

# LANDSCAPES

PENINSULA OPEN SPACE TRUST

STEWARDSHIP



# POST Stewardship: We Get It Done

I grew up on a farm in Saratoga, and over the years saw the open space, orchards and farms of the “Valley of the Heart’s Delight” develop into today’s Silicon Valley. My interest in preserving the natural landscape here probably comes from this background.

As a youngster, I spent a lot of time playing in Wildcat Creek, which ran through my family’s property, watching the animals that live around the creek — salamanders, pollywogs and frogs. It was there that I first developed a sense of how fragile and enduring watersheds and their surrounding landscapes are, and in fact this is a particular interest of mine in POST’s Stewardship Program.

The Stewardship Program was formed to assure protection of a wide variety of natural resources. In addition to the routine management activities that POST must carry out to maintain its properties, such as road maintenance, fire abatement, and managing numerous agricultural leases, there are opportunities to reduce or eliminate threats to important resources. The mission of the stewardship program is to identify and prioritize these threats, and develop strategies for addressing them.

Over the past two years, POST has been working to refine its vision and strategy for stewardship of both currently owned properties and future acquisitions. To provide guidance in achieving this goal, we assembled a stewardship committee in July 1999 to work with POST Director of Stewardship Paul Ringgold and his land management staff. Our stewardship committee consists of representatives with diverse experience and expertise: Board members Allan Brown, Vince Garrod, Christy Holloway, Paul Newhagen, and Bill Reller, Advisory Committee members Ward Paine and Paul Reimer, and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District General Manager Craig Britton.

In the first phase of its work, under the leadership of Christy Holloway, the committee also included Gene Richeson, owner of Double Dog Ranch in Pescadero, and Steve Johnson, former director of The Nature Conservancy’s stewardship program.

In addition to the review, discussion and critique of stewardship strategies for individual properties, the committee plays a key advisory role in the development of broad guidelines for resource management. The committee also has been working closely with POST staff to establish a process for prioritizing stewardship goals and activities.

This issue of *Landscapes* is devoted to describing a few of POST’s stewardship activities, with a focus on Cloverdale Coastal Ranch. The 4,733-acre ranch serves as a location to test a variety of stewardship projects. The articles will show you some of the stewardship challenges POST faces on this and other properties, as well as the innovative and traditional approaches it will use to meet them. As you’ll see, we have a tremendous opportunity to bring about positive change on the land POST has acquired with your help.



A blue ink signature of Robert C. Kirkwood, written in a cursive style.

Robert C. Kirkwood  
Member, Board of Directors  
Chair, Stewardship Committee

# Cloverdale Coastal Ranch:

## A STEWARDSHIP MODEL

POST's ownership of Cloverdale Coastal Ranch represents an opportunity to develop a model of long-term stewardship and sustainable management for one of the most diverse landscapes on the California coast. Using this vast property as an ecological laboratory, POST is developing a comprehensive stewardship program that implements new ideas, techniques and partnerships.

Covering 8.8 square miles just east of the Pigeon Point Light Station, Cloverdale's 4,733 acres include miles of ocean frontage, scenic corridors and riparian habitat, plus hundreds of acres of forest, prime agricultural soil and grassland. Three large creeks — Gazos, Arroyo de Los Frijoles, and Butano — cross the property from east to west before emptying into the ocean. Stretching from sea level to the hilltops through a series of coastal terraces, Cloverdale creates an ecological staircase of distinctly different habitats, supporting several threatened and endangered species and including more than 600 acres of coastal terrace prairie, the rarest and most highly diverse grassland habitat in North America.

### BEYOND PROTECTION

When POST gave permanent protection to the property in 1997, our goals were to: complete a big piece of the Coast's open space puzzle; protect a highly visible landscape from subdivision and development; connect Butano State Park to Año Nuevo State Reserve; create beach access and trail corridors; continue private agriculture where appropriate; and protect sensitive habitat and riparian corridors.

We accomplished some of these goals by transferring 900 acres of the original ranch to Butano State Park in 1999. On the remaining 4,733 acres, we studied the land and, to help ensure its

natural resource values were protected began stewardship activities to restore native grassland and protect critical habitat for hundreds of animal species — thus taking a different role than we had traditionally played in open space preservation.

