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Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District to Contribute \$2.7 Million to Conserve 688-acre Kashia Property on North Sonoma Coast

Easement will protect natural resources, limit development, preserve scenic vistas, and provide public access

SANTA ROSA, CA (October 16, 2015) – The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (District) received approval Tuesday from its Board of Directors to spend up to \$2.7 million to acquire a conservation easement over 688 acres of coastal property from the Kashia band of Pomo Indians of Stewarts Point Rancheria (the Kashia). The easement will protect the property’s natural resources, limit development, preserve scenic vistas, and allow for public trail access. In the same transaction, Sonoma County Regional Parks (Regional Parks) will accept a trail easement along the coast to provide public access, and eventually connect with other nearby trails and public parks. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Kashia have secured a combination of public and private funding to add to the District’s contribution to purchase the property from its current owners – the Richardson Trust.

“The District is thrilled to have the opportunity to protect this pristine property along the Sonoma Coast with the Kashia band and our partners at The Trust for Public Land,” said District General Manager Bill Keene. “This critical acquisition allows for the protection of coniferous forest, coastal grassland, and other habitat for sensitive species, all while preserving a highly visible landscape along Highway One and providing opportunities for public access.”

Protecting this property brings multiple benefits to community

The Kashia property consists of 688 acres located approximately three miles south of Stewarts Point, adjacent to Salt Point State Park to the south and the Sonoma Land Trust’s Rocky Point conservation easement to the north. It is bisected by Highway One and includes approximately one mile of coastline. The property is primarily forested with open grassland along the coast and three intermittent creeks that traverse the property from the ridgetop on the east to the ocean. The property also contains approximately 500 acres of Priority Coniferous Forest which provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife, including threatened and sensitive species such as Osprey, Marbled Murrelet, Bald Eagle, and Northern Spotted Owl.

In addition to preserving the rural and scenic character of the County’s coastal zone, protection of this property also preserves the unique and diverse natural forest, riparian, and coastal prairie habitats in this area, which connect to a larger complex of protected properties along the coast. Moreover, the forested area of the property provides auxiliary benefits such as carbon sequestration potential, while the coastal grasslands afford the opportunity for public recreation through the construction of a trail connecting to other adjacent parks, and eventually linking up with the California Coastal Trail.

Collaboration and creativity key to conservation

The Trust for Public Land, in partnership with the Kashia, has secured funds to acquire the property from the Richardson Trust. The property is under contract with TPL and will be owned by the Kashia at closing. The District negotiated the purchase of a conservation easement and trail easement from the Kashia, and the purchase amount of the conservation easement will be included in the overall purchase of the property in the same closing.

The District has worked with the Kashia to protect the natural and scenic resources on the property by prohibiting subdivision and limiting development. Timber harvesting will only be used to restore the forest back to a condition that is typically found now only in old growth forests. This will include larger trees, especially redwood and Douglas fir, and the wildlife that rely on these forests. The Kashia are required to prepare a Natural Resource Management Plan (Plan) within three years of closing that must contain, at a minimum, a Forestry Plan, a Grazing Plan, and a Harvesting Plan for native plants and wildlife other than timber. Per the terms of the conservation easement, no timber cutting, additional grazing, or native wildlife and plant harvesting for any purpose may occur until the Plan is approved by the District and the California Coastal Conservancy. Any future timber harvesting must comply with the Plan and also be approved by the District.

"The Kashia Pomo Tribe is excited to return to ownership of our coastal lands as we are once again a coastal Tribe with direct access to our coast. For more than 12,500 years we used our ocean, and for the last 150, we had to ask others for permission to access it. Today, we have righted that wrong," said Kashia Chairman, Reno Franklin. "With the help of our tribal membership under the guidance of our elders, we have become whole again. We are deeply appreciative to our neighbors along the coast, the Trust for Public Land, the California Coastal Conservancy, the Lannan Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, California Natural Resources Agency, and the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. It is a good day to be Kashia. Yahwee (Thank You)."

"This is a great example of our mission of protecting land for people," said Brendan Moriarty of The Trust for Public Land. "It is deeply gratifying to help the Kashia return to their coast. We are honored to be working with the Kashia and all our partners to turn this dream into a reality, and to protect this special place for all."

In addition, the District and Regional Parks have negotiated the acquisition of a trail easement which will traverse the property for over a mile along the coast west of Highway One. The trail easement will also allow for a parking area along the highway providing a convenient and safe place for trail access. The trail easement will go directly to the County, and the trail will be developed, operated and managed by Regional Parks. Eventually, the trail will connect to other trail segments, including trails on Salt Point State Park to the south, as part of the 1,200-mile California Coastal Trail.

"The potential for this trail is so exciting," said Regional Parks Director Caryl Hart. "Helping the public access and enjoy our beautiful coastline is a priority for Sonoma County, and we look forward to creating a link to adjacent parkland and new opportunities for outdoor recreation on the North Coast."

About the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & 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 106,000 acres. Agricultural and open space lands have been protected through a quarter-cent sales tax approved by voters in 1990 and reauthorized in 2006. For more information, please visit www.sonomaopenspace.org.

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