



## POST Acquires San Gregorio Farms



Less than a quarter-mile from the junction of Highways 1 and 84 on the San Mateo coast lie 267 acres of grassy meadows, agricultural fields and rolling hills. The higher reaches of the property afford spectacular views of the coast and neighboring hillsides. San Gregorio Creek meanders through the lowland areas, creating rich wildlife habitat that is home to many threatened and endangered species. These lands, used in recent years for hay production, also once hosted organic farming and an unusual “worm farm” operation.

This is San Gregorio Farms. Surrounded by protected lands to the north, west and south, it represents a key piece of the puzzle in POST’s efforts to preserve the rural character of the San Mateo Coast.



**Originally,** POST believed there was little risk that this property would be pursued for development. However, after the death of a senior member of the family that owned the land, the remaining family members decided to sell the property. With five existing parcels and the possibility for further subdivision, it could have been developed into at least five home sites.



*San Gregorio Farms represents a key piece of the puzzle in POST's efforts to preserve the rural character of the San Mateo Coast.*

During the last few years, three public agencies—the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the California Coastal Conservancy—became interested in protecting San Gregorio Farms. Several months ago, the Coastal Conservancy approached POST and asked us to consider acquiring it.

After POST Conservation Project Manager Keryn O'Donnell evaluated the property and researched its resource value, we realized how important it was as wildlife habitat, how it could provide linkage to other protected lands, and how detrimental development would be.

POST purchased the property for \$3.95 million. It is the fifth acquisition in our *Saving the Endangered Coast* campaign, following Whaler's Cove at Pigeon Point, Bolsa Point Ranches, the Johnston Ranch Addition and Rancho Corral de Tierra.

## Protecting a Rich Habitat

Development of San Gregorio Farms would have threatened critical wildlife habitat, negatively impacted the scenic corridor along Highways 1 and 84 and Stage Road, and eliminated potential public access and future trail development opportunities. The property is bounded by three protected properties:

privately-held San Gregorio Ranch, over which POST holds a conservation easement, to the north; San Gregorio State Beach to the north and west; and Pomponio State Beach to the south.

By purchasing San Gregorio Farms, POST will create 3.5 miles of contiguous protected land along Highway 1. We'll also ensure preservation of the scenic coastal landscape and increase possible recreational opportunities in the region by creating links to the Coastal Trail. The most important aspect of this acquisition, however, is the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat resources.

San Gregorio Creek courses through the northern portion of the property for nearly a mile, supporting habitat for endangered and threatened species: the California red-legged frog, western pond turtle, San Francisco garter snake and tidewater goby, a small fish that lives in estuaries. The familiar black phoebe, yellow warbler and America kestrel are seen here in abundance.



California Hedge Nettle, *Stachys bullata*, blooms April through September on coastal slopes from San Francisco to southern California.



*Rolling hills and hay fields form a backdrop for Bird's Foot Lotus and Yellow Bush Lupin at San Gregorio Farms.*

The Department of Fish and Game has developed habitat restoration and management plans for the creek and estuary. Steelhead trout now swim through the estuary to breed in La Honda Creek, and there are numerous opportunities for salmon habitat restoration. POST's ownership of the upper estuary, combined with public ownership of the lower estuary, will facilitate integrated management and enhancement of this important resource.

## The Future

Our goal is to add this property to the state park system. Accordingly, we are seeking support from the State of California to help fund the purchase of the property. These funds are likely to come through the Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board and California State Parks.