Not only have we reached our original goals in preserving Cloverdale, but through management we've reached a better understanding of restoration techniques and the associated costs. We have also shared what we've learned with public agencies and other organizations. In 2002, POST sponsored a San Mateo County stewardship conference to bring land managers together to discuss ideas, identify problems and consider solutions.



Robert Buelteman

Above: A fog-free spring day on Cloverdale Coastal



Ranch. Cloverdale Road, pictured here, winds through a rural valley.

## HEALING A SCARRED LANDSCAPE

When you drive along Highway 1 on the San Mateo Coast, you see large erosion gullies in the hillsides.

For many years before POST acquired the property, soil erosion on Cloverdale Ranch destroyed vegetation, farmland, wildlife habitat, and future recreational opportunities, and marred the beauty of the landscape. Water rushing through these gullies carried large amounts of sediment into riparian corridors, damaging habitat. This is why it has been a priority for POST to repair erosion gullies on Cloverdale that are located in the Gazos Greek watershed.



Jeff Powers

A native rush, heavy with blossom.

The watershed supports threatened steelhead trout and coho salmon. These species need clean, gravelly creek bottoms for their eggs to hatch. Erosion causes sedimentation and hinders spawning.

Two years ago, POST received grants totaling \$175,000 from the California Department of Fish & Game, California Coastal Conservancy and San Francisco Foundation to fix 21 of 22 gullies on Cloverdale Ranch that drain into Gazos Creek. We built diversion ditches above the gullies to prevent water carrying eroded soil from entering the creek. We installed check dams with energy dissipaters to stabilize the sides of the gullies and slow any water flowing through. Then each gully was seeded with native plant species.

Last year, supported by grants from the Bella Vista Foundation and the Coastal Conservancy, POST repaired 25 gullies that were “incipient” — or about to form — throughout the ranch, using the same techniques.

This year, using additional grants from the Coastal Conservancy and Fish & Game, we will

address the 22<sup>nd</sup> and final gully on Cloverdale that drains into the watershed. This amphitheater-sized crevice is 400 feet long by 40 feet deep and 50 feet wide. We plan to install a number of long and deep diversion ditches to “de-water” the gully.

Our erosion control program has prevented tens of thousands of cubic yards of sediment from entering Gazos Creek. In addition, we have succeeded in repairing scars that disrupt Cloverdale’s beautiful landscape and have prevented the further reduction of plant and animal habitat.

## REVITALIZING GRASSLANDS

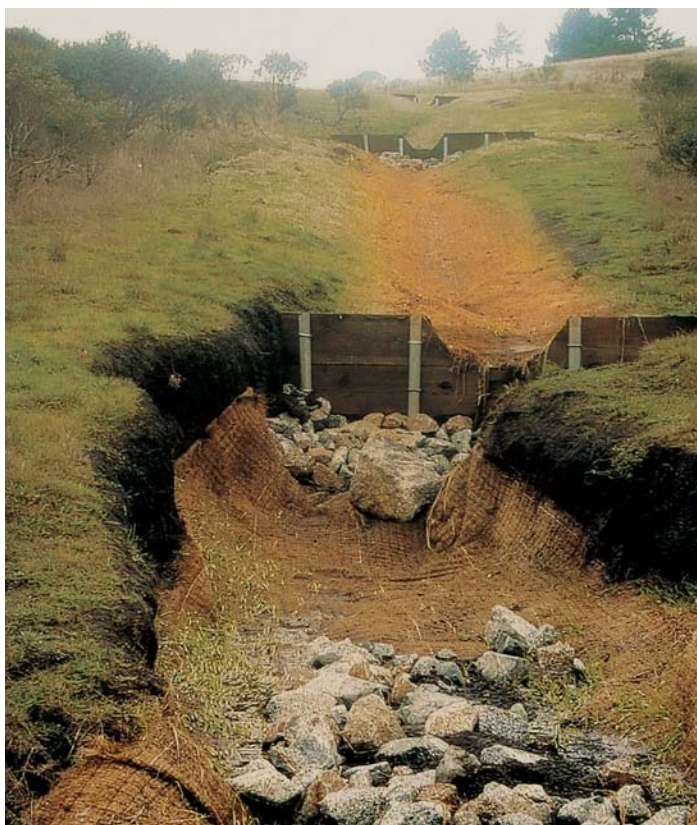
The coastal terrace prairie on Cloverdale is the third-largest remnant in California of this extremely rare habitat. Most of us are unaware that we have something known as a prairie — typically associated with the landscapes of Iowa, Nebraska, or even Montana — on our coast.

