



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

**AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION
AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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District Ag Program Continuing to Keep Local Food Local

Board approves 238-acre conservation easement with future public access

SANTA ROSA, Calif.—Perpetuating a strong commitment to protect the county’s local food system, preserve an integral scenic vista in southern Petaluma, and provide opportunities for public access and education, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, acting as the District’s Board of Directors, approved a conservation easement agreement between the District and Craig and Tara Smith, owners of the Smith Family Ranch, also known as Tara Firma Farms.

The \$2.3 million agreement eliminates the potential for development of eight parcels and provides for continued agricultural and existing residential uses on the property. The easement will protect wildlife habitat including open meadows, oak woodlands, and a riparian corridor and vegetation.

“By continuing to use conservation easements as a tool for land preservation,” said Mike Kerns, Second District Supervisor, “we are able to help farmers and ranchers remain economically-viable land stewards.”

The family-owned farm, once the site of a dairy, is located 1.5 miles south of Petaluma in unincorporated Sonoma County, just west of Highway 101 and visible from I Street. Views of Mt. Burdell, the Petaluma River, San Pablo Bay, Mt. St. Helena, can be seen from various points on the property. It is currently operating as a diversified agricultural operation offering chemical-free, all-natural produce, and grass-fed, pasture-raised livestock including pigs, cows, and chickens.

“It has been our dream to bring to our family and local community ‘real/clean’ food and an opportunity to connect with where it comes from.” said Tara Smith, farmer and co-owner of Tara Firma Farms. “By allowing the community the ability to hike, fish, and picnic on the property, we can educate people to demand healthy, organic, environmentally-conscious food raised locally. We want to thank Sonoma County for their investment and invite all to come and visit.”

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Additionally, the Smiths are donating a trail and staging area on the property for future public access. The Smiths currently provide public access on their property through various activities including produce picking, hiking, picnics, and school outings.

The District has protected more than 10,000 acres, from west of Petaluma to the Pacific Ocean, for dairies and livestock ranches. In total, the District has protected approximately 35,000 acres for agricultural use—nearly half of all the land protected by the District since its creation by Sonoma County voters in 1990.

“The preservation of agriculture in Sonoma County underscores the importance of securing a sustainable local food system,” said Bill Keene, General Manager of the District. “In addition to shrinking the ecological footprint of food, we can assist in reconnecting the farmer to the consumer, and help to ensure the security of a regional food supply.”

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 more than 80,000 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

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