



Friends of the Gualala River

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March 25, 2013

Doug Bosco, Chairman
State Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 13th floor
Oakland, CA 94612
c/o Karyn Gear kgear@scc.ca.gov

Re: Preservation Ranch

Dear Chairman Bosco:

The Friends of the Gualala River enthusiastically **supports** the Coastal Conservancy staff recommendation to assist The Conservation Fund in the purchase of Preservation Ranch in western Sonoma County.

This is a rare opportunity to protect such a significantly large and important portion of the remaining undeveloped lands of the County. A failure to purchase and protect would result in a far-flung and destructive development of luxury homes and ridge top vineyards being dropped into 20 thousand acres of presently wild land in the remote hills of coastal Sonoma County.

The property contains a large portion of the headwaters of the Gualala River, precious rearing habitat to the struggling salmon and steelhead populations in the Gualala River watershed. This river is EPA 303d listed as an impaired river, impacted by sediment and high temperatures and its future recovery depends on preventing further impacts. Your crucial support in the purchase of this significant addition to protected forestland in Sonoma County will also head off a long and heated legal battle powered by widespread community opposition and led by a broad coalition of environmental groups.

The acquisition of the former Preservation Ranch project lands will permanently protect the forested watershed from development impacts of expanded permanent road networks, reservoirs, and agricultural pesticides, water demands, and fencing. Beyond providing true "preservation", the acquisition will provide unique opportunities for North Coast watershed and salmonid conservation, including:

- Consolidating 20,000 acres of coastal forestland and coastal streams, forever protecting them from fragmentation and degradation due to intensive agriculture or water withdrawal;
- Demonstrating the sustainable, long-term productivity of a coastal watershed with conservation forestry management that balances public trust resource protection and economic growth along with a visitor-based coastal economy;
- Protection of flows and water quality for recovery of steelhead and coho salmon;

- Protecting the supply of clean water for The Sea Ranch and Gualala, and the groundwater supplies that sustain streamflows
- Protecting and recovering the biological diversity of the heart of the Gualala River watershed
- Protection of Pomo cultural heritage sites that are integral to the human and natural landscape
- Providing new opportunities for public education, limited public access, and community-based monitoring and habitat restoration

The participation of the Coastal Conservancy in assisting The Conservation Fund and its partners will assure that a unique opportunity will not be lost. This is a chance to permanently establish a future of habitat protection and restoration along with true sustainable forest management for these coastal lands. These goals have been central to the missions of numerous state and regional plans. County general plans, federal and state fish recovery plans, and water quality control plans to name a few will all have their goals furthered by the acquisition and protection of Preservation Ranch lands.

We wholeheartedly urge you to vote affirmatively to approve the participation of the Coastal Conservancy in the partnership effort to purchase Preservation Ranch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Poehlmann". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Chris Poehlmann
President
Friends of the Gualala River