Preserving the California Coast

Landscapes

PENINSULA OPEN SPACE TRUST & SPRING 1998

POST saves two strategically located and stunningly beautiful coastal properties

THE COAST

Among the Peninsula's greatest natural gifts — and the country's national

treasures — are the beauty, grandeur, and hypnotic wonder of the San Mateo Coast. This is why protecting the San Mateo Coast is one of our highest priorities. Thanks to you, POST is making it happen.

Just two months after announcing a land-saving agreement that will protect the magnificent lands surrounding the Djerrassi Resident Artists Program, POST

has reached agreements to purchase two prime coastal properties totaling 1,181 acres. The combined purchase price for the properties is \$6,542,500. We will continue our efforts to raise the funds needed to complete these projects as part of *Completing the Vision: The Campaign to Save Essential Open Space.*

The two properties, known as the Johnston Ranch (647 acres) and Purisima Farms (534 acres), contain fertile agricultural land which produces significant quantities of artichokes, brussel sprouts, and other row crops. Both properties contain important wildlife habitat which supports a diverse community of local animal and plant life, including the endangered red-legged frog and possibly the San Francisco garter snake. Arroyo Leon, which is fed by the watershed that contains the By André La Fleur

Johnston Ranch, provides habitat and spawning grounds for steelhead trout.

Both properties afford scenic vistas accentuated by rolling hills, beautiful beaches and coastal bluffs which are typical of the rural San Mateo Coast. The most significant aspect of these acquisitions, however, is the creation of strategic links to existing open spaces and preservation of the rural character of the Coast. They also offer excellent opportunities to expand the area's existing trail systems and parks.

Photo : Dewitt Jones



"This is an exciting achievement! Preserving the California Coast has always been one of our greatest priorities," said Bill Reller, POST's Board President. "These acquisitions will help to safeguard coastal agriculture as well as the beautiful views along Highway 1."

THE VISION

Preserving the open space character of the San Mateo Coast will have the

long-term effect of giving this area an entirely different development pattern than exists on the Bay side; along San Francisco Bay one can't tell where one city begins and another one ends. Instead of an unbroken band of urban development, one can envision distinct coastal communities separated by a beautiful, productive greenbelt. Acquisition of these properties makes it possible to keep valuable agricultural land in production, providing an economic return while preserving the special character that farming brings to the landscape. It also supports the continuation of a unique way of life that has existed and remained relatively unchanged for over a century.

The need to protect these properties is critical because both are threatened by subdivision for luxury housing and commercial development. If these coastal properties were developed, the scenic views, farmland, and pastoral hills that are such an important part of what makes the Peninsula such a special place would be lost forever.



The Johnston Ranch

In an area that is becoming increasingly congested, protecting the Johnston Ranch creates a firm urbanrural boundary on the eastward city limits of Half Moon Bay. It also preserves a large coastal farm and offers an opportunity to create trail connections and a park that could extend from Skyline Ridge to Half Moon Bay. The Ranch is a broad open bowl where Arroyo Leon, a lush riparian corridor, cuts diagonally across the property, displaying willows and other creekside vegetation. To the East, the flats and hills gradually steepen into grass covered ridges. To the West, productive farmland stretches all the way to Highway 1, providing scenic enjoyment for all who pass by. Views from the upper portion of the property take in the entire coastal area.

One of the unique features of the Johnston Ranch is the widely recognized and historic Johnston House, a large white New England "salt box" built by one of the prominent pioneer families in 1855, a time when grizzly bears still roamed the Coast. The structure, according to San Mateo County historians, was once a warm home from which the social axis of Half Moon Bay revolved. The house sits on a 20-acre parcel owned by

> the City of Half Moon Bay located in the lower portion of the Ranch. The restoration, management, and project planning for the Johnston House is administered by the Johnston House Foundation. If you would like to arrange a tour of the Johnston House, call (650) 726-4162.

