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Sonoma Land Trust and Coastal Conservancy Announce Purchase of Key Sonoma Coast Parcels

Bodega Bay, California -

The Sonoma Land Trust and the Coastal Conservancy have announced their successful acquisition of key Sonoma Coast open space properties located along the Sonoma/Marin County line adjacent to the Estero Americano estuary.

After a yearlong partnership process, the two agencies have closed escrow on approximately 86 acres on the northern shore of the Estero Americano, near Bodega Bay, in an area rich in wildlife, migratory waterfowl, and important wetlands. The plan is for the property to be owned and managed by the Sonoma Land Trust as an agricultural open space preserve.

"The Estero Americano is one of the most important biological areas on the entire Northern California coast," said Richard Charter, Executive Director of the Sonoma Land Trust. "We extend our appreciation to Mr. Tom Hepper of Santa Rosa, the seller of the property, for his generous philanthropic contribution and conservation intent which made this transaction possible."

Michael Fischer, Executive Officer of the Coastal Conservancy, said "The Coastal Conservancy is proud to be a partner with the Sonoma Land Trust in this very significant project. The Estero Americano waterway itself is a part of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and lies within the United Nations Central Coast International Biosphere Reserve. It is a secret, hidden, quiet fjord with a unique landscape and precious habitat. What could be more important than restoring the watersheds and wetlands that protect this key estuary?"

Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey hailed this acquisition and said "This is just one more example of how the public and private sectors can work together to protect our unique natural resources."

Tom Hepper of Santa Rosa, the former owner of the properties whose charitable contribution of a portion of the land value to the Sonoma Land Trust enabled this transaction, said: "This has always been a special area to my family because of the wildlife and the natural beauty. We felt strongly that it needed to be preserved."

The Sonoma Land Trust utilized its own land acquisition funding reserves for the project, supplemented with a grant of \$150,000 from the Coastal Conservancy. Additional funding for the project continues to be sought by the partner agencies in the form of open space funds, grants for wetland restoration on the site, and public contributions.

The scenic Estero Americano estuary lies along the Southern Sonoma Coast and is unique within the National Marine Sanctuary System. The property acquired by the Sonoma Land Trust lies about two miles inland from the ocean and contains extensive wetlands and important wildlife habitat.

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COASTAL CONSERVANCY

