

# LANDSCAPES

PENINSULA OPEN SPACE TRUST



## Key Coastal Property Donated to POST

*A few miles north* of Half Moon Bay, a large, 482-acre property forms the scenic backdrop to the Coastside communities of El Granada and Miramar. This land, marked by grassy hillsides, coastal ridges and a massive eucalyptus forest, affords sweeping views of the coast. Its strategic location provides a rare opportunity to link other protected lands and create an extraordinary trail connection from the ocean shore to the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains.





Photo: Robert Buellman

“You think you’re in a different world. You’re in the country. There’s lots of fresh air. You see the deer and bobcat running around ... the rabbits, the quail. You get back to nature.”

MIKE O’NEILL

## WICKLOW: POST Receives

This is Wicklow. Donated to POST by Mike and Margaret O’Neill and their children, it represents one of the largest and most significant land gifts ever made in San Mateo County.

### “A Different World”

Wicklow, recently appraised at \$3.6 million, could have been developed into a number of luxury homes. Instead, due to the generosity and foresight of the O’Neill family, it will be permanently preserved as open space. Of the property’s 482 acres, the family donated 462 acres to POST and retained a 20-acre parcel that includes the home where the senior O’Neills reside.

“We’re delighted to receive this gift and ensure that this beautiful property will be permanently protected as open space,” said Audrey Rust, POST president. “At a time when there is a lot of

retrenching taking place, it’s nice to see someone step forward and make a significant gift to the community. All of us find it very inspiring.”

Mike O’Neill has been in the construction business in San Francisco for 40 years. His company owns and manages apartment units.

“California is getting too crowded. There’s no place to move,” he says. “When you come down here from San Francisco, you think you’re in a different world. You’re in the country. There’s lots of fresh air. You see the deer and bobcat running around ... the rabbits, the quail. You get back to nature.”

“The reason I’m doing this is that I don’t want to see anyone building anything out here. When I go out in the morning or nighttime and walk around, I like what I see, and I’d like to keep it that way. I want to see it left just as it is. I know POST will do the right thing. They’ll keep it as open space.”



## Lifelong Love of the Land

O'Neill bought the property in 1994 and named it Wicklow after the county in Ireland where he grew up. He was raised in a small town about 35 miles south of Dublin where his family owned five farms totaling 450 acres. The O'Neills were the leading potato farmers in their part of the country. They also grew wheat, barley, oats and sugar beets, and grazed 160 head of cattle and 500 sheep.

Mike was the second-oldest of 13 children. He showed an early interest in working the land and won the county plowing championship when he was 12 years old. He went into the family business and quickly gained a reputation as one of the most productive farmers in Ireland.

In 1949, wanting to strike out on his own, he left his homeland and moved to

Canada where he met his wife, Margaret. He spent 11 years in Canada as an iron and steelworker, and another three years building homes in Spokane, Washington, before moving to San Francisco in 1962. He started building apartment houses and has owned and managed rental units in the city ever since.

Today, at 80, O'Neill still leaves for work at 5 a.m. and personally does all the maintenance on his apartments. Margaret keeps the books.

"They call it work. To me it's pleasure," Mike says. "I look at life as give-and-take. The most important thing is to know where to give and where to take. I'm not interested in making a mint on this property. I'm interested in making sure it's left as it is. That's what I'm after."