Purisima Farms

Just three miles further south on Highway 1, Purisima Farms strategically fills the gap between North Cowell Ranch and South Cowell Ranch, which POST acquired for protection as open space in 1987 (see map). The addi-



tion of Purisima Farms creates a band more than four miles long of permanently protected coastal bluffs, offering beautiful views up and down the Coast and the potential for increased coastal access. One hundred feet below the property's cliffs are two sandy beaches with 4,400 feet of ocean frontage. Purisima Creek, which runs along the northern boundary of the property, ends in a seasonal waterfall that tumbles into the ocean - a rare phenomenon in California. Public access to the beaches and waterfall are part of the future plans for the property. With excellent water rights and two reservoirs, this property is one of the best row crop vegetable farms in San Mateo County. The rich farmland stretches from Purisima Creek Road and Verde Road past Highway 1 to the coastal bluffs. At one time this land was home to one of the largest artichoke and brussel sprout operations in the country; these crops continue to be grown on the land today.

THE FUTURE

Long-term plans for the properties are similar to those POST

has implemented on the 1,300-acre Cowell Ranch where both field agriculture and recreational uses co-exist. These important activities were preserved through the sale and transfer of the Cowell Ranch to public agencies and to private landowners subject to conservation easements. For the immediate future, POST plans to continue to lease portions of these properties to the current agricultural tenants while it works with various public agencies to find an appropriate owner for the beaches, potential parkland, and hiking trails.

The Campaign

These landmark acquisitions are the seventh and eighth targeted properties to be given permanent protection through POST's land acquisition campaign, *Completing the Vision: The Campaign to Save Essential Open Space.* This brings the total to nearly 10,000 acres that have been purchased, optioned, or donated as part of this historic, three-year, \$28.5 million initiative to protect the Peninsula's essential open spaces.

The Trust exists because of people like you. During POST's 21-year-history, citizens of the Peninsula have come together to form one of the most effective land trusts in the nation. Together we have protected more than 36,000 acres of open space.

THANK YOU "POST's knowledge of the real estate market, understanding of the needs of the landowners, and our ability to act quickly and confidentially were key to the success of these acquisitions, but it is the generous support from our donors that allowed us to negotiate agreements for these very important properties," said Audrey Rust, POST's Executive Director. "The preservation of these beautiful coastal lands is a testament to the commitment and vision of the people who have participated in POST's campaign. We will continue to need their help as we seek to complete these projects in the next few years."

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and the Peninsula Open Space Trust: *Differences and Similarities*

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) and the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) have enjoyed a successful twenty-one year partnership that's resulted in thousands of acres of protected open space. While our names and work are similar, there are important differences between the two organizations that are interesting to note.

A Shared History

The MROSD was created in 1972 by voters in northern Santa Clara County. A few years later voters in the southern part of San Mateo County elected to join the District. It owns and operates open space preserves totaling over 42,000 acres in both counties, mostly along the Skyline Corridor and in the Mt. Umunhum

area, south of Lexington Reservoir. Although originally the MROSD spent most of its tax-generated income on land acquisition, today most of these revenues are used for operations and maintenance. As a public agency, MROSD has the right of eminent domain.

The Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) was formed in 1977 by a group of local citizens as a private alternative to the MROSD. POST operates in a broader geographic area than the District, including all of San a completely confidential fashion when working with private landowners. POST only buys land from willing sellers. POST is also fortunate to have received donations of land and protective conservation easements from conservation-minded landowners. Through partnerships and private action, we have helped to protect more than 36,000 acres of open space.

POST has collaborated on many successful projects with the MROSD (Windy Hill is an often cited example). However, we also work with the National Park Service, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, California State Parks, and over fifteen other groups and agencies. While not all of our work is with a government agency, when we do work in that context our role has been to work in confidential discussions with landowners to arrive at a

negotiated agreement which

best fits the needs of both

the landowner and POST.

Once we have reached such

an agreement, POST must

put together the funding so

The MROSD operates

more than fifty-two parks

and preserves that provide

more than one million visi-

tors each year the opportu-

recreation, challenging hik-

ing or restful walking, and

much-needed solitude.

nity to enjoy exhilarating

that the land can become part of our public parks

and preserves.



Mateo County to the Coast, Santa Clara and a portion of Santa Cruz County. POST relies completely on voluntary contributions.

As a private organization, POST can and does act in

Together, the MROSD and POST are working to ensure that the Peninsula's rapidly disappearing open space is protected, and that all of us have the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of our labor. Located off Highway 101 in Redwood City, Bair Island's living marshes and sloughs provide critical habitat for more than 200 species of birds, fish, and wildlife—five of which are endangered or threatened. This thriving tidal marsh, which rises and falls with the tides and reflects the sky and nearby mountains, will be a permanent testament to your commitment to the land and the future.

