



**LAND
TRUST**
OF SANTA CRUZ
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Land Trust Protects 256 acres for Wildlife A Mile from Proposed Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County protected an additional 256 acres of wild lands with a conservation easement last Thursday. The easement will keep the property in private ownership and protect it as a wildlife corridor—connecting lands adjacent to the proposed Highway 17 wildlife crossing to the northern Santa Cruz Mountains.

The property is part of a critical link for wildlife moving between Loch Lomond Recreation Area and Quail Hollow Ranch Park to areas closer to the proposed wildlife crossing.

Land Trust CEO Terry Corwin said that the process of protecting lands for the wildlife corridor is like putting together a puzzle. “We have to do it piece by piece—and these 256 acres make up an important part of the whole wildlife corridor picture.”

The Land Trust has been working on protecting land for wildlife to roam since the launch of its 25-year *Conservation Blueprint* in 2011. The *Blueprint* calls for the protection of 50,000 “multi-benefit” acres in Santa Cruz County—for water, wildlife, farmland,

recreation and many other conservation purposes.

Additional conservation values of the property include significant natural and scenic open space, forests, and special habitat values. The land is also host to seven acres of rare Sandhills habitat, an ancient seabed that supports an ecosystem endemic to Santa Cruz County.

“The easement is a forever thing, precluding the land from ever being subdivided and developed,” said Land Trust Project Director Dan Medeiros.

The landowner said that plans to permanently protect this land began years ago, with the great enthusiasm of her late husband. She sees the protection of open space as the answer to poor suburban planning and the “tragic effort to pave over of California,” especially nearby Silicon Valley. Together, the landowner and her neighbor Ed Fenster donated more than three-quarters of the value of the conservation easement.

While this property is located a mile from the proposed wildlife tunnel, its protection is a necessary piece of the wildlife corridor and crossing project and provides a great deal of open space for animals to roam. This easement brings the Land Trust’s total protected acres for wildlife to more than 11,000 acres.

Corwin adds that the nonprofit plans to sign an easement protecting 170 acres west of Highway 17 next summer. That project will complete the protection of land adjacent to the future wildlife crossing.

The “Wildlife and Wildlands” campaign is but one of four campaigns within the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County’s \$20 million Great Land and Trail Campaign. Find out more on the Land Trust’s website: www.LandTrustSantaCruz.org