## Donation of Beautiful Coastal Land



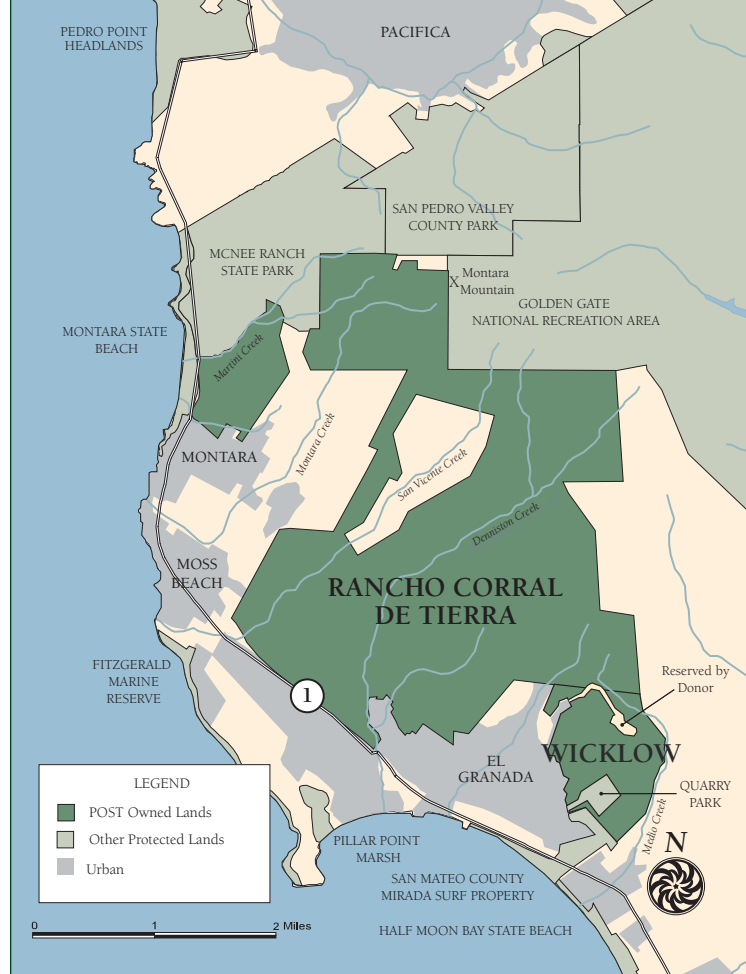
Photo: Robert Buelteman

## The Property

Wicklow has a rich and diverse history. The bowl-shaped parcel was used for cattle grazing in the early 1800s and later became the Blue Gum Ranch, the first settlement in the area. When renowned architect Daniel H. Burnham designed the town of El Granada in the early 1900s, this land was designated as a 500-acre park and planted with groves of blue gum eucalyptus.

Today, eucalyptus trees cover more than half of the property. Abundant wildlife, including deer, fox, bobcat, raptors and a variety of other birds, lives here. The rest of the land consists primarily of grassland and coastal scrub, including the rare and endemic Montara Mountain blue bush lupine.

The upper reaches of Wicklow provide excellent views of Montara Mountain to the north, Half Moon Bay and the coastal bluffs to the south, Pillar Point and the harbor to the west, and Scarper Peak to the east. The protection of this property will preserve this view shed and the highly visible, scenic greenbelt behind El Granada and Miramar. ■



# Connecting Protected Lands

**WICKLOW** provides exceptional recreational opportunities. Fire and logging roads, which will be open to the public once the land is transferred to a public agency, afford excellent access to the higher elevations above El Granada. The most significant recreational potential of the property, however, lies in providing an important link to other open lands.

The property is bordered by three other protected parcels: Rancho Corral de Tierra, a 4,262-acre property acquired by POST for inclusion in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), lies to the north and east; Quarry Park, a 40-acre community park owned by San Mateo County and maintained by Midcoast Park Lands (a local non-profit organization that introduced POST to Mr. O'Neill) borders Wicklow to the southwest; and Mirada Surf, a 40-acre parcel being purchased by the County for park use, is directly south, immediately adjacent to the Half Moon Bay state beaches.

When POST transfers the property to public ownership, a continuous network of county, state and (ultimately) GGNRA lands will create a spectacular trail connection stretching from the peak of Montara Mountain all the way down to the coast.

Thanks to the O'Neill family, you will be able to hike from the beach at Mirada Surf up through the eucalyptus forest of Wicklow through Rancho Corral de Tierra to Montara Mountain. You'll then have the opportunity to trek down through the complex of state and county parks that lead to Pacifica or over to the trail that will be formed along Highway 1 after the Devil's Slide tunnel is complete.

It's remarkable to think that these properties, along with the San Francisco Watershed lands, will form a contiguous, 29-square-mile corridor of open lands just seven miles south of the San Francisco boundary line!







# A Lasting Legacy: Major Land Gifts to POST

The O'Neill family's donation of Wicklow is one of several important land gifts POST has received over the years from property owners committed to permanently protecting their land as open space and eliminating the threat of future development.

