

State News

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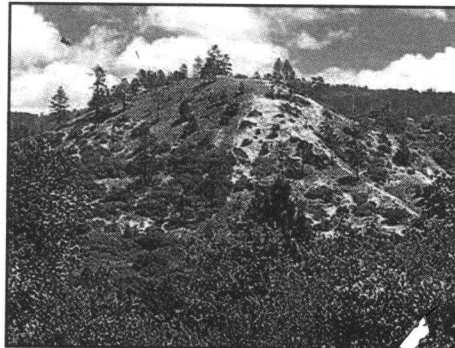
State Gives Grant to the Land Trust for Sandhills Protection

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The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County was awarded \$772,000 from the State Wildlife Conservation Board toward the protection of 51 acres of rare Sandhills habitat near Scotts Valley. This marks the fifth Sandhills property and brings to 285 total acres the Land Trust has protected since 2007.

The Land Trust anticipates closing on the project early next year, purchasing and conservation easement over 37 acres and buying in fee title the remaining 14 acres. The easement will restrict development on the property, ensuring it will remain Sandhills habitat forever, while keeping the land in private ownership.

The Sandhills make up an ancient seabed. Sand dollars, seashells and fossils of extinct sea mammals can be found there. Biologist Peter Raven likened the Sandhills to the Galapagos because of their biological diversity.



Santa Cruz Sandhills are home to seven species of plants and animals found nowhere else on earth, including the Mt. Hermon June Beetle, Zayante band-winged grasshopper, Santa Cruz kangaroo rat, Ben Lomond spineflower, Santa Cruz wallflower, Silverleaf Manzanita and Ben Lomond buckwheat.

"In our Conservation Blueprint, the Sandhills are identified as a priority conservation area, due to their rarity," said Land Trust Executive Director Terry Corwin. Corwin said the Land Trust partners with the Museum of Natural History to offer hands-on learning to elementary school students at the Land Trust's 189-acre Randall Morgan Sandhills Preserve.

Total project costs will exceed \$1.4 million. Funding will come from a variety of sources, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Act, Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Program, CA Department of Fish and Game, and \$772,000 from the State Wildlife Conservation Board. Corwin said the Land Trust would use \$19,000 from its \$4.5 million Opportunity Fund, which was raised as part of the group's \$13.5 million campaign to protect 10,000 acres, completed in January.

Additional funding for the project came through the Living Landscape Initiative



Challenge Grant Program of Resources Legacy Fund, which is funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore

Foundation.

The group plans to protect additional Sandhills lands through easement or acquisition. ■

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Formed in 1978 by local residents concerned about protecting the lands that make Santa Cruz County special, the Land Trust has protected more than 13,000 acres by working with willing landowners and conservation partners. The trust protects both working lands, like farms and timberland, and natural lands with high conservation value – thus protecting water supplies, wildlife habitats and open space.

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The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) was created by legislation in 1947 to administer a capital outlay program for wildlife conservation and related public recreation. WCB is a separate and independent Board with authority and funding to carry out an acquisition and development program for wildlife conservation (California Fish and Game Code 1300, et seq.). WCB consists of the President of the Fish and Game Commission, the Director of the Department of Fish and Game and the Director of the Department of Finance. Legislation that created WCB also

established a Legislative Advisory Committee consisting of three members of the Senate and three members of the Assembly, which meet with WCB, providing legislative oversight.

The primary responsibilities of WCB are to select, authorize and allocate funds for the purchase of land and waters suitable for recreation purposes and the preservation, protection and restoration of wildlife habitat. WCB approves and funds projects that set aside lands within the State for such purposes, through acquisition or other means, to meet these objectives. WCB can also authorize the construction of facilities for recreational purposes on property in which it has a proprietary interest.

WCB's three main functions are land acquisition, habitat restoration and development of wildlife oriented public access facilities, which are carried out through its programs.

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The Living Landscape Initiative is a collaborative effort among five land conservation organizations in and around Silicon Valley. Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, The Nature Conservancy, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), Save the Redwoods League and Sempervirens Fund. The Initiative seeks to enhance our lives by promoting clean air and water, local farming and working lands, biodiversity and habitat protection for wildlife, and public enjoyment of natural lands. To learn more, visit www.livinglandscapeinitiative.org.