

1,000 acres saved for ag

Agriculture

By CATHY KELLY

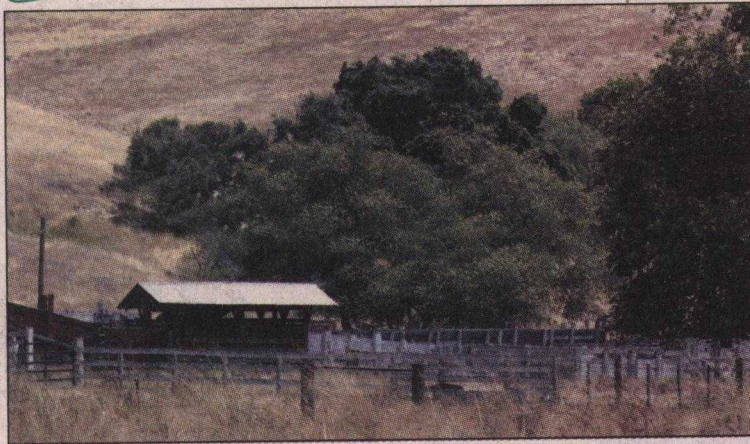
ckelly@santacruzsentinel.com

PAJARO VALLEY — With rolling hills and fields providing a bucolic backdrop, preservationists and landowners gathered at a ranch Saturday to celebrate the dedication of 987 acres of farmland for permanent agricultural use.

Working since 2005, four landowners entered agreements with the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County to place permanent easements on the properties so they cannot be used for purposes other than agriculture.

The easements decrease the land's value, but provide some tax breaks for property owners.

The development rights to the



BILL LOVEJOY/SENTINEL

In addition to the newly acquired farmland at the Circle P Ranch, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County has held surrounding property for 10 years.

14 properties east of Watsonville were purchased with state and federal funds for more than \$4.5 million. The land is off Riverside Drive and along the Pajaro River.

The acreage will join other protected agricultural land in the area, including the 684-acre Circle P Ranch where the event was held. It is tucked up against the foothills near Riverside Drive and Carlton Road.

"This is a dream come true for some of us," said Terry Corwin, executive director of the Land Trust. "These acres will never be dotted with 'McMansions.'"

Such farmland is irreplaceable, said Bridget Luther, director of the California Department of Conservation.

"This valley is so incredibly important for the agricultural future of California," Luther said.

The state has similarly pre-

SEE AG ON B4

B4 SUNDAY, JULY 11, 2010

EXT

AG

Continued from B1

served 360,000 acres since 1996, at a cost of \$68 million, she said.

The Pajaro Valley land is owned by the Borina Family Foundation, Don and Diane Cooley, the Reiter Family Trusts, and Randy Repass and Sally-Christine Rodgers.

The drive to preserve it as farmland was initiated by Bill Locke-Paddon and Sheila Burke, co-directors of the Borina Foundation, said Stephen Slade, deputy director of the Land Trust.

"What's so interesting here is Pajaro Valley is so small, a few people can make a big difference," Slade said.

The largest property, 526 acres, belonged to June Borina Schnacke, who died in 2000 and left no heirs, said Bill Locke-Paddon of the Borina Foundation. The Reiter Family Trusts co-owned part of that land.

Borina Schnacke's parents grew apples and then strawberries, he said, and she wanted to keep the family property to benefit the community, directing that rent from the properties be given to local charities after her death.

The foundation-owned land will eventually be



BILL LOVEJOY/SENTINEL

Land Trust Executive Director Terry Corwin and president of the trust's board of directors, Cindy Rubin, stroll on the preserved farmland Saturday.

deeded to the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County.

The easement was purchased for \$3 million, with \$700,000 from the National Resources Conservation Service and the remainder from Proposition 40, approved by state voters in 2002.

The Borina Foundation donated \$690,000 of that to the Land Trust, which is responsible for defending the easements, and \$1.85 million to the Community Foundation.

The Cooleys, who have dedicated easements on 384 acres, were paid \$1.3 million from the state Department of Conservation and \$389,500 from the National Resources Conservation Service; they gave \$300,000

of that to the Land Trust.

Randy Repass and Sally-Christine Rodgers donated the easement on their 92-acre Lake Tynan Ranch, Slade said.

Diane Porter Cooley said easements her parents agreed to decreased her inheritance tax so that she could afford to keep the land.

"It's private, working land," she said.

And it's some of the most beautiful and productive land in the state, said Cindy Rubin, board president of the Land Trust.

"We are in a new phase as stewards of farm land," she said. "We are looking at ways to protect and enhance the viability of agricultural lands; it's an exciting new endeavor."