The O'Neill's 462 acres ranks as the fourth-largest gift to POST. In 1993, we received almost 1,200 acres west of Skyline Boulevard from an anonymous donor. Two years later, 564 acres near Half Moon Bay were donated to POST by Mimi Levitt of New York City.

Here's a look back at the largest land gifts in our history:

**1981: Windy Hill** POST obtained this signature 537-acre property — the scenic backdrop to Portola Valley, visible throughout the Peninsula — in a donation from Ryland Kelley and Corte Madera



Photo: Paolo Vecchia

Mike and Margaret O'Neill  
donated Wicklow

Associates. We then sold the property to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, thereby creating the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve. The \$1.5 million purchase price was used to create our land acquisition fund. Eighteen years later POST purchased a 204-acre inholding in the preserve from Corte Madera Associates, preventing the potential development of 20 luxury housing units in the middle of Windy Hill. All but 30 acres of the land has since been transferred to the District.

"It was fortuitous timing," said Kelley, reflecting back on the 1981 gift. "From our standpoint, it came together as the logical conclusion for a property that had been held for almost 20 years. We had a plan at one time to develop it, but tuck the development out of view under the trees. Ultimately, the diverse attitudes of all the people in our partnership came together on the idea of making the gift to POST.

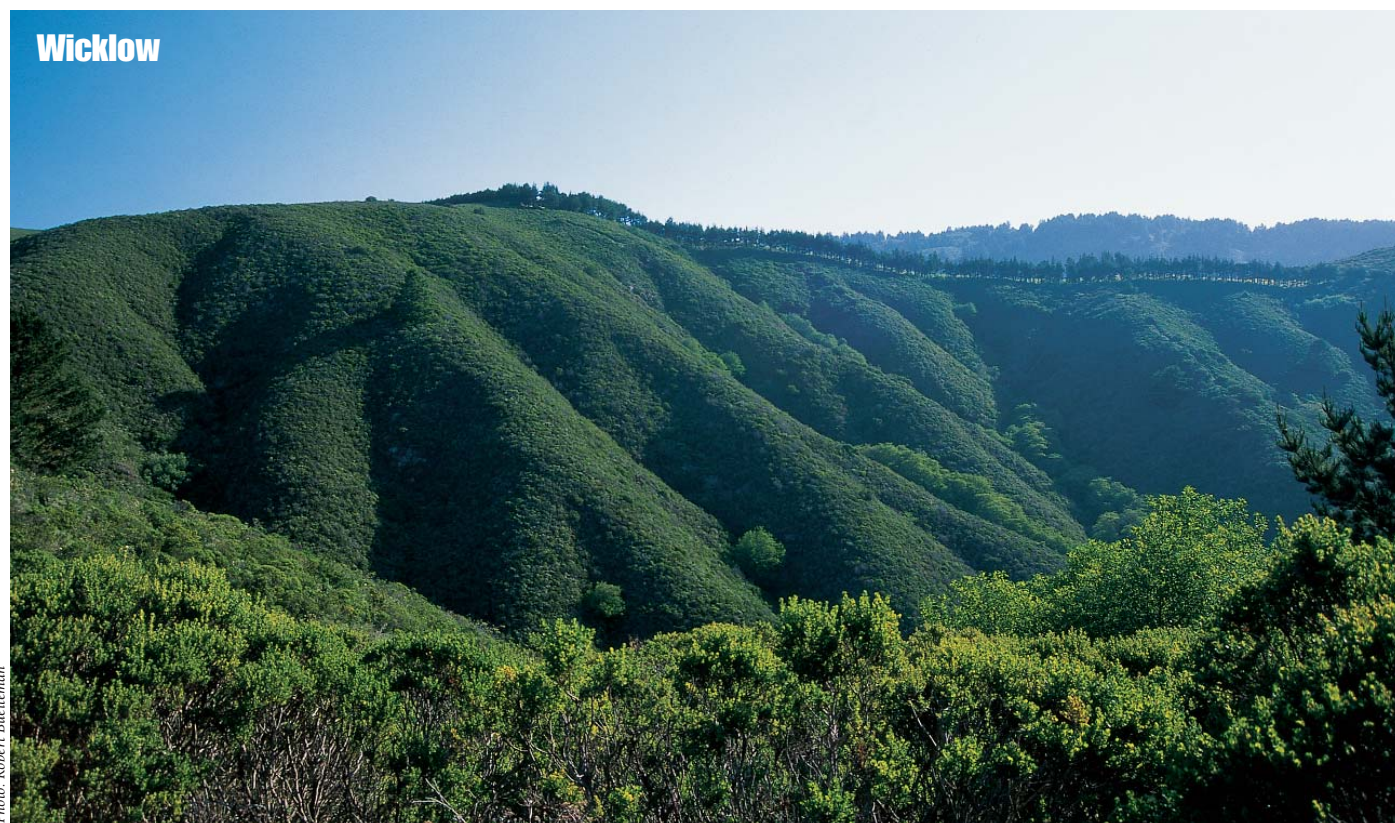


Photo: Robert Buckleman



## Windy Hill

Photo: Dan Quinn



"The key thing for POST was that Windy Hill had such high visibility. This very prominent, very visual property was being preserved. We were pleased to have our project be initiating for the POST movement. They were able to sell our property to the District and use the money to purchase other open space. In a sense, it propelled the program forward."

**1993: Tunitas Creek and Bald Knob** An anonymous donor gave POST two parcels of rolling hills, redwoods and ranchland in San Mateo County totaling nearly 1,200 acres — the 480-acre Bald Knob property adjacent to the Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve west of Skyline Boulevard, and the 704-acre Tunitas Creek Ranch above Woodside. Both properties offer fantastic views of the coast and hillsides, extensive hiking trails and prime wildlife habitat.

Bald Knob has since been transferred to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and added to the Purisima Creek Preserve. In the future, we also plan to transfer Tunitas Creek to a public agency.



