



PRESS RELEASE

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Historic Stewarts Point Property Permanently Protected by Save the Redwoods League and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

*700-acre redwood forest, indigenous tribe access to ancestral lands,
coastal bluffs with newest California Coastal Trail segment, and Gualala
River section protected under 868-acre conservation easement*

San Francisco, Calif. (February 22, 2017) – Save the Redwoods League (League), the only nonprofit organization in the world dedicated to protecting the redwood forest throughout its natural range, today announced the transfer of a conservation easement on the League’s 870-acre Stewarts Point property (Stewarts Point) to Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (District) for \$6 million and the upcoming conveyance of a cultural access easement to the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians (Kashia). The District contributed \$2 million of the purchase price, with additional funding coming from the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC – \$1 million) and Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB – \$3 million). The transaction also includes the transfer of a trail easement to the County of Sonoma for the development of a trail along the coastal bluffs. These agreements for Stewarts Point, located on both sides of Highway One on California’s northern Sonoma County coast, conserve 700 acres of redwood forestland, over 100 acres of coastal grasslands, and a 1.7-mile stretch of the Gualala River. They also protect scenic and cultural resources, provide forest management jobs, and grant public access along a new segment of the California Coastal Trail.

“This is a truly unique and special occasion. The Stewarts Point project brings together coast redwood conservation with social justice and new recreational opportunities for the public,” said Sam Hodder, the League’s President and CEO. “We are thankful to everyone, from all our dedicated donors to our partners at the District, Wildlife Conservation Board, and State Coastal Conservancy, for helping us protect this vibrant redwood forest and spectacular coastline and make this incredible place accessible for everyone to enjoy. It’s also a blessing to work with the Kashia tribe to provide them access to this sacred shoreline, their ancestral home.” In 2010, the League purchased the Stewarts Point property for \$11.25 million as the first step to protect this majestic landscape from potential subdivision and extensive logging and to provide future public access.

On its western boundary, the property includes a mile of coastal bluff grasslands looking out to magnificent views of Stewarts Point State Marine Reserve. Extending inland for about two miles to the South Fork Gualala River, 700 acres of the property is blanketed in a healthy second-growth coast redwood forest with scattered old-growth trees, Douglas fir, Bishop pine, and a variety of hardwoods. It’s also home to two sag ponds created by the San Andreas Fault. On its eastern edge, the property winds along approximately 1.7 miles of the steelhead-bearing Gualala River. Thousands of acres of sustainably managed private forestland surround the property, making it an important wildlife corridor.

The conservation easement conveyed to the District protects the property’s forest in two ways. First, 175 acres will be protected as an old-growth Restoration Reserve along the Gualala River. This Reserve will safeguard the old-growth trees, allow younger trees in that area to grow older, provide habitat to support more species of plants and animals, and prevent erosion, stabilizing the banks of the river. Secondly, the conservation easement provides that the remainder of the forest be managed for ecologically-sound timber harvests, including wildlife protection, enhanced creek protection, and ecologically-driven timber harvest limits. The easement also requires forest managers to encourage the increase of the average tree size over time to accelerate the development of old-growth forest characteristics that were lost over a century ago.

“We are pleased to contribute to the protection of Stewarts Point, furthering our goals of wildlife habitat conservation, river protection, and public access for current and future generations to enjoy,” said John P. Donnelly, Executive Director, California Wildlife Conservation Board.

The League has conveyed a trail easement to the County of Sonoma and a recreation covenant to the District to ensure construction of a trail that will traverse the coastal terrace for just under one mile and provide visitors with a gorgeous view of the

coastline. The new trail will have a designated parking area along Highway One, and both will be developed and managed by Sonoma County Regional Parks Department (Regional Parks). When complete, the trail will connect with the California Coastal Trail network, which will ultimately extend 1,200 miles from Oregon to Mexico. Under the terms of the trail easement and recreation covenant, the Stewarts Point trail segment will be open by the end of 2019 after planning is completed by Regional Parks, and will remain open in perpetuity.

“We are thrilled to acquire the Stewarts Point easement from Save the Redwoods League to ensure conservation of these beautiful forests, this critical section of the Gualala River, and the coastal terrace we all treasure. This fits squarely into our acquisition plan, as it also includes the protection of agricultural lands and an expansion of an existing recreational trail system, in addition to the natural resources,” said District General Manager, Bill Keene. “Knowing that the Kashia will have access to their ancestral lands and that we will be able to work with our partners at Regional Parks to provide access to this property and educate the public about its important history also makes this a truly enriching opportunity for the community.”

“Helping the League and its partners protect the magnificent coastal lands at Stewarts Point and secure the next piece of the California Coastal Trail was important to us,” said Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer, California State Coastal Conservancy.

Along with the District agreement, the League is about to grant a cultural easement to the Kashia providing access in perpetuity to their sacred site on the coastal bluff. The Kashia will be able to hold seasonal ceremonies on the bluff, which would include gathering seaweed, harvesting abalone, as well as leading traditional prayers and other spiritual and cultural activities.

“Our ancestors took care of these lands for thousands of years. Having access to our sacred site at Stewarts Point is deeply meaningful,” said Reno Franklin, Chairman of the Kashia. The Tribe’s Rancheria is located a few miles inland on Skaggs Springs – Stewarts Point Road.

The League and District thank the State Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board for providing major funding support for these easement acquisitions. The League would also like to thank the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation for major funding towards the original purchase of the property. Eventually, the League plans to sell or exchange the property to a buyer who will continue to conserve it.

About Save the Redwoods League

Walk through a redwood forest — home of the tallest, largest, and some of the oldest

living beings on Earth — and you can't help but feel an overwhelming sense of awe and peace among these magnificent giants. Since 1918, Save the Redwoods League has led the effort to protect the coast redwoods and giant sequoias for all to experience and enjoy. The League has protected nearly 200,000 acres of redwood forest and associated land. For more information, please visit [SaveTheRedwoods.org](https://www.savetheredwoods.org), or to sign up for updates, please visit [SaveTheRedwoods.org/signup](https://www.savetheredwoods.org/signup).

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 its creation, the District has protected more than 107,000 acres of land throughout our region. These 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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