



# LANDSCAPES

PENINSULA OPEN SPACE TRUST  FALL 2008

## SAVING FARMLAND





# POST AND LO

## *A Natural Fit*

Fresh, local food is making headlines, yet in the United States cropland is at its lowest levels since 1945. From the beginning, POST has worked to protect local farmland and keep it under cultivation. In this issue, we talk with some of the San Mateo County farmers who benefit from POST's effort to save agricultural land.

Farmland requires special care. While state, county and local parks agencies like Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District are appropriate stewards for open space terrain, the best long-term owner for agricultural land is likely to be a farmer. POST completes a number of steps to protect farmland: buying at-risk land when it comes up for sale, leasing POST-owned land to farmers and protecting farmland with conservation easements. Whenever possible, POST works with tenant farmers to make it easier for them to buy land outright and continue farming, subject to the terms of an easement.

### *Bringing Down the Cost of Land*

Typically, local farmers seeking to buy land get priced out by our region's exorbitantly priced real estate. But land protected by POST conservation easements is by definition more affordable.

Easements are deed restrictions that provide permanent protection of a property's natural qualities, such as scenic views, wildlife habitat and watersheds. When selling land to a farmer, POST typically holds back an easement limiting the land's development potential, which in turn brings down the property's total value, making the land more affordable for the farmer. Easements can also reduce property taxes, providing significant savings for the farmer. Easements are carefully crafted to suit the particular conditions on a given property, safeguarding the character of the land and offering long-term economic incentives to keep the land under cultivation.

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 and Santa Cruz Mountain range. POST encourages the use of these lands for natural resource protection, wildlife habitat, low-intensity public recreation and agriculture for people here now and for future generations.



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# CAL FOOD

POST's partnership with local farmers doesn't stop with leases, easements and land sales. POST staff members also help farmers with grant writing, permit applications, maintenance projects and water issues. This investment of time and resources helps preserve agriculture in our area and ensure sources of fresh food close to home. ■

## FAST FACTS

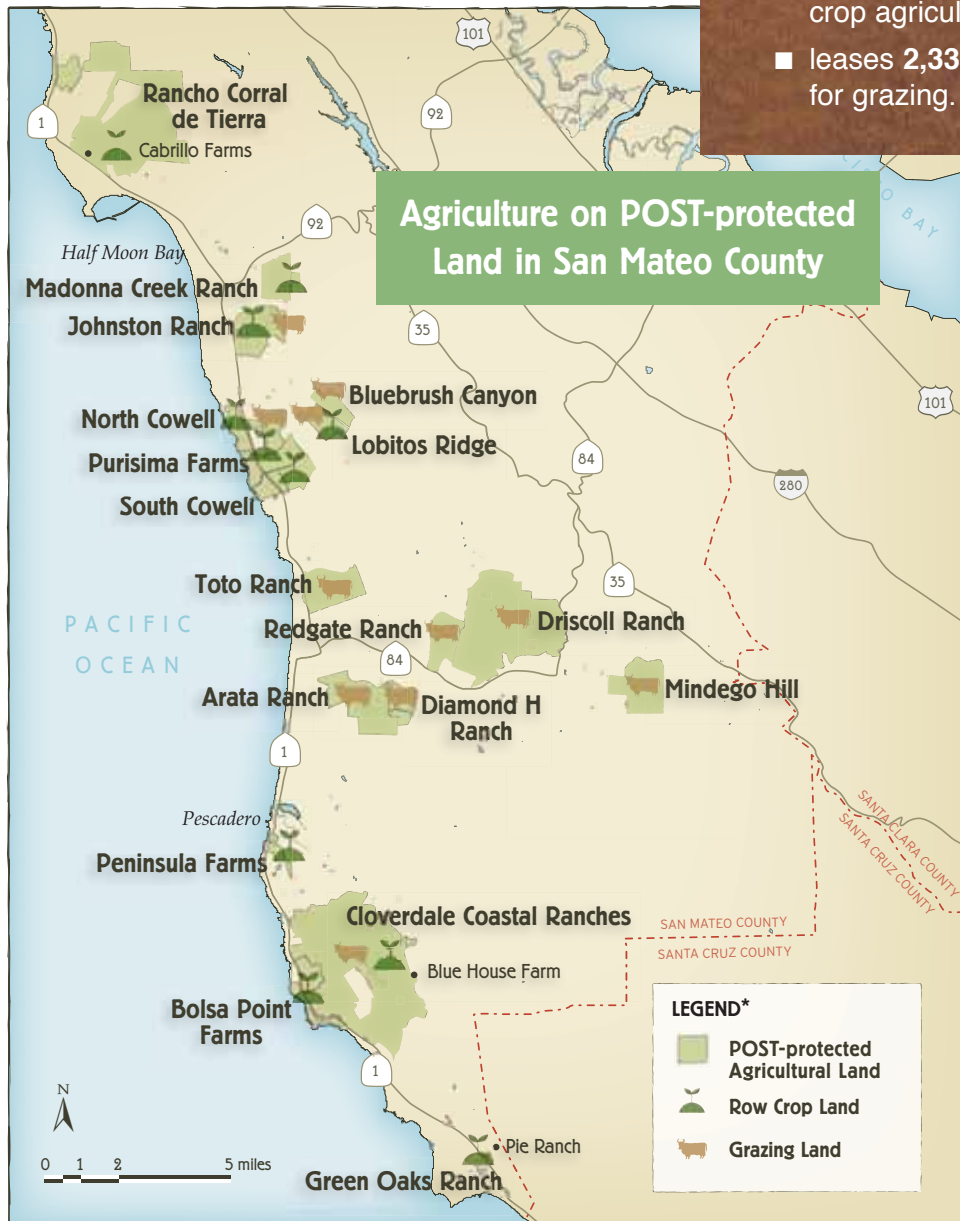
Agricultural land represents 20 percent of the 60,000 acres POST has preserved to date.