Photo: Paolo Vescia

Ryland Kelley donated Windy Hill

**1995: Madonna Creek Ranch** POST received a gift of 564 acres of coastal land (now known as Madonna Creek Ranch) near Half Moon Bay from Mrs. Mimi Levitt of New York City. This donation inspired our efforts to acquire three nearby properties — Mills Creek Canyon, Miramontes Ridge and Johnston Ranch — to restore the Pilarcitos watershed, protect critical riparian corridor and provide linkage to Burleigh-Murray State Park.

"Giving away this land isn't a loss for us, but a gain for everyone," Mrs. Levitt said in making her gift. "I do believe that beautiful land should be preserved. I don't believe that every inch needs to be inhabited by humans. It's nice to see some nature, some open land."

"Nature is very restoring. Just to see it does something to your soul, your spirit. It gives you piece of mind. There is something very spiritual you can get out of looking at a beautiful mountain or trees, seeing a beautiful sky or a beautiful sunset. It is uplifting." ■



# ARASTRADERO PRES

## POST helps Palo Alto protect the scenic gateway to an open space preserve

POST has stepped in to help the city of Palo Alto protect a small island of land in the middle of the Arastradero Preserve from luxury estate development. In October, POST successfully bid to purchase the 13-acre property in U.S. Bankruptcy Court for \$3.56 million. The asking price for the land was \$5 million, and another bid was on the table.

A two-story building of more than 20,236 square feet — about the same floor area as a Best Buy electronics store — could have been built on the property, which provides the scenic gateway to the preserve. The land is located in the Palo Alto foothills between Page Mill Road and Alpine Road, and fronts scenic Arastradero Road for about one-third of a mile. The surrounding preserve is owned by the city of Palo Alto. A private residence and riding stables originally located on the property were destroyed in a fire 17 years ago.