FARMLAND as open space

Purisima Farms and the Johnston Ranch join Cloverdale Coastal Ranch, North and South Cowell Ranches, Levitt, Michelson Ranch, Campinotti-Pescadero and Walter Bridge's Ranch as properties protected by POST which contain a significant amount of productive farmland. Local agriculture not only provides open space and an economic return, but also the continuation of a unique way of life and added diversity to the landscape.

In addition to providing food, jobs, and open space, agriculture plays an important role in creating and preserving land-saving opportunities. Without agriculture, many POST projects would not have been possible because the land would have been subdivided long ago and swallowed up by neighboring cities and sprawling suburbs.

Each year POST evaluates many land-saving opportunities. An essential part of this process is to create an inventory of the characteristics and conservation values that each property has to offer. Among the characteristics and conservation values that POST seeks to preserve are wildlife habitat and biological diversity, productive agricultural land, scenic and aesthetic value, watersheds and riparian corridors, public access and recreational opportunities, potential park connections, urban-rural boundaries, and natural resources. While Purisima Farms and the Johnston Ranch are primarily coastal farms, they support the preservation of all of these values.

While we have seen many farms broken up to create subdivisions, subdivisions are never reassembled to create farms. With your support and encouragement POST is saving another irreplaceable resource.

Thank you for helping to save our local farmland.





BAIR ISLAND UPDATE

Due to the generosity of 3,815 POST donors,

the permanent protection of Bair Island is fast becoming a reality. To date, \$4,283,666, or 86% of the \$5 million in private funding required to purchase and protect this vital wetland has been raised.

We are confident that once we have met our \$5 million commitment, the remaining \$10 million required to complete the purchase will be forthcoming from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. POST has already secured approval of \$2 million for the purchase from the fiscal year 1998 federal budget.

Your letters and donations in support of protecting this vital wetland have been truly inspirational and

will continue to play an important role in POST's efforts to secure the full federal funding needed to save Bair Island.

Your continued support is critical. Peninsula residents will never have a better opportunity to protect local wetlands, the Bay, wildlife habitat, and essential open space. The time and the opportunity is now – with your continued financial support, Bair Island will be permanently protected!

If you would like information about guided birdwatching tours of Bair Island, please contact Janet Curtis at POST (650) 854-7696.

COMPLETING THE VISION: *The Campaign to Save Essential Open Space*



By mid-April, POST received \$23.8 million in pledges and gifts. This is 84% of our \$28.5 million goal.



4096 donors have contributed to this total.





Eight properties, totaling 9,979 acres, are under option or have been purchased as part of the Campaign, including two conservation easements.

66 In our cities great and small, it is apparent that we must take action to save woods and streams, meadows and ponds, unviolated seashore and salt marsh, green hills and vistas. In other words, these parcels of wild lands where nature holds sway will be irreplaceable anchors in a surrounding sea of man-made objects.

The essential ingredient in the preservation of open space must be a heightened sense of stewardship on the part of those of us who own the land, and those of us who use the land. **??**

> Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior under John F. Kennedy



Photos pages 10 and 11: John Brennan

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Planned Gifts

In order to ensure that the land you are helping to protect today will be safeguarded for the future, POST invites you to make a planned gift in support of the longGeneral Counsel Associates Gilmore Envelope Corporation LMA Film & Video Mid-Peninsula Bank Network Associates Oak Creek Apartments Robyn Color Lab, Inc. Sand Hill Advisors, Inc. Sobrato Development Companies *The Mercury News*

term stewardship and management of protected lands.

If you would like information about how you can include POST in your will, please contact André La Fleur at (650) 854-7696 ext. 22.



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 Telephone:
 (650) 854-7696

 Fax:
 (650) 854-7703

 Website:
 www.openspacetrust.org

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Purisima Creek waterfall. Photo: John Wade

Peninsula Open Space Trust 3000 Sand Hill Road, Bldg. 4, Suite 135

Menlo Park, CA 94025

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A land conservancy for the San Francisco Peninsula

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