



617 Water Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
831-429-6116
Fax 831-429-1166
info@landtrustsantacruz.org
www.landtrustsantacruz.org

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CONTACT:
Stephen Slade
Executive Director
Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
(831) 429-6116
Stephen.slade@landtrustsantacruz.org

Steve Hobbs
California Senior Project Director
The Conservation Fund
(651) 249-1389
shobbs@conservationfund.org

A New Way to Protect Farmland in Santa Cruz County

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County has come up with a new way to protect expensive Pajaro Valley farmland. The local non-profit has teamed up with The Conservation Fund — a national organization dedicated to providing environmental and economic solutions — to purchase farmland and then resell it with a conservation easement that forever protects the land as farmland.

The first property protected under the new arrangement is a 180-acre ranch along Lake Tynan just outside the City of Watsonville. This property has produced a wide variety of produce over the decades. The highly productive fields of the ranch are capable of producing 20 tons of berries per acre and approximately 100 acres are certified as organic.

The Conservation Fund purchased the property on April 25 and will work together with the Land Trust to place an agricultural conservation easement that restricts development and ensures the land remains protected. The two organizations will then sell the property to a private buyer.

The ranch will be the 18th property protected by the Land Trust since 2008. The Land Trust now protects more than 1,800 acres of Pajaro Valley farmland. The Land Trust holds an easement on an adjacent 92-acre ranch. The property is in contract to be sold for \$10 million.

The Conservation Fund has helped protect more than 8 million acres of land in the United States since 1985. About a half million of those acres are in California, mostly notably approximately 74,000 acres in the North Coast redwoods in Mendocino and Humboldt counties. The Fund uses a variety of innovative financing approaches to support local nonprofits like the Land Trust who want to protect prosperous land.

ABOUT THE LAND TRUST:

The mission of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is to protect, care for, and connect people to the extraordinary lands that make this area special. Since its founding in 1978, the Land Trust has raised \$75 million in funding for conservation and has protected more than 14,000 acres – directly and through partnerships. More at www.landtrustsantacruz.org.

ABOUT THE CONSERVATION FUND:

At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 8 million acres of land, including more than 555,000 acres in California.

www.conservationfund.org

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