes a house, barn, and small workshop. The house was built in the 1880s and is listed as a significant historic building in the region. The property is leased for year-round grazing.

Invasive plants present on the property include Italian thistle, bull thistle, jubata grass, and Himalayan blackberry, among others. Because the property is grazed throughout the year, there is no need for annual mowing along the roads or around the perimeter of the property. However, Ag + Open Space contracts for occasional necessary maintenance on this property, including fencing and other infrastructure repair, house and barn repair, and road maintenance.

As part of the purchase agreement, Ag + Open Space was required to remediate an old sheep dip located behind the barn on the property. This included excavating a significant amount of contaminated soil, which was hauled offsite for proper disposal.



Young-Armos

- Intermittent Stream
- Property Boundary
- Road
- Other Protected Land



Young-Armos

- 45 acres
- Located near Rohnert Park
- Date acquired: 5/19/1997
- Acquisition price: \$370,000

This property was purchased under the Greenbelt category in the Ag + Open Space Acquisition Plan. The acquisition was intended to allow continued agricultural use of the area and maintain and preserve the open space character and property's natural conditions.

Ag + Open Space has worked with a Certified Rangeland Manager to assess the property's vegetation and determine the adequate livestock stocking rate and appropriate type of livestock to graze the property.

Young-Armos contains several wetland areas near the middle of the property where a single oak tree stands.

Elsewhere, the property consists of annual grassland and a few coyote brush shrubs. This property is within the potential habitat range of the state and federally-protected California Tiger Salamander.

Ag + Open Space contracts for maintenance and vegetation management, including debris removal, fence repair, and annual mowing around the property perimeter. Mowing occurs after a consultant conducts a nesting bird survey on the property to ensure no birds or nests are present. If nesting birds are present, mowing is postponed until the birds fledge and leave the nest.

Ag + Open Space plans to repair the existing well onsite and repair sections of the existing boundary fence to prepare the property for grazing.