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Peninsula Open Space Trust Transfers Farm Ownership and Adds Infrastructure Improvements and Farmworker Housing on Fourth San Mateo Coastal Agricultural Property

NINE-YEAR-OLD FARMLAND PROGRAM BOLSTERS LAND PROTECTIONS VIA LOCAL, LONG-TERM OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

Palo Alto, Calif. – February 15, 2024 — [Peninsula Open Space Trust](#) (POST) today announced the successful completion of two ownership transfers, two new agricultural conservation easements and a major farmworker housing grant across four independent farms that POST has partnered with and protected. Since launching its Farmland Futures Initiative in 2015, POST has protected more than 2,000 acres of farm and grazing land in San Mateo County (*see map at bottom*). The Initiative was created to counter the mounting economic and political pressures that have led to the disappearance of 46% of the County’s farms since 1990.

Blue House Farm at San Gregorio Transferred to Farmer Ownership

This month, POST transfers ownership of the 74-acre San Gregorio Farm to longtime tenant and operator Ryan Casey of [Blue House Farm](#). POST acquired the historic farm in 2015. The following year, POST awarded Blue House Farm a long-term agricultural lease with the intention of ultimately transferring ownership of the property, which is now permanently protected by an agricultural easement. POST and Casey have collaborated to make significant investments and improvements to the infrastructure of the farm: 12 bedrooms in four units of farmworker housing; an improved and enlarged reservoir that eliminates water withdraws from the adjacent San Gregorio Creek during dry summer months; and a refurbished barn and packing shed. The operation has grown to include a roadside stand, “u-pick” options and a presence at farmers’ markets throughout the Bay Area.



“This outcome is exactly why POST created our Farmland Futures Initiative nine years ago,” said **Walter T. Moore**, president of POST. “Our vision from the outset has been to protect and improve prime San Mateo County farmland so that it can remain in active, sustainable production in perpetuity. Local farms not only add to the beauty of our region, but sustainably managed farmland plays a vital role in the health of our environment, our economy and our people.”

“POST’s partnership has been a critical factor in building a sustainable operation at Blue House Farm,” said **Ryan Casey**, founder and owner of the farm. “I am so proud that our operation has consistently supported a community of farm workers and provided organic, nourishing food to Coastsiders and the broader Bay Area. Full ownership, improved infrastructure and stable housing for our team is a dream come true.”

South Cowell Ranch Protected and Transferred



This protected 611-acre agricultural property is five miles south of Half Moon Bay along Highway 1 and home to [Bob’s Vegetable Stand and Pumpkin Patch](#), a beloved and iconic San Mateo Coastside destination. Following the April 2023 transfer from POST to [Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District](#) (Midpen), ownership of the property is now shared by Midpen and the Marsh Family Trust. The Marsh family has worked this property for over 100 years and POST has partnered with the Marshes since the late 1980s to protect

the property and keep it in active agricultural use. In recent years, POST enhanced the conservation easement on the property to ensure continuation of agricultural activities and allow for future public access on the uplands portion of the property that abuts Midpen’s 5,000+ acre Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. POST also recently restored a farmhouse on the uplands portion, which now acts as a residence for Midpen staff, built a new corral and invested in water storage infrastructure.

Funding Future Farmworker Housing at Fifth Crow Farm at Cloverdale Ranch

As POST has done on three other farms it has worked with – Blue House Farm, R&R Fresh Farms and at [Cloverdale