Identified as the most ecologically diverse habitat in North America, this ecosystem is truly a treasure to preserve and sustain.



Robert Buckleman

*With your support, POST has protected more than 7,000 acres surrounding the landmark Pigeon Point Light Station. Much of this has been made possible through contributions to POST’s campaign, Saving the Endangered Coast.*



*Installed check dams and mesh netting prevent water from rushing through erosion gullies and carrying sediment into Gazos Creek.*

Discovering coastal terrace prairie on the ranch was a major revelation, and learning about it changed the way we think about the resource. Like many other grassland communities, this prairie is a disturbance-dependent system. That means it must be “disturbed” through grazing or fire to help germinate seeds, cycle nutrients, and control invasive species such as pampas grass that can crowd out the native vegetation.

For thousands of years, Native Americans regularly burned the grasslands to help hunt animals and clear the land, keeping the coastal prairie healthy.

Last October, we conducted the first “prescribed burn” on about 100 acres of this habitat just south of the Pigeon Point Light Station and east of Highway 1. The California Department of Forestry (CDF) managed the burn to ensure safety.

In the spring, the results of the burn were evident: beautiful native

flowers and grasses grew where coyote brush once dominated. An added benefit is the reduction of fire fuel load, thereby protecting a few nearby homes from wildfire outbreak. POST’s plan is to continue with this burn program to revitalize coastal terrace prairie and other native grasslands.

## ROOM TO GROW

Hand in hand with the enhancement of the coastal terrace prairie is the removal of invasive exotic species that overwhelm these grassland communities. The primary culprit is pampas grass, which can grow to be 8 feet wide by 8 feet tall — big enough to fill an average-sized office. This plant is prominent throughout the San Mateo Coast.

POST is approaching this problem on two fronts. A team of volunteers is spot-spraying individual plots of pampas grass with Roundup®. Used by many land management organizations, this is a highly effective herbicide that biodegrades quickly, doesn’t accumulate in the soil and isn’t harmful to animals. However, it does require careful, accurate application and POST trains volunteers in its proper use.

For more dense occurrences near the coast, POST is testing two other techniques. One uses an excavator to turn over the pampas grass and expose the root structure, which then dries out and dies. The other method involves cutting the

*(continued on page 12)*



*California Department of Forestry firefighters monitor the prescribed burn.*

# HOW FARMING & GRAZING FIT IN





# TO POST's STEWARDSHIP PLANS

The picturesque farms and ranches that dot the San Mateo Coast add to its scenic beauty. Rich fields of artichokes, brussels sprouts and other row crops cover many of the Coast's valleys and terraces, while cattle graze on its upper grasslands and hillsides.

These historic, cultural activities support a way of life that has existed relatively unchanged on the Coast for over a century. They also raise important issues that POST must address relative to natural resource preservation and enhancement. As part of our ongoing stewardship responsibilities, we must continually monitor, evaluate and manage activities such as agriculture and grazing to ensure that they remain compatible with our vision for the property.

## Balancing Protection of Land, Fish and Farm

In saving open space, POST provides farmers with the opportunity to continue farming on many of the properties we own. On the Johnston Ranch at the southern boundary of Half Moon Bay, POST is working with the Giusti family, which has farmed the land for over 50 years, and a number of public agencies to create a landmark solution to water-use demands.

Last year the Giustis lost their primary source of water for irrigation — a pair of in-stream reservoirs built on the property over 100 years ago — when they were unable to obtain the permits to operate them. The California Department of Fish & Game determined the dams were impacting the area's population of the threatened steelhead trout by impeding migration and damaging native riparian vegetation.

POST helped the Giustis mitigate their loss by paying for the drilling of new wells on Johnston Ranch, reducing their lease payments, and making alternative farmland available on the adjacent Purisima Ranch.

Going forward, we would like to create new sources of water on the property by building off-stream reservoirs. However, this groundbreaking \$1.5 million project is contingent on obtaining permits and a significant contribution of public funding. If all goes well, POST will restore the streambed so that agricultural production can continue without harming the fish. POST is also collaborating with farmers on other lands, helping, for example, obtain grants to

fund drainage control on Purisima Farms and new fences on Rancho Corral de Tierra near Montara.

