

LAND FOR LIFE



AG + OPEN SPACE
SONOMA COUNTY

Ag + Open Space is a community-created, taxpayer-funded agency creating lasting protections for agricultural and natural lands for over 30 years.

There are several ways to engage with us!

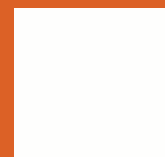
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Learn more about us

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And be sure to follow us on social

@sonomaopenspace



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LAND FOR LIFE

Permanently protecting Sonoma County's diverse agricultural lands, natural resources, and scenic open spaces for future generations.



WE CONSERVE...



Agricultural Lands

Lands that support diverse, sustainable, and productive agriculture.



Community Identity

Lands that surround and differentiate the county's urban areas and contribute to the unique scenic character of the county.



Healthy Communities

Open space and publicly accessible lands in and near cities and communities that connect people with protected lands.



Water

Natural lands and aquatic habitats that support water resources.



Wildlands

Natural lands and terrestrial habitats that support plants, wildlife, and biodiversity.

OVER
120,000

**ACRES OF OUR WORKING
AND NATURAL LANDS
PROTECTED, FOREVER**



WHAT LAND CONSERVATION MEANS FOR YOU

Land for Climate Resilience

Conserving our natural and working lands plays a key role in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Our forests and grasslands sequester and store carbon, while protected coastal lands, wetlands and marshes, and riparian areas help us adapt to rising seas. Limiting development in greenbelts and wilderness areas reduces greenhouse gas emissions from urban sprawl and car trips, while also forming protective buffers around our communities during wildfires and floods. By conserving an extensive and diverse system of lands across the county, we preserve biodiversity and maintain open space for wildlife to adapt as the climate changes.

Land for Nature + Wildlife

Protected wildlands and watersheds provide habitat for wildlife to live and roam freely, while giving our community ample recreational and immersive outdoor opportunities. Healthy natural lands also help to filter and recharge our water and are often home to sensitive plants and animals; and rivers, creeks, estuaries, and baylands are important nurseries for fish and water species. These ecosystems are networks of living things that rely on and support a diversity of habitats, plants, and animals to function properly; and provide clean air and water, pollination of plants, pest control, and many other benefits.

Land for Farms + Ranches

Conserved agricultural lands safeguard our county's rural beauty and character, our capacity for local food production, and the critical connections necessary for thriving farms, dairies, and ranches. These working lands produce milk and cheese, grass-fed meats, seasonal vegetables and fruits, pasture-raised eggs, honey, wine, and more. Nearly all of the family farms and ranches we've protected are still active today, helping to provide over 7,200 local jobs and contributing to a \$1 billion industry. Properties protected by conservation easements are also more affordable for the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Land for Scenic Beauty

Extensive open landscapes of rolling hills, coastal grasslands, redwoods, oak woodlands, rock outcroppings and more combine to create a stunning backdrop to daily life in Sonoma County. Distinctive peaks, ridgetops, valleys, and waterways reinforce community identity and provide a sense of place for all Sonoma County residents. Being in nature also reminds us that we are a part of something interconnected and larger than ourselves. Enjoying the beauty and wonder of the natural world inspires awe within us, helping us to feel happier, and even more generous and kind.

Land for All

Parks and open space preserves offer people the ability to directly experience the natural splendor and beauty of our county, including ridges and mountains, forests and woodlands, rivers and creeks, meadows, and the coast. Vibrant parks, gardens, and greenways within and near urban areas provide an opportunity for all our residents to enjoy open space just minutes from their homes, and can transform communities by providing places to find solitude, host public gatherings, and recreate. Conserving different types of land throughout the county helps ensure that everyone has access to nature and open space, local healthy food, and opportunities for exercise and education.

LAND FOR LIFE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT SONOMAOPENSACE.ORG



AG + OPEN SPACE PROTECTED LANDS

- Owned by Ag + Open Space
- Conservation Easement Held by Ag + Open Space
- Open Space Easement Held by Ag + Open Space
- Other Public or Protected Land

HOW WE PROTECT LAND

We use **conservation easements** as our primary tool for ensuring protection of our community’s most important open space, agricultural lands, and natural resources. Our conservation easements are legal agreements between a willing landowner and our agency that permanently limit uses of the land to protect its conservation values—specific agricultural, natural, scenic, or recreational attributes of the property that provide a public benefit.

How Conservation Easements Work

1. Conservation Goal Evaluation

First, we determine what should be conserved for public benefit, including values such as sensitive natural areas, scenic vistas, and agriculture.

2. Current Property Conditions

We document the current conditions that exist on a property—including natural features such as a forest or creek, or an agricultural operation.

3. Potential for Development

We also assess the potential for development, which includes subdividing the land into smaller parcels and/or building houses or roads.

4. Landowner Interests

We consider the landowner’s interests, which may consist of uses and improvements they want to retain such as houses, agricultural infrastructure, and recreational amenities.

5. Conservation Easement Design

We then design the conservation easement to meet the landowner’s interests, as well as our own. This includes designating building envelopes, scenic, agricultural, or natural areas, and specific locations for other uses on the property.

6. Perpetual Protection

Once the agreement is signed, it becomes our responsibility to visit the property periodically to ensure the values the public has invested in are protected forever.

For a List of Publicly Accessible Lands

Visit SonomaOpenSpace.org/GetOutside

Scan the QR Code

To see an interactive version of this map