In the last 31 years POST has:

- protected more than **1,800 acres** of productive cropland in San Mateo County, or approximately **10 percent** of the county's agricultural land currently in production.
- protected more than **8,300 acres** of grazing land, or **50 percent** of the county's current total.

At present POST:

- leases **613 acres** to nine farmers for row crop agriculture and dry farming.
- leases **2,330 acres** to five cattle ranchers for grazing.







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## BLUE HOUSE FARM: *Success by CSA*

At Blue House Farm, four miles south of Pescadero, farmers Ned Conwell and Ryan Casey build links between people and their food one box of produce at a time. On just three acres, these intrepid farmers cultivate hundreds of pounds of healthful, certified organic, sustainably produced fruits, vegetables and flowers, enough to feed the 80 local families who have signed up as subscribers to the farm.

Ned and Ryan have leased this land from POST for three years. Their farm is located on POST's Cloverdale Coastal Ranches, now covering 5,777 acres of open space, grazing and cropland. They operate as a CSA, or Community Supported Agriculture farm, which relies on members who pay annual fees to generate income and cover expenses.

Each May, Blue House members begin receiving a weekly box of fresh produce—lettuce, chard, beets, strawberries, tomatoes, peppers, pumpkins or whatever else reaches its peak of perfection on delivery day. Except for the Early Girl tomatoes, which are watered once at planting time and dry farmed to a flavor-concentrated finish, the farmers irrigate all their crops.

As CSA members, Blue House customers enjoy fresh, high-quality produce and a direct relationship with the farmers. Members know exactly where their food dollars go and can ask questions about how their food is grown, visit the farm any-time, or even throw on a pair of overalls to take part in a workday. The farm offers tours to school and other groups and, with three interns, is educating the next generation of organic farmers. At all times, the farm's growing methods are compatible with the preservation of surrounding natural lands.

Besides their CSA, Ned and Ryan sell at the farm stand at nearby Pie Ranch (see story page 6) and to a handful of local markets. "Both of us had seen this model work elsewhere, so we made an early decision to form a CSA rather than sell at





Ned Conwell and Ryan Casey of Blue House Farm are among the young, innovative new farmers on the Coastside.

farmers' markets," says Ned. "We also share a similar dream of combining farming with environmental education."

Not owning their land is both an advantage and a risk, says Ned. "Healthy soil is our most important resource. We've put a great deal of time, energy, money and materials into building the soil at Blue House Farm," he says. "We've planted cover crops, added compost, selected the best times and methods for tilling, rotated crops, tested the soil repeatedly. If we were to leave, we couldn't take the soil with us. It's the soil that ties us to the farm. Ownership is best, but working on POST-protected land gives us more assurance of a long-term presence on the land." ■



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Above: "Graffiti" seems more flower than cauliflower. The variety is one of three grown at Blue House Farm. Right: Ned shows off the week's box at POST's office in Palo Alto, one of the drop-off points for the CSA.