The city has been interested in buying the land since 1991, but has lacked the necessary resources to do so. POST protected the property to ensure that the city and its residents would have time to raise money to buy the land. The city expects to purchase it from POST within three years. At that point, POST's investment will be returned to its revolving land fund. ■



Photo: Robert Buelteman



# ERVE

## ARASTRADERO PRESERVE INHOLDING 13 ACRES

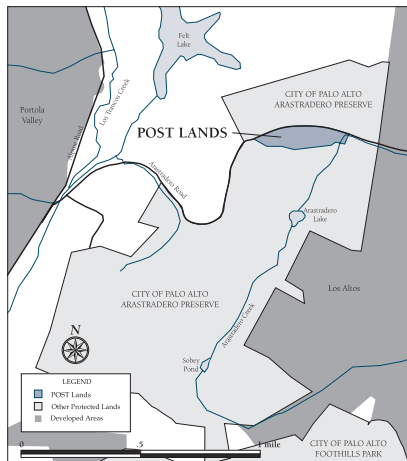
The Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) purchased this 13-acre property at a public auction on Oct. 10, 2002 for \$3.56 million. POST acted to help the City of Palo Alto save this island of land in the middle of the 609-acre Arastradero Preserve from luxury residential development. The city had been attempting to buy the property since 1991, but failed because of the excessive cost during that time.

### This purchase will...

- give the city an opportunity to enhance an important recreation area
- protect the scenic entrance to the preserve
- safeguard oak woodlands and rolling grasslands that provide habitat for a host of native wildlife, including deer, bobcat, coyotes, and many varieties of birds
- remove debris and restore native vegetation

### Future Plans

POST's purchase of the Arastradero property will allow three years for the City of Palo Alto and its residents to raise money to buy the land. In the meantime, POST has erected fences to prevent illegal dumping and will work with the city's Community Services Department to monitor the land.



### FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

## Peninsula Open Space Trust

*Permanently protecting the beauty, character and diversity of the San Francisco Peninsula landscape.*

(650) 854-7696 [www.openspacetrust.org](http://www.openspacetrust.org)

## CONSERVATION *in action*

**DURING THE PAST YEAR,** POST conceived of "Conservation in Action" signs to inform the public about our work to preserve land, our long term plans, and ongoing restoration activities on our properties. We post these signs on POST lands near parks, trails and roads that are highly visible to the public. In addition to the "Conservation in Action" signs now posted at the Arastradero Preserve, you'll find signs at Rancho Corral de Tierra in Montara, on POST property adjacent to the Pigeon Point lighthouse, and at the Cloverdale Coastal Ranch in Pescadero.



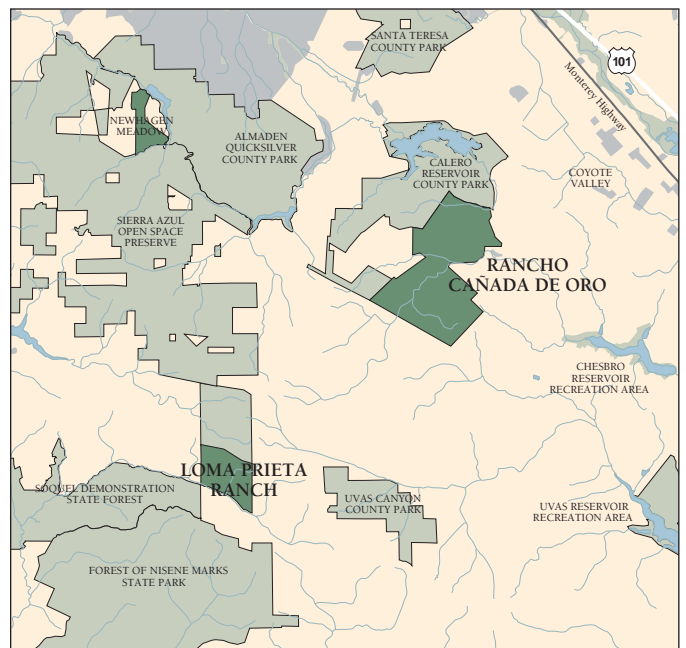
# Loma Prieta POST transfers 493 acres to MROSD

Loma Prieta Ranch, an important link in connecting a network of trails from the hills of Los Gatos to the Pacific Ocean, has been transferred from POST to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD). POST purchased the property from Charles “Chop” Keenan for \$1 million in December 1999. At the time, the district focused on the purchase of the adjacent 827-acre CHY property for \$3 million.

Under the original purchase agreement, POST agreed to hold title to Loma Prieta Ranch, which would be managed by the District, until public funds were available. On December 31, 2002, MROSD paid POST \$1 million to effect the transfer.