“We view this as a two-way partnership,” says Paul Ringgold, Director of Stewardship. “Agriculture enhances the coastal landscape. Farmers help us monitor and secure our property. They can identify issues that we may not see as readily. We definitely benefit from their knowledge of the land and their presence on the land.”

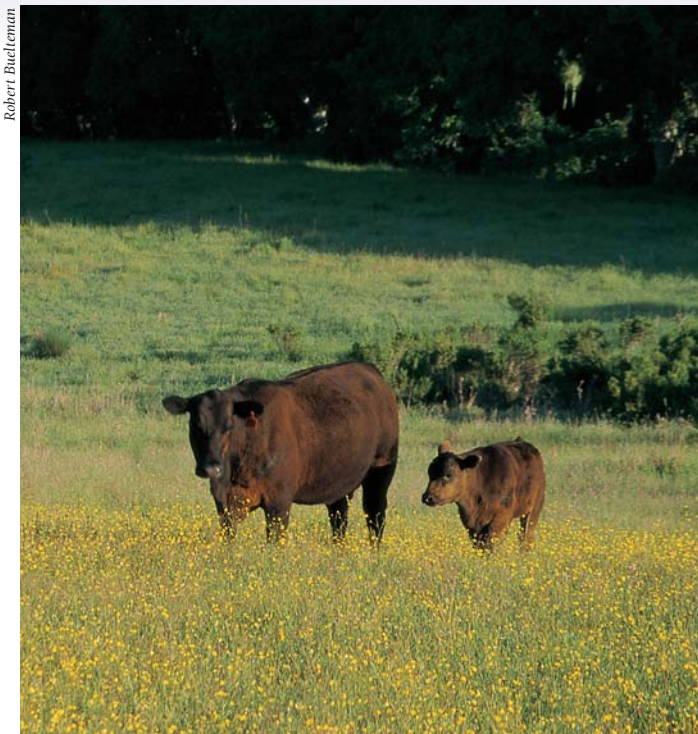
POST’s long-term stewardship plans include selling agricultural land we currently own to the tenants who work the property, subject to conservation easements.



Robert Buelteman

These brussels sprout crops grow on a bluff at Bolsa Point Ranches. POST has protected more than 2,000 acres of row crop farmland on the San Mateo Coast.

*“Agriculture enhances the coastal landscape. Farmers help us monitor and secure our property.... We definitely benefit from their knowledge of the land and their presence on the land.”*



Robert Buelteman

“Conservation cows” graze at Driscoll Ranch.

## Conservation Grazing

Before establishing general stewardship guidelines for grazing, POST is testing a technique called conservation grazing on the 3,681-acre Driscoll Ranch near La Honda on Highway 84.

This process may actually restore the health of the land by controlling grass growth, reducing residual dry matter, and rejuvenating native grasses while controlling invasive species. Grazing also may aid erosion control by compacting soil in erosion gullies. Grazing does, however, have the potential to degrade the landscape. This is why we are approaching this technique with caution, and working closely with Rudy Driscoll, who will conduct the grazing operation, as well as with biologists to monitor the results.

(More about POST’s conservation grazing program can be found in our spring 2002 issue of *Landscapes*, which is posted on our Web site [www.openspacetrust.org](http://www.openspacetrust.org))



*(left) This barn on the Cloverdale Coastal Ranch is located west of Cloverdale Road. A local firm stores recycled lumber here in exchange for restoration work.*



*(right) This barn, which is part of the Muzzi family's farm operation, is located just east of Highway 1 on the Cloverdale Coastal Ranch. POST has replaced the cupola and roof in recent years.*

## Restoring Old Barns, Recycling Lumber

One of the sidelights to POST's stewardship program is the opportunity to restore and preserve two barns on the properties we own and manage. In partnership with Recyclable Lumber, a firm from Woodside, POST is restoring a barn on Cloverdale Coastal Ranch. POST is restoring another on the adjacent Bolsa Point Ranches.

Recyclable Lumber maintains the Cloverdale barn in exchange for the right to store wood inside it. The company processes and re-sells usable lumber harvested from old buildings throughout the Peninsula that are being torn down.