## WHAT IS A CSA?

Community Supported Agriculture is an arrangement between people eager to eat fresh, local food and farmers needing a steady market. Members pay in advance for a share of a farm's bounty for one growing season. Members also share the season's risks, such as poor weather or attacks by insects. The money upfront enables the farmer to purchase seed, soil amendments, farm equipment and labor early in the year, long before anything is ready to harvest, and keeps the farmer out of debt.

CSAs may give members more collard greens or kohlrabi than they want at a given moment, but they also offer tastes of new foods or new ways of preparing old favorites. No matter what's in their weekly box, it's up to members to cook it themselves, which may be the greatest benefit of all.

To learn more about Blue House Farm, go to [www.bluehousefarm.org](http://www.bluehousefarm.org). For more about CSAs, visit [www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csadef.shtml](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csadef.shtml).



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## PIE RANCH: *Wants a Second Slice*

Named for the shape of the property, Pie Ranch between Pescadero and Davenport is a model 14-acre organic farm and educational center. This small wedge supports thriving rows of raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, apple trees, rhubarb, pumpkins and wheat—all delightful in pie. A large flock of chickens and a committee of goats contribute. Even the bees have jobs.

POST owns a second slice, a 13-acre parcel of land known as Green Oaks Ranch adjacent to Pie Ranch. The owners of Pie Ranch—co-directors Karen Heisler and Jered Lawson and ranch manager Nancy Vail—currently lease Green Oaks from POST and have an option to purchase the land, subject to a conservation easement.

Besides five acres of excellent cropland, Green Oaks contains the historic Isaac Steele house, a nationally registered landmark, as well as restorable barns and farm buildings. A roadside barn on Highway 1 becomes a farm stand on summer weekends and hosts monthly barn dances open to the public. The balance of the property is an important riparian corridor, with potential to become a trail along Green Oaks Creek, which begins in nearby Big Basin Redwoods State Park and connects to the Pacific Ocean.

“This relationship is another example of how important POST and other non-profits are in creating a link between traditional and new coastal agriculture,” says POST President Audrey Rust. “Our goal is to keep the farmland at Green Oaks in production while helping Pie Ranch in its effort to become the long-term owner and prime mover in restoring this historically significant ranch.”

### *Let Them Eat Pie*

Since its founding in 2002, Pie Ranch has been deeply engaged in teaching future farmers and consumers, especially inner-city high school students. They come for day programs or overnight stays of





Pie Ranch family Jered Lawson, Nancy Vail and their children, Rosa and Lucas.

several days. Says Jered, “Most urban kids believe milk comes from a carton. It’s an eye-opening experience for them to milk a goat and drink the milk fresh from the animal.

“Our culture has lost the connection to the sources of our food,” says Jered. “We use the farm to educate youth and adults about the progression from seed to table. People who understand the process develop a conscious capacity to make good choices.”

In addition to its seasonal farm stand, Pie Ranch works with Mission Pie, at 2901 Mission Street in San Francisco, to sell pies, eggs and fresh, organic produce from Pie Ranch and other local organic farms. The pie shop is the farm’s urban link and offers employment opportunities to students who have completed programs at Pie Ranch.

Pie Ranch succeeds on a scientifically controlled rotation of crops, animals, harvests and cultivation practices. Every plant and animal is multitasking. Chickens are enclosed in a portable solar electric fence. After the goats have grazed tall edible plants, the chickens graze on the stubble, removing insects and fertilizing as they strut. A little red gypsy wagon contains nesting boxes where part of the flock lays its eggs. From 320 hens, Pie Ranch collects 100 dozen eggs per week to use, sell or distribute through their “Community Supported Eggriculture” program.

Even the monthly barn dances are multipurpose. The public is invited to an afternoon work party and potluck supper before the dancing. As they build up the farm, Pie Ranch is building community.

For more information about Pie Ranch, go to [www.pieranch.org](http://www.pieranch.org). ■

## TO SAVOR THE FLAVOR, EAT LOCALLY

- **Enjoy Greater Flavor and Nutrition.** Wine may improve with age, but fruit and vegetables lose taste and nutrition soon after harvest.
- **Fight global warming.** On average fresh foods travel 1,500 miles before reaching your kitchen. Buying locally grown food helps you cut down on fuel consumption and the resulting greenhouse gases.
- **Protect yourself from harmful chemicals.** Small farms tend to use fewer and less dangerous chemicals than large corporate farms, especially when the farmer lives on the land.
- **Protect biodiversity.** Local farms grow more than one crop. Growing several crops and multiple varieties protects biodiversity, preserves a broader gene pool among plants and prevents the soil from wearing out.
- **Boost the local economy.** After paying for transportation, processing, packaging, refrigeration and marketing, farmers nationwide receive only 23 cents of every dollar you spend on food. When you buy locally, farmers earn a much greater share, and the money stays in the community.
- **Keep development in check.** Preserving farmland prevents development from sprawling, thereby preserving open space and scenic vistas.