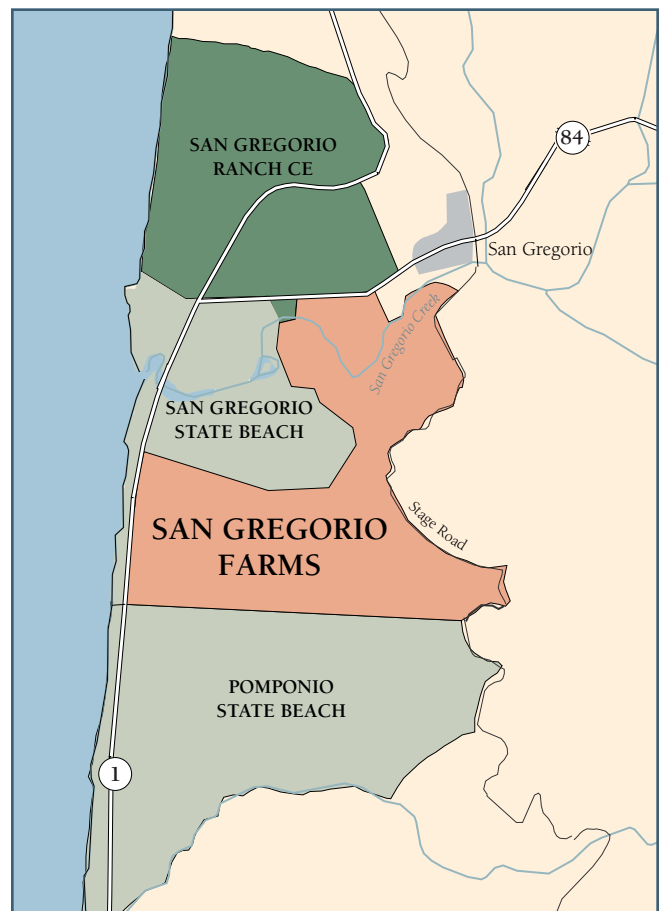
POST has no plans to remove the three residences currently located on the property, which provide opportunities for affordable housing. We

will retain the haying operation on the property as long as the current tenant is interested in continuing to do so.

## Thank You!

"The generous support of our donors will make this acquisition possible. This is an example of the important lands that will be lost if we aren't successful in raising the additional \$100 million toward the campaign goal," Rust said. "If we succeed, this rich coastal landscape will be permanently safeguarded. Gifts of all amounts from individual donors are the key to meeting this goal and preserving this land as open space.

"Now, every dollar that we can obtain in state funding for this project will replace private gifts to POST. The state money will allow us to use our donor gifts again for other important acquisitions in the campaign." ■







San Gregorio estuary.



Robert Buellman

# What is an ESTUARY?

You may catch glimpses of it everyday and not even realize what you are seeing is part of an estuary. That big body of water sitting between us on the Peninsula and folks in Fremont and Hayward is part of a much larger water system: the Pacific Ocean and the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers form one of the country's largest estuaries, the San Francisco Bay. Estuaries are bodies of water where salt and fresh water meet. Known as marshes, bays, sloughs, inlets, lagoons and swamps, they provide diverse and valuable resources depending on their size and location.

Estuary waters and surrounding lands protect plants and animals from the full force of ocean wind and waves; filter silt and materials from the incoming fresh water; and allow salt waters to enter the mouth of the creek with the tidal ebb and flow.

A rare ecosystem on the San Mateo coast, POST considers the estuary to be the most important physical feature of San Gregorio Farms. When you visit the estuary, you are greeted with a cacophony of bird calls that include American gold finch, redwing blackbird, American blackbird, and mallard. The babbling waters of the creek as it slows to meet the tidal waters are bordered by red alder, yellow willow, cottonwood, dogwood and red elderberry.

While San Gregorio Creek is small by comparison to estuaries the size and scope of the San Francisco Bay, all estuaries received renewed support from Congress with the passage of the Estuary Restoration and Clean Water Act of 2000. Estuaries produce more food per acre than the richest Midwest farmlands and contribute 28 million jobs and \$111 billion annually to our national economy. The National Estuary Program, established under the Environmental Protection Agency in 1987, is designed to improve chemical, physical, and biological resources, as well as to promote economic, recreational, and aesthetic values of estuaries.

*To learn more about estuaries or programs being implemented to protect the San Francisco Bay visit:*

[www.estuaries.org](http://www.estuaries.org)

<http://calfed.ca.gov>

<http://www.abag.ca.gov/bayarea/sfep/sfep.html>

*You can find these links on our web site at [www.openspacetrust.org](http://www.openspacetrust.org)*

*The American Goldfinch, *Carduelis tristis*, is a frequent visitor to the banks of San Gregorio Creek. The male is easily recognized by its bright yellow body, black cap and white rump.*



# Enjoy Summer with Fresh Produce from the Coast

**It's summertime!** Which means it's a great time to visit the area's farmers markets. POST leases agricultural land to several farmers who sell their produce locally at both farmers markets and supermarkets. During the summer and into the fall, you can enjoy San Mateo farm fresh produce — artichokes, peas, green beans, chard, and more — from coastal farms knowing that you are supporting local agriculture at the same time.

