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**LAND TRUST OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PROTECTS LAND FOR
RELICT SPECIES WILDLIFE CROSSING ON HIGHWAY 1**

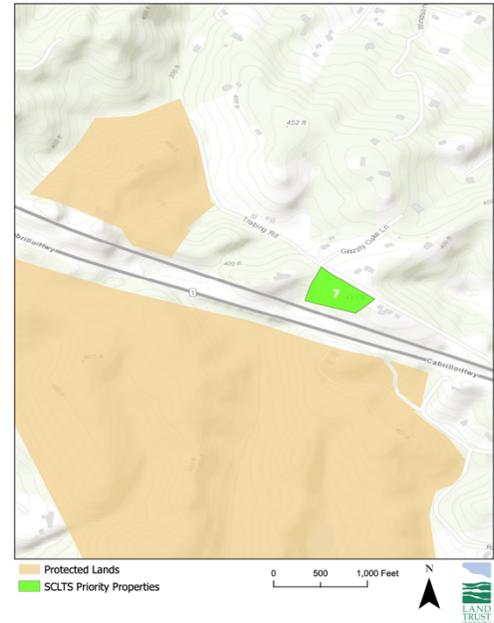
Watsonville, CA (April 6, 2022): On March 31, 2022, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County closed escrow on parcel #049-131-32 on Trabing Road. A humble 3.5-acre vacant lot, the property is key to ensuring the survival of one of Santa Cruz's most unique and endangered species, the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander.

Over the past year, the Land Trust has collaborated with the US. Fish & Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, Caltrans Region 5, and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission to facilitate the recovery of the long-toed salamander.

In January of 2022, the small Trabing Road parcel was listed for sale. "When we heard there was an offer from a developer being considered, our Land Protection Team knew they had to work fast," says Dan Medeiros, Director of Land Protection, "thankfully, we were able to make a competing offer and secure a Purchase and Sale Agreement. We are extremely grateful to our partners at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Department of Fish and Wildlife, Caltrans, and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission for helping us take action to ensure the survival of this species."

ABOUT THE SANTA CRUZ LONG-TOED SALAMANDER

Santa Cruz long-toed salamanders were first identified in 1954. Described as a relict species, long-toed salamanders were isolated from their most recent common ancestor close to 2 million years ago. With the county's dramatic increase in development over the past 80 years, long-toed salamander breeding grounds have become further isolated, shrinking their population to dangerously low levels and awarding them endangered species status at the state and federal levels.



Map identifying Trabing Road parcel as a priority for SCLTS connectivity.



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WILDLIFE CROSSINGS – GREAT AND SMALL

The Land Trust is dedicated to creating pathways for wildlife throughout Santa Cruz County. Most notably, is the Laurel Curve Undercrossing currently being constructed under Highway 17. The crossing is pivotal to ensuring the genetic health of Santa Cruz County's apex predator, the Santa Cruz Mountain Lion.

"Lower profile species like the long-toed salamander don't get the attention they deserve," says Land Trust Executive Director, Sarah Newkirk, "the long-toed salamander is a species that has been genetically isolated since mammoths and saber-toothed cats roamed California. They may be small, but genetically speaking, the long-toed salamander is a living fossil from an epoch long before the birth of humanity as we know it."

One of the most critical needs for the recovery of the species is the creation of a safe crossing for the SCLTS across Highway 1 in Larkin Valley. The Watsonville Slough Ecological Reserve already protected land on the southbound side of Highway 1. The Trabling Road property, located directly across the highway from the reserve, offers the ideal location for both the crossing's entrance and the creation of a long-toed salamander breeding pond.

As of last week, the initial design for the long-toed salamander crossing was completed, and the project recently was issued a project initiation document by Caltrans.