Sources: [www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org), [www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org), [www.about.com](http://www.about.com)





## B.J. BURNS: *Facing the Future*

Twenty-five years ago, B.J. Burns was an established Pescadero farmer, growing straw flowers, artichokes, fava beans and pumpkins on a combination of owned and leased land. Over the years, he witnessed the loss of large farms and dairies and the family life they supported. He experienced the disappearance of infrastructure for farming as well as changing markets. Seasonal labor, replacement parts, mechanics, even produce buyers moved to the Central Valley, with the result that his most important farm tool was the phone he used to round up services.

In 1983, land available for farming on the Coastside was shrinking. As B.J. looked ahead, he imagined local farming might shift indoors to greenhouses, where the region's flower nurseries already flourished. His observation was prophetic. In recent years, low-cost foreign imports have devastated the flower industry, so much so that growers are now beginning to think about planting vegetables in greenhouses to extend the local growing season.

B.J., past president of the San Mateo County Farm Bureau and now a director and treasurer, sees other factors with impact on local agriculture. "In the last two years the cost of diesel, gas and fertilizer has gone way up," he says. "We have to look more carefully at local markets. The county has helped promote the special slogan, 'As Fresh As It Gets.' This can help small

growers, but large growers must still ship out of the area. They produce much more of a single product than could be consumed here on a daily basis."

As a farmer, B.J. concentrates on crops he can sell locally—pumpkins, yarrow and oat hay. Though he has used conventional farming methods for years, this season he is growing pumpkins without pesticides on his own land as well as on land leased from POST at Cloverdale Coastal Ranches, just across the fence from Blue House Farm. His pumpkins are sold to local stores and farm stands, with the balance distributed in the Bay Area. The oat hay is sold primarily to local horse owners. Only yarrow, a fresh flower, goes to regional wholesalers for national distribution.

B.J. would like to see more farmland saved, especially for food production. "To save agricultural land we've got to try farming in new ways. There is interest here in olives for olive oil, blueberries and special varieties of lemons," he says. "I don't want to see us become dependent on foreign imports for our food the way we are for oil. The growth of farmers' markets and organic producers suggests that people are taking more interest in where their food comes from." By adapting to changes in the marketplace, he says, local farms can have a new lease on life. ■





# *The Sprout Kings*

## OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

Local farmers Joe Muzzi, John Giusti and Dave Lea are among the biggest producers of Brussels sprouts in San Mateo County. Their family farms are all located on historic agricultural properties protected by POST.

Remarkably, 99 percent of the sprouts consumed in the United States come from California, primarily from San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties. Joe, John and Dave sell to local farmers' markets as well as large national grocery chains. Their sprouts, the largest crop in San Mateo County, end up at your neighborhood grocer or favorite corner bistro and as far away as dinner tables in Boston and New York.

*"We saw Brussels sprouts on the menu at Lulu's," said Dave, recalling a meal he once shared with John and Joe in San Francisco.*

*"We made a bet that if the sprouts came from one of our farms, the other two guys would pay for dinner. We gave the waiter twenty bucks to check the box in the kitchen. Sure enough," he laughs, "they were from John's farm, south of Half Moon Bay."*



# *Brussels Sprouts*

## THE RENAISSANCE CROP

Part of the *Cruciferae* family, Brussels sprouts are related to cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower. Known also as brassicas, they are rich in vitamins A and C, folic acid and fiber. While some people dislike their aromatic intensity, others savor their nutty sweetness, enjoying them boiled, steamed or roasted.

Brussels sprouts were cultivated in Europe as far back as the 14th century. During the late 1500s, they became popular in Belgium, hence the name. Thomas Jefferson is said to have introduced them to North America. They have been

harvested commercially in California since the early 1900s.

Sprouts prefer the cool fog, ocean breezes and well-drained soils of the coast. The edible buds grow below a broad canopy of large green leaves, maturing in clusters along the stalk from the bottom up. A single plant can produce 80 to 100 sprouts. At harvest time, workers chop the stalks down by hand with machetes. Lined up in windrows, the cut stalks are fed through a harvesting machine, which strips off the sprouts. The veggies are then cleaned, sorted and packed for distribution. ■





"Years ago people bought a lot more frozen Brussels sprouts. Today people are buying more fresh produce of all kinds, including 50 to 60 percent of the sprout crop," says Joe Muzzi.