The Giusti family, who farm Johnston Ranch and North Cowell (a POST Conservation Easement property), has sold produce at the Palo Alto Farmers Market for 21 years. They also sell vegetables to local Lucky's, Safeway and Albertson's supermarkets. David Lea of Cabrillo Farms and Ocean View Farms (on Rancho Corral de Tierra) also sells at Palo Alto Farmers Market as well as the Walnut Creek Farmers Market, Cuhna's Country Store in Half Moon Bay,

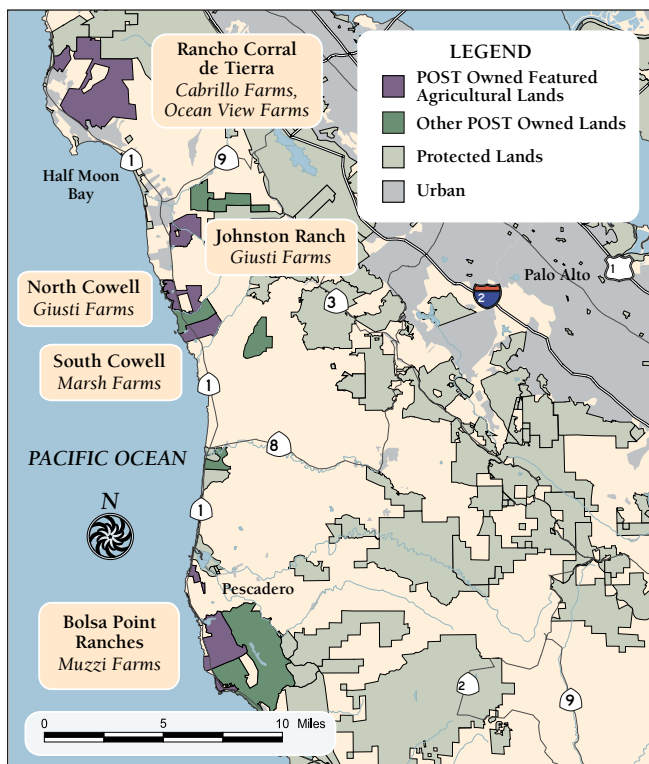


Dan DiVittorio

*David Lea, Cabrillo and Ocean View Farms, preparing brussels sprouts for market.*

and local Safeway Markets. Joe Muzzi (farming Bolsa Point Ranches) can be found in San Francisco at Alemany Farmers Market, the area's largest and oldest market.

Farmers also have stands coast side on or near their fields. Joe Muzzi sells his crops at Artichoke Joe's Stand, Muzzi's Market and Norm's Deli in Pescadero. Bob Marsh operates Marsh's Produce Stand along Hwy 1 on the South Cowell property, just south of Purisima Road. David Lea's stand, The Farmer's Daughter, is located on the opposite side of Highway 1 from the Half Moon Bay airport.



## **Palo Alto Farmers Market**

Gilman Street between Hamilton and Forest Streets  
Saturdays 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM, May to December



## **Walnut Creek Farmers Market**

the corner of Broadway & Lincoln  
Sundays 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM



## **Alemany Farmers' Market**

100 Alemany Blvd. in San Francisco, near Hwy 101  
Saturdays, 6:00 AM – 6:00 PM



# Committing to the Coast

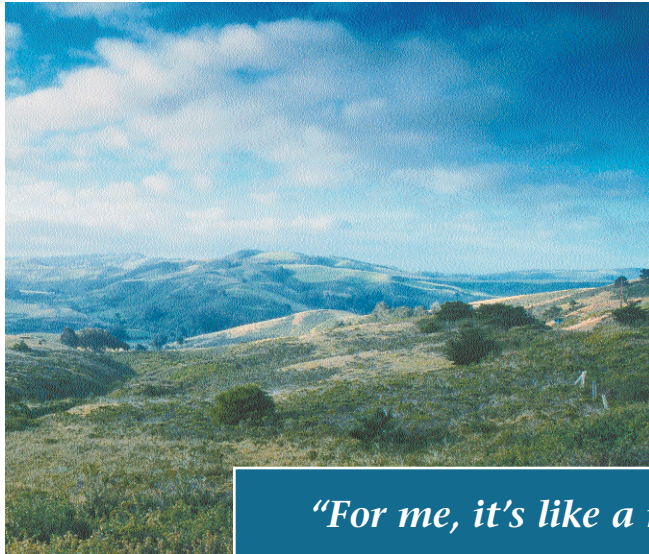
## A donor's thoughts about *Saving the Endangered Coast*



Denise Rehse Watson

Carol Espinosa

In a recent conversation with Audrey Rust, POST's President, Carol Espinosa shared her thoughts about why she and her husband Chris are committing a gift to POST for our new campaign to protect open lands along the San Mateo coast.



Robert Buckleman

*"For me, it's like a reservoir of tranquility...  
the land west of skyline is a broad, open,  
free and natural landscape"*

**“W**e’re reaching deep for our donation because this is such an important quality of life issue. I’ve taken it for granted for the 29 years I’ve lived on the peninsula that the land west of Skyline is a broad, open, free and natural landscape that I can escape to when the pressures of life on this side get to be too much. Even

though I don’t often go over there, it gives me a lot of mental ‘breathing’ room to know that once you get west of 280, and especially west of 35, the population density and development saturation fall away. For me, it’s like a reservoir of tranquility. If the coast or the western hills became densely developed, or even had intense development in pockets, it would really change how I feel about living in the Bay Area. This peace still feels like the last of the western frontier, complete with ranches and cattle and large acres of traditional agriculture – and the wildlife and cleaner air and quiet.”

“I never really thought about what it would be like of we ‘lost’ the San Mateo coast, and saving it for our present and future enjoyment and the use of future generations feels like a very important legacy issue. While I might like to have a wonderful beach house,

I wouldn’t like it if the surrounding coastal land was heavily developed, so

as a corollary, saving the coast is a more immediate and important goal for me than having a vacation retreat. So I move from the use of my resources for the limited benefit of my family to the use of my resources to preserve a hugely important element of my quality of life, which, happily, other people can also benefit from.

(continued on page 7)

## 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.

## Committing (continued from page 6)

*"It's a great feeling to know I'm helping conserve land that I can enjoy now, and that will be there as my son grows older for him to hike and explore. I encourage everyone to participate in this campaign and know our community has come together to protect this extraordinary place."*

Our thanks to Carol for letting us share with you her thoughts about giving to the campaign to protect the rural San Mateo coast. As Carol and her family enjoy the rural lands along the San Mateo coast today and in the future, they will know that they and others who contribute to the campaign, *Saving the Endangered Coast*, are important partners in our efforts to protect this beautiful landscape. ■

## Acknowledgements

The map that appeared in the spring newsletter, *A Spring Road Trip*, was created by Trail Center, "Peninsula Parklands Map." Helpful San Francisco Peninsula resources can be found via their web site: [www.trailcenter.org](http://www.trailcenter.org).

We thank Sequn and Theron Kabrich of the Garden Gallery for their continued support. For the third year in a row, the Garden Gallery hosted an evening reception in May for their California Landscapes Exhibit. A percentage of the evening's sales benefit POST and our land conservation work. Thank you to all who attended and to the Garden Gallery for hosting the event. Garden Gallery, 604 Main Street, Half Moon Bay



## Landscapes

Landscapes is published quarterly by the Peninsula Open Space Trust  
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*The grand show is eternal.  
It is always sunrise somewhere;  
the dew is never all dried at once;  
a shower is forever falling;  
vapor is ever rising.*

*John Muir*

Cover photos: Robert Buelteman



**LANDSCAPES**  
**SUMMER 2001**

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*A land conservancy for the  
San Francisco Peninsula*

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