The structures being restored are a small dairy and cow barn off Cloverdale Road and a large barn on Bolsa located on the east side of Highway 1 across from the Pigeon Point Light Station. The Bolsa barn, built around 1900, includes two

sections, one that originally served as a granary. It is being used by the Muzzi family, which farms the property, to store equipment and process crops such as brussels sprouts.

"We really have two objectives here," says Cloverdale Ranch manager Jeff Powers. "One is the preservation of the Coast's cultural heritage. People love barns. They love looking at them and seeing them on the landscape.

"The other is the practical consideration. These barns serve a valuable function for farmers and will also be useful in the future should we decide to implement a conservation grazing program on Cloverdale as we have on Driscoll Ranch. An added benefit is that we're helping to do something positive by recycling lumber, a limited resource."

(continued from page 7)

grass with rotary-arm mowers and then quickly spraying it with the herbicide. Our goal is to determine the most effective way to remove pampas grass while having as little impact on the surrounding land as possible. In the long term, we hope to reduce and, if economically feasible, eliminate it.

## TRAILS AND TRACTORS

As part of its stewardship program, POST strives to integrate appropriate recreational opportunities, farming and ranching activities with our natural resource protection and restoration projects.

POST is working with farmers who lease land on Cloverdale on a variety of issues, including soil and water conservation and creating buffer strips along riparian areas. These measures encourage farming operations that are compatible with our natural resource preservation goals. A conservation cattle grazing plan is also being considered for the property. (See related story on page 8.)

In addition to providing for continued agricultural use, POST creates recreational opportunities in partnership with public agencies and private foundations. In special cases, POST also builds trails before it transfers land to public agencies.

This is the case with two short trails we plan to construct near the Pigeon Point Light Station.

This fall we'll begin building Wilbur's Watch: a mile-long hiking trail with benches and

interpretive signs located on Cloverdale Coastal Ranch just south of the Pigeon Point Light Station and east of Highway 1. The building of Wilbur's Watch is funded by the Packard Foundation to honor the foundation's retired president, conservationist Cole Wilbur, and will provide a destination point for the public to take in sweeping views of the coastline, the surrounding protected lands, and the beautiful and historic lighthouse.

At Whaler's Cove, POST is planning to build a segment of the California Coastal Trail called "Mel's Lane" in honor of founding Board member Mel Lane. Mel, who many know along with his brother Bill as Publishers of Sunset Magazine and Books, was also the first Chair of the California Coastal Commission and of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission. This trail is a fitting tribute to a man for whom coastal protection has been a life-long concern.

Nestled in the rolling meadow along Mel's Lane will be a site with views of the lighthouse, secluded beach, Año Nuevo Island, the mountains of Butano and Cascade State Parks, and the fields of coastal crops at Cloverdale Ranch where hikers and visitors can rest and reflect. Protected from coastal winds by the topography of the landscape, this is where donors to POST's campaign, *Saving the Endangered Coast*, will be recognized. To learn more about this recognition opportunity, contact POST's Vice President, Kathryn Morelli. ■



Robert Buckleman

POST conducted a controlled burn in the area pictured above to restore the native coastal terrace prairie.

# Animal Trackers Partner with POST

Working in conjunction with the Nature Studies program of the Reikes Center for Human Enhancement in Redwood City, POST has established a Wilderness Awareness Field Station on Cloverdale Coastal Ranch.

The station serves as a classroom to train students in the art and science of animal tracking under the direction of Reikes Center master tracker Jon Young.

From a few footprints, a trained tracker can identify an animal's species as well as its age, gender, mood, health, and energy level. Thanks to new "Cyber Tracker" technology, trackers can conduct wildlife surveys and use a handheld computer to capture data about animal populations.

The partnership between POST and the Reikes

Center is beneficial for both organizations, says Cloverdale Ranch Manager and Wildlife Biologist Jeff Powers. "We serve as a resource for the trackers by providing a place to train students. At the same time, we gain valuable information on the different mammals they track.

"These experienced animal trackers can help POST get an accurate picture of the wildlife population on Cloverdale," Powers notes.

"They took samples at the 100-acre area where we conducted a prescribed burn last fall and will return this year to see if there has been any effect on the local mammal population."