The property links the Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve to the northwest, and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park and Soquel Demonstration Forest

to the southwest, and will enable a future trail connection between the Bay Area Ridge Trail and the California Coastal Trail. Located on the western slope of Mt. Loma Prieta in Santa Cruz County, the 493-acre parcel features 40 acres of chaparral and 50 acres of redwoods that flourish alongside Soquel Creek. The property provides habitat for a variety of wildlife, including mountain lion, bobcat, deer and coyote, and is an important spawning habitat for steelhead trout. ■



## Rancho Cañada POST Completes Transfer

Thanks to your support and POST's partnership with three public agencies, Rancho Cañada del Oro, a spectacular 2,428-acre ranch located less than a half hour from downtown San Jose, has been permanently preserved as a county park and open space preserve. This beautiful property features grassy meadows, rolling hills and canyons surrounded by oak-covered ridges. The hilltops offer sweeping views of the Diablo Range to the east and Mt. Hamilton and Mt. Umhunhum to the south. Home to a broad array of wildlife, including bobcat, mountain lion, California newt and acorn woodpecker, this land provides habitat for the threatened California red-legged frog and Bay checkerspot butterfly.

Appraised for more than \$12 million, Rancho Cañada del Oro had been optioned to a developer for \$8 million. In November 1999, POST was able to acquire the property for \$6.2 million due to our successful relationship with the landowners, the

Crummer family, who had previously sold POST the 5,638-acre Cloverdale Coastal Ranch. POST contributed \$3.1 million to the purchase price, using a combination of individual donations and a partnership grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. The balance was provided by the city of San Jose, Santa Clara County Parks and the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority.

At the beginning of this year, POST transferred the property to county parks and the open space authority. In the near future, our expectation is that half the property will be opened to the public as part of the Calero Reservoir Recreation Area and half will be maintained by the county's open space authority as an outstanding nature preserve. ■







# Rancho Corral de Tierra Update

The bill to extend the boundary of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) to include Rancho Corral de Tierra had been approved by both the House of Representatives and Senate and was ready for final passage. But at the end of the session last year, when Congress took up the Patriot Act, our bill, like hundreds of others, was put on the back burner.

Now, as a result of the November elections, the chairmanship and membership of the House Committee on Natural Resources have changed. We now must bring our case before a new group of representatives. In the Senate, Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein remain our key contacts on the legislation.

In 2003, we need to move the boundary extension bill through Congress again, and we also need

to begin to move a federal appropriations bill through at the same time.

POST is seeking \$15 million from the federal government's Land and Water Conservation Fund over three years to match state funding and thousands of individual contributions.

So it's going to be a year of intensive focus on Washington. Our board of directors has formed a subcommittee consisting of Bob Kirkwood, Susan Ford, Dianne McKenna, Ward Paine and Anne Westerfield to work on this. We need to generate letters of support and create some momentum for our bill.

Where we need the most help is on the House side. We plan to do intensive networking to find people throughout California and the nation who know the chairman (Rep. Richard Pombo of Tracy) or other committee members and can help influence this process along with us. The House committee list is posted on our Web site.

On the Senate side, Dianne Feinstein serves on the appropriations committee. It is critical that she know that people here think this is an important appropriation. ■

January 2003

Peninsula Open Space Trust  
3000 Sand Hill Road, 4-135  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear POST,

Please pass on my message of strong support to our U.S. Congress for the expansion of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) to include Rancho Corral de Tierra. Additionally, I urge Congress to introduce and pass legislation appropriating \$15 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for this land's permanent protection.

Sharing over three miles of boundary with the GGNRA, inclusion of this property in the park would create a dramatic and logical southern entrance. It would protect unique coastal scrub and chaparral habitat that supports numerous threatened, rare and endangered plant and animal species. Additionally, it would provide an opportunity to create a network of trails with adjacent public lands. I heartily endorse Congressional action and financial support for the permanent protection of Rancho Corral de Tierra as part of our Golden Gate National Recreation Area. This will be of great benefit to local citizens and visitors now and forever.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

*We need your help!*  
*Please send us your letter*  
*supporting the protection of*  
*Rancho Corral de Tierra. We*  
*will forward your letter to*  
*the House and Senate.*  
*Thank you!*







# Djerassi Art Tours

The Djerassi Resident Artists Program, a well-known artist-in-residence program located on Bear Gulch Road off Skyline Boulevard in Woodside, has announced its schedule of public hikes. The hikes provide the public with an opportunity to view this beautiful land, along with installations by the many artists who have drawn inspiration from its natural beauty.