## Joe Muzzi

### HISTORY IN HIS HANDS

Under the names Peninsula Farms and Bolsa Point Farms, Joe Muzzi and his sons John and Danny farm 558 acres near Pigeon Point Lighthouse.

Joe's family were tenant farmers on the coast for 50 years, growing crops that hadn't changed in 100 years. All that time, the Muzzis leased farmland without any assurance their place on the land was secure. But that changed in 2007. Using funds from its *Saving the Endangered Coast* campaign, POST bought both farms, then re-sold them to the Muzzis while retaining conservation easements on the land.

"Without POST and the easements, we would not have been able to afford to buy the land. It probably would have been developed,

and a lot of my family's history on the land would have been plowed under," says Joe.

Besides Brussels sprouts, the Muzzis also grow leeks, fava beans and English peas. They process the vegetables on their Bolsa Point Farms in a large white barn POST renovated in 2002 after a major storm ripped off part of the roof.

In spite of rising costs and other challenges, Joe is optimistic about coastal agriculture. "I think farmers will move toward growing more specialty crops and selling in local markets to make ends meet. I know the idea of buying local is gaining popularity, and I hope people in Silicon Valley will continue the trend by buying from local growers."





## John Giusti

### CREATING THE FAMILY FARM

John Giusti grew up on the coast and followed his father into farming. John grows Brussels sprouts five miles south of Half Moon Bay on 534-acre Purisima Farms, which he bought from POST in 2006 after leasing part of the land for six years. He also leases 121 acres of POST's Johnston Ranch in Half Moon Bay.

In 1992, Giusti's late father, Aldo, purchased POST's North Cowell property, where he grew sprouts, artichokes and English peas. Like Purisima Farms, the 597-acre North Cowell property, which is still owned by the Giustis, is protected by trail and conservation easements owned by POST as well as the California Coastal Conservancy.

Brussels sprouts make up about 75 percent of John's overall business.

"My kids don't eat them, but I like 'em," he says. Picky palates notwithstanding, John hopes one day his children, whom he and his wife, Maureen, are raising on the farm, will carry on the agricultural traditions of the Coastside, like their father and grandfather before them.

*John Giusti grows artichokes as well as Brussels sprouts.*

## Dave Lea

### A LIFE ON THE LAND

At Dave Lea's Cabrillo Farms, just across Highway 1 from the Half Moon Bay airport, Brussels sprout plants line a strip of fertile soil considered one of the most productive agricultural tracts in California. Wedged between the road and hillside, the strip is part of POST's 4,262-acre Rancho Corral de Tierra property.

Lea's family has worked this land since the late 1960s, when his father, Ed, moved the family from a farm near Pigeon Point. Three generations of Leas have farmed on the San Mateo Coast since the 1920s.

From his pickup truck, Dave can point to any spot on the 220 acres he leases from POST and tell you how



©Paolo Vescia/San Mateo Grown Project





*For Dave Lea and his father, Ed, there is nothing better than the thrill of working outside on a crisp, clear day surrounded by beautiful scenery.*

likely it is for sprouts to flourish. The harvest peaks from October to December, about the same time his pumpkins appear at local roadside stands and at farmers' markets in Palo Alto and Walnut Creek. He also grows artichokes, fava beans, peas and leeks. Each crop has multiple methods of distribution: buyers who come to the farm, as well as deliveries he makes to produce terminals, brokers, packers and restaurants.

Without his lease arrangement with POST, Dave says, it would be difficult for his family to continue to work the land. "There are a lot of factors working against us. Our produce has to be perfect or our customers and produce buyers will reject it. We have to cope with weather, pests and disease. And we're always competing with foreign imports. But being able to farm here means we can keep up the family business," he says.

Back at the processing barn, about a dozen workers sort the day's harvest. Tightly clustered green globes come tumbling down the conveyor belt like alien ping

pong balls. A bruise here or a brown patch there, and the offending veggie gets tossed into a box on the ground, destined for cattle feed. The ones that pass muster get sorted into two batches. Larger sprouts for local farmers' markets and grocery stores go into waxed boxes. Smaller sprouts get diverted onto a separate conveyor belt to be shipped to Watsonville. There they will be distributed to Green Giant and Birds Eye, two of the largest purveyors of frozen vegetables in the country.

