



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

**AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION
AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2010

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Original Crane Melon Property Protected Forever

District works with the Crane family to protect agricultural legacy

SANTA ROSA, Calif.—The 48.53-acre farm where the original Crane melon was developed is now protected in perpetuity as the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, acting as the District's Board of Directors, today approved a \$365,750 purchase of a conservation easement that eliminates the potential for development of two parcels. The purchase price represents a 5% or \$19,250 reduction of the appraised value.

The Crane Home Ranch is located on the north side of Crane Canyon Road, east of Petaluma Hill Road, just outside of Rohnert Park. The easement will protect the agricultural uses on the farm which include the production of melons, hay, and 11 acres of pinot noir grapes, as well as the riparian corridors associated with two seasonal creeks that traverse the property.

“By protecting the heritage site of our local Crane melon, we are also protecting some of our most fertile and productive land in the County,” said Valerie Brown, First District Supervisor. “As our population grows, our food is increasingly in the path of development and we need to protect our finest farmland for local food production.”

The Crane melon is a hybrid melon developed by Oliver Crane in the early 1900s. It thrives in heavy clay soils which require little or no irrigation and has been sold at the family's “Crane Melon Barn” located on Petaluma Hill Road since the 1920s. According to the Cranes, the soil type, farming techniques, growing conditions are all integral in developing the flavor and other unique characteristics of the melon.

“Our family has lived on and farmed this property for more than 160 years,” said Jennifer Crane, daughter of property owner Richard Crane and sixth-generation Crane. “With this easement in place we can continue to grow the Crane melon, which was developed on this property by my great, great grandfather more than 100 years ago.”

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The District has protected nearly 300 acres in the surrounding area that continues to experience agricultural land conversion to rural residential estates. Currently, the District leases out 148 acres in that vicinity for agricultural use. In total, the District has protected 33,000 acres for agriculture—nearly half of all the land protected by the District since its creation by Sonoma County voters in 1990.

“It has been a privilege to work with the Cranes to protect their family farm and an agricultural legacy in Sonoma County,” said Bill Keene, General Manager of the District. “We are able to provide perpetual farmland and environmental protection, while retaining an important piece of our agrarian history.”

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 83,000 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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