## ■ Two Mile Tour dates:

Wednesday, April 9  
Friday, May 2  
Saturday, May 17  
Wednesday, June 4  
Friday, June 13  
Sunday, July 13  
Wednesday, July 23  
Friday, August 1  
Sunday, August 24  
Wednesday, September 3  
Friday, September 19  
Saturday, October 11

## ■ Director's Tour dates:

Saturday, April 19  
Sunday, May 18  
Sunday, June 14  
Sunday, July 20  
Saturday, August 16  
Sunday, September 14

Twelve free, docent-led **Two Mile Tours** of the program's grounds and sculpture collection are being conducted as part of the conservation easement POST purchased in 1999. The conservation easement ensures the permanent protection of the 580-acre property, which contains dense redwood forest, as well as spectacular views of rolling landscape from Skyline Ridge to the Pacific Ocean.

The program also offers six **Director's Tours**, which cost \$40 per person. These half-day tours are conducted by Djerassi program director Dennis O'Leary. Plan to bring a bag lunch for the midday picnic break.

Registration for tours in the spring and early summer opens March 20. Registration for tours planned in the late summer and fall begins July 1. Be warned: these popular hikes book up quickly.

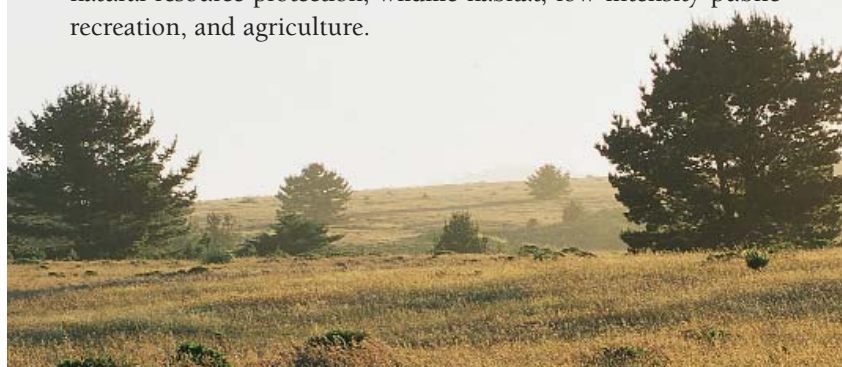
**For reservations and information, contact the Djerassi Artist's Program at (650) 747-1250.**



## 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



## SAVING THE ENDANGERED COAST

### CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Our heartfelt thanks go to Mike and Margaret O'Neill for their wonderful gift of the Wicklow property (see cover story).

Their donation of 462 acres of rolling open lands and forests is the latest land gift POST has received. Some of the Peninsula's most beautiful and well-loved open lands have come to POST as gifts from land owners. In fact, over the past 26 years we have received 42 gifts of land and conservation easements, from small parcels of less than an acre to larger properties like Windy Hill and Wicklow. This issue of *Landscapes* tells about three of these gifts along with the Wicklow property.

As we work to protect \$200 million worth of coastal prairie, bluffs, meadows, beaches and forests through our campaign *Saving the Endangered Coast*, land owners' donations of property and conservation easements will play an essential role in reaching this goal.

We still have a lot of work to do to safeguard our extraordinary coastal landscape, and there are many ways you can participate in the campaign with gifts of cash, stock or real estate.

To learn more about *Saving the Endangered Coast* and how you can contribute, please call Kathryn Morelli, Vice President, at (650) 854-7696. ■



## Landscapes

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*Make no little plans;  
they have no magic to stir men's blood.*

DANIEL H. BURNHAM  
*El Granada City Planner & Architect*

Cover Photos: Wicklow Property (Robert Buelteman)



**LANDSCAPES**  
**SPRING 2003**

**Peninsula Open Space Trust**  
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San Francisco Peninsula*

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