Driving back towards Highway 1, Lea passes an old horse stable that has seen better days. "That's where my father lived as a boy. It wasn't a stable back then. It was a nice farm house, but that was a long time ago," he says, eyes fixed on the road. With crops to harvest, fields to irrigate, and shipments to distribute, there's not much time for nostalgia. Like his friends Joe Muzzi and John Giusti, he's too busy farming, and from the looks of it, he wouldn't have it any other way. ■



## Jan Garrod Joins POST Board

Jan Garrod, general manager of Garrod Farms and Cooper-Garrod Estate Vineyards in Saratoga and

Bird Flat Ranch in Lassen County, is following the family tradition by joining POST's Board of Directors.

Jan's father, Vince, was a member of the Board from 1983 until 2005, when he became an Advisory Council member. Like his father, Jan is highly involved in regional thinking about agriculture, serving currently as president of the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau, founder and water master for Mount Eden Mutual Water Company, member of the agricultural advisory board of the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and active with numerous equestrian and vintners associations.

"Jan brings an enormous measure of practical experience to our Board of Directors," says POST President Audrey Rust. "He lives with issues facing all Santa Clara County farmers, and as president of the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau, he is in touch with these issues in a more formal way. At home he has had to tailor his agricultural pursuits to fit the needs of the highly urbanized culture surrounding the family farm. It pleases me greatly to have another visionary thinker from the Garrod family on our Board."

Garrod Farms, which once produced prunes and apricots, now consists of 120 acres—a portion dedicated to horses and riding programs and a portion dedicated to wine grapes. The equestrian facilities house 200 horses, some boarded, others available as rentals for lessons or trail rides. Garrod Farms is also home to a world-class junior vaulting program. The ranch in Lassen County grows hay for the horses.

Under Jan's watch, the winery has developed into a major destination along the Santa Cruz Mountain wine road, producing chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc. Meanwhile Jan keeps an eye on the future to be prepared for whatever comes next. ■

# Tributes

APRIL 1 – JUNE 30, 2008

*Your honorary and memorial gifts to POST create a lasting tribute to friends and loved ones by helping to protect the beauty, character and diversity of the San Francisco Peninsula and Santa Cruz Mountain range.*

*If you would like to make a tribute gift, please call Kathleen Ward, Associate Major Gifts Officer, at (650) 854-7696.*

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## Landscapes

*Landscapes* is published quarterly  
by Peninsula Open Space Trust  
222 High Street  
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Telephone: (650) 854-7696  
Fax: (650) 854-7703  
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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 Nina Nowak  
Designed by DiVittorio & Associates  
Printed by TradeMark Graphics, Inc.

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# Leaving A Legacy:

## *How to Make a Planned Gift to POST*

Create a legacy of permanently protected lands by including POST in your estate plans.

### ■ Bequests

Help ensure the continued protection of open space by naming POST as a beneficiary of your will or trust. Your bequest can be a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or a specific asset such as real estate or securities. You also may name POST as a beneficiary of your IRA or life insurance policy.

### ■ Gifts of Real Estate

Real estate contributions are especially appropriate for people who have highly appreciated real estate that would trigger significant capital gains taxes if sold. Through a gift of a remainder interest in your home, you also can receive a significant income tax deduction at the time of the gift and continue living in your home during your lifetime.

### ■ Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRTs)

By establishing a CRT, you can support POST's future work while receiving a tax deduction and income for life. If you have appreciated assets such as real estate or stocks, CRTs are an excellent option because you can avoid incurring capital gains taxes. The trust provides you or your designees with income for life or for a term of years. At the end of the term, the trust dissolves and the remaining balance goes to POST.

To learn more about making a planned gift to POST, please contact Director of Planned Giving Adelaide Roberts at [aroberts@openspacetrust.org](mailto:aroberts@openspacetrust.org) or (650) 854-7696. ■



# *Join us for a seaside* **Walk & Talk**

*POST's Skyline Society Committee  
invites you to celebrate fall with  
a coastal outing at Wavecrest  
in Half Moon Bay!*

*Bring your own picnic, and enjoy bird-watching,  
hiking or relaxing to the sound of waves.*

*New friends welcome.*

*October 4, 2008     12 to 3 p.m.*

*Email POST at [wavecrest@openspacetrust.org](mailto:wavecrest@openspacetrust.org)  
or call us at (650) 854-7696 to make reservations.*

*Directions provided when you reserve your space.*

*Dogs welcome.*

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**FALL 2008**

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