Animals discovered by trackers on Cloverdale to date include mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, badgers and shrews. ■

## Volunteers Play Key Role in Stewardship

A vital component of POST's land stewardship program is the participation of committed volunteers. More than 70 volunteers generously contribute their time and energy to engage in restoration projects and monitor POST's open space lands and easements. Other volunteers provide us with significant legal and technical support.

In addition to their hands-on work, volunteers play a crucial role in providing connections to the broader Bay Area community. With their knowledge of POST and the land, they tell others why it is critical to protect these natural areas.

The majority of POST volunteers work as open space monitors. Land monitors serve as the eyes and ears on POST-owned property, inspecting them annually to ensure that prohibited activities are not taking place.

"They act as true stewards of POST's open space and natural resources," says Land Manager Jean Lauer.

Long-time volunteer Don Savant said two of the most rewarding aspects of his work are becoming familiar with Peninsula open space and telling others about it.

"I'm happy to have discovered POST and to have this relationship," he says. "The Bay Area is John Muir country. The natural landscape is what makes this place so special."

A new volunteer project offers involvement in stewardship activities on Cloverdale Coastal Ranch, where volunteers are working with team leader John Chamberlain to remove pampas grass.

"It's labor-intensive work, but it's very effective," says Chamberlain, POST's 2002 Volunteer of the Year. "We're confident we're going to win the battle and eliminate a lot of it."

Over the past decade, volunteer positions have become coveted. Only two to four positions become available every year.

"We encourage POST supporters who are interested to contact us," says Lauer. "While we may not be able to place them right away, we can contact them as soon positions become available."

Chamberlain, who has volunteered for POST since 1999, says he really enjoys meeting and working with "so many interesting and generous people. It's very satisfying. The more I go out on the land, the more I love it and want to preserve it." ■

# Stewardship Tour

Drive over Highway 84 to La Honda and you enter another world — the endangered San Mateo Coast. This is the only remaining rural accessible coast located within a major metropolitan area to be found anywhere on earth. A driving tour is a wonderful way to see not only the terraced hills and coastline we are protecting together, but also several of POST's stewardship projects. Stopping for a cup of Duarte's famed artichoke soup or a slice of homemade pie is a perfect stop to end the tour.



**1.** The first stop on the tour is **Whaler's Cove**, which is located next to the **Pigeon Point Light Station**. POST protected this 3-acre parcel in 2000 in order to restore the historic landscape surrounding the lighthouse and ensure that the land and beach remain open to the public. You'll notice the native plants on the blufftop that were planted after POST purchased the property. Also, POST removed three newly constructed motel buildings. In the next year, POST plans to add the Mel's Lane trail, seating area, viewing platform, and interpretive signage. Take a look at this beautiful scenery: We've protected more than 7,000 acres here.

**2.** As you leave the lighthouse and drive south on Highway 1 toward **Año Nuevo State Reserve**, you'll notice the terraced hillside rising above a white barn (see photo page 11) to the left. This is the eastern slope of the 4,733-acre **Cloverdale Coastal Ranch**. As you continue south you'll see Gazos Creek Road, which is the southernmost boundary of the ranch. Turn left on Gazos Creek Road.

**3.** The two-lane road follows **Gazos Creek**, where the threatened coho salmon and steelhead trout still swim. Over the years, erosion gullies on **Cloverdale Coastal Ranch** drained tons of soil into the creek, harming the fish habitat, until POST established erosion control projects last year.

