



News Release

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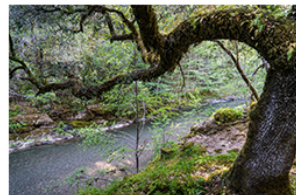
Conservation Partnership Saves Salmon Waters, Redwoods and Woodlands in Wine Country

SONOMA COUNTY, California—This week, Western Rivers Conservancy and the California Rangeland Trust successfully protected a critical stretch of the Wheatfield Fork Gualala River and a series of cold-water salmon and steelhead streams in Sonoma County, at the heart of wine country. The partners accomplished this by placing a conservation easement over the 4,440-acre Silva Ranch, an extraordinary California Coast Range property that contains a rare swath of old-growth redwoods.

In total, the easement conserves over six miles of stream frontage on small tributary creeks and the Wheatfield Fork Gualala, the largest of three major tributaries of the mainstem Gualala River. Together, these streams provide crucial habitat for winter steelhead and, historically, coho salmon, two species that have experienced rapid declines throughout the state.

The easement protects a broad swath of mixed conifer forest, 41 acres of old-growth redwoods, and more than 2,600 acres of oak woodland and grassland—habitat that potentially supports wildlife like northern spotted owl, bald eagle and red-legged frog. The Silva Ranch is especially important because it lies adjacent to 75,000 acres of already protected lands. Adding the ranch's unbroken open space to this assemblage improves habitat connectivity for wildlife at a landscape scale.

Due to its prime location, the Silva Ranch had the potential for dozens of home sites and extensive grape production, both now severely limited or prevented by the conservation easement. The easement will allow only around three percent of the property to be used for vineyards or other intensive agriculture and add protections to streams throughout the ranch to conserve habitat and prevent water withdrawal.



Media photos can be found at: <https://bit.ly/3C4EOBZ>

“With its rolling grasslands and giant redwoods, the Silva Ranch is a precious slice of old California, and we are incredibly proud that we were able to protect this landscape in partnership with California Rangeland Trust and the Silva family,” said Peter Colby, WRC’s California

program director. “Fish, wildlife, the Gualala River system and everyone in the greater Bay Area will all benefit from this accomplishment.”

Recognizing its conservation values, WRC began efforts to conserve Silva Ranch in 2015. Over the course of seven years, WRC and the Silva family worked together to devise a long-term conservation solution and partnered with California Rangeland Trust to bring the project over the finish line. Rangeland Trust will hold the easement in perpetuity and annually monitor the ranch to ensure its management continues in line with the partners’ shared conservation values.

“We are proud to be a partner in protecting both the ranch’s agricultural and environmental resources values,” said Michael Delbar, CEO of Rangeland Trust. “It is because of the stewardship of ranching families like the Silvas that we as Californians can all continue to reap the many gifts the land provides including vibrant wildlife habitat, clean air, fresh water, protection from wildfires, magnificent viewsheds, and so much more.”

With the conservation easement held in perpetuity by Rangeland Trust, the Silva family will continue to sustainably manage the ranch’s lands for timber and livestock production, while the property’s critically important river habitat, redwoods, woodlands and rangelands will remain intact for fish and wildlife.

“This easement allows us to preserve this remarkable resource and keep our family heritage alive,” said Dale Silva, co-owner of the Silva Ranch. “None of this would be possible without the hard work of the Rangeland Trust and Western Rivers Conservancy, we could not be happier with the outcome of this partnership.”

This project was made possible through generous funding from California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Bay Area Conservation Small Grants Program of Resources Legacy Fund, funded in part by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

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ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTNERS

Western Rivers Conservancy acquires lands along rivers throughout the West to conserve critical habitat and to create or improve public access for compatible use and enjoyment. By cooperating with local agencies and organizations and by applying decades of land acquisition experience, Western Rivers Conservancy secures the health of whole ecosystems. Western Rivers Conservancy has protected hundreds of miles of stream frontage on great western rivers, including the Klamath, Eel, Goose Creek/Smith, Rio Grande, Yampa, John Day, Salmon, Snake, North Umpqua and Madison Rivers. To learn more, visit www.westernrivers.org.

Founded in 1998 by a group of ranchers determined to safeguard rangeland agriculture and the natural ecosystems they steward; **California Rangeland Trust** is the only rancher-led land trust in California. Over the last 24 years, the organization has permanently protected more than 365,000 acres of open rangeland to provide clean air and water, carbon sequestration, vibrant habitat for wildlife and healthy foods that all Californians rely upon. California Rangeland Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization, headquartered in Sacramento, Calif., dedicated to serving the land, people and wildlife by conserving California's working rangelands. To learn more, visit www.rangelandtrust.org.

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