



S O N O M A C O U N T Y

**AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION
AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 14, 2009

Contact:

Peggy Flynn
Community Relations Manager
Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
707.565.7347 office
707.293.4592 cell

District Partnership Protects Vital Rangeland and Watershed

Board approves 396-acre conservation easement and preservation agreement

SANTA ROSA, Calif.—In an action to protect the County’s essential rangeland and the health of the Salmon Creek watershed, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, acting as the District’s Board of Directors, approved a conservation easement and preservation agreement between the District and Dennis Gilardi, a rancher who has owned and operated the property as a ranch for more than two decades.

The 396-acre ranch is located in western Sonoma County, adjacent to the town of Bodega, where similar properties are being subdivided and sold for rural residential estate development. The conservation easement ensures that the property and operation will remain intact, and it preserves the property’s highly-productive grasslands and pasture soils for grazing and agricultural use.

“This region is known for its farmland, fields, and dairies, but they’re a threatened resource,” said Efen Carrillo, Fifth District Supervisor. “The preservation of our farms and grasslands is crucial to ensuring our agricultural vitality and protecting our local economy.”

The \$1.6 million agreement continues the agricultural and existing residential uses on the property. Gilardi, who originally owned 295 acres, was able to purchase an additional 101 acres adjacent to the property to extend his operation and preserve the use of the entire 396 acres—all of which are protected under the agreement.

“I wanted to ensure this scenic rangeland stays intact for agricultural use,” said property owner Dennis Gilardi. “Partnering with the District, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Goldridge Resource Conservation District allows me the ability to preserve the use and ecological value of this property for future generations.”

The District has protected more than 9,500 acres, from east of Petaluma to the Pacific Ocean, for dairies and livestock ranches. In total, the District has protected approximately 33,000 acres for agricultural use—nearly half of all the land protected by the District since its creation by Sonoma County voters in 1990.

-more-

Additionally, Gilardi has agreed to continue protecting the 1.4-mile portion of Salmon Creek that runs through his property, by maintaining fencing along the corridor of the creek which prevents bank erosion and protects water quality. Through grants from the Community Foundation of Sonoma County, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the Coastal Conservancy to the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District, Gilardi was able to erect the fencing and stabilize an eroding streambank with native plants in an effort to restore the health of the Salmon Creek Watershed.

Salmon Creek flows through a 35-square-mile watershed surrounded by approximately 200 ranches and farms into the town of Bodega and out to the Pacific Ocean. In an effort to revive the Coho salmon population that historically inhabited the creek, the California Department of Fish and Game have recently reintroduced the fish to the watershed. The creek is also a part of the Sonoma Coast State Marine Conservation Area—a state Marine Protected Area.

“We thank Dennis Gilardi for his commitment to protecting the farmland, its productivity, and the health of the watershed,” said Maria Cipriani, Assistant General Manager of the District. “Our community continues to recognize and support the District’s efforts to conserve important agricultural and natural resources in our county.”

About the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District permanently protects the diverse agricultural, natural resource and scenic open space lands of Sonoma County for future generations. Since 1990, the District has protected 163 properties totaling 75,364 acres. Agricultural and open space lands have been protected through a 1/4-cent sales tax approved by voters in 1990 and reauthorized in 2006. For more information, please visit www.sonomaopenspace.org

###