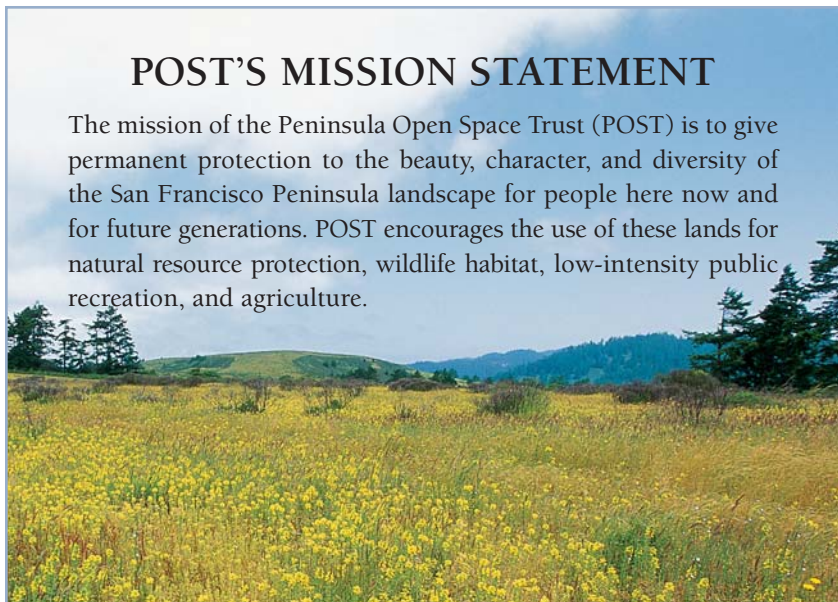
**4.** After taking a left on **Cloverdale Road**, you'll drive over a hill that opens into a valley. To the left is the ranch. On the right, you'll see large erosion areas that stand in stark contrast to Cloverdale. Continue driving and you will see a small turnout on your left with a "**Conservation in Action**" sign posted near the gate. The sign describes stewardship activities on the land. From the gate, you can see one erosion control project to the left of the dirt road. As you drive further into the valley, you can spot a large brown barn (see photo page 11) that is being restored. Seeds found on the property will be used to create a native grass landscape surrounding the barn.

**5.** As you reach Pescadero Road, you'll take a left turn that will bring you into downtown Pescadero. Take a right on Stage Road and **Duarte's** is on your right. You passed the restaurant's own garden on your way into town where they grow vegetables used in their recipes. The famed artichoke soup relies on local artichokes grown by the Muzzi family — some of these on POST property. ■

## POST'S MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) is to give permanent protection to the beauty, character, and diversity of the San Francisco Peninsula landscape for people here now and for future generations. POST encourages the use of these lands for natural resource protection, wildlife habitat, low-intensity public recreation, and agriculture.

Robert Buckleman



## GIVING TO POST

POST owes its success to your generosity. With your support, POST has established a reputation for:

- Achieving visionary land protection goals
- Leveraging your gifts to attract state and federal funds to our projects
- Using your donations effectively

Your annual operating gifts provide essential funding to bring together the research, partnerships and financing for our increasingly complex conservation projects.

Your gifts to POST's campaign, *Saving the Endangered Coast*, are used to acquire properties that add to the remarkable natural landscape west of Skyline to the ocean. Your contributions to POST are tax deductible. Additionally, *how* a gift is given can make a difference to you. Here are four ways to make a lasting contribution to POST today:

1. Give cash. Write a check, make a pledge, charge your credit card. Get a tax deduction and maybe miles on your credit card.
2. Give appreciated stock. A gift of securities to POST is free of capital gains tax, and you can deduct the current market value of the gift.
3. Give your home, retaining life tenancy. You may give POST your home subject to your continuing use of the property. In so doing, you will earn an income tax deduction now.
4. Give real estate. Donated property is evaluated for its conservation resources. If a decision is made to sell the property, the proceeds will be used to further our land-saving mission. You can realize tax savings by deducting the market value of your real estate and avoid capital gains taxes.

Our families and community value and benefit from the investment we make in protecting our remaining natural lands today. Please contact POST's Vice President, Kathryn Morelli, for more information. ■



## Landscapes

Landscapes is published quarterly  
by the Peninsula Open Space Trust 3000  
Sand Hill Road, 4-135  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

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POST is a public benefit California corporation and is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to POST are tax-deductible.

Edited by Deirdre Holbrook  
Contributing Writer: Gary Cavalli  
Designed by DiVittorio & Associates  
Printed by TradeMark Graphics, Inc.

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*No other nation on Earth so swiftly wasted its birthright;  
no other, in time, made such an effort to save what was left.*

WALLACE STEGNER  
*The Sound of Mountain Water*

Front Cover: Native blue-eyed grass grows in the aftermath of a prescribed burn on Cloverdale Coastal Ranch. (Robert Buelteman) Back Cover: Driscoll Ranch (William Matthias)



## LANDSCAPES FALL 2003

Peninsula Open Space Trust

3000 Sand Hill Road, 4-135  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

*A land conservancy for the  
San Francisco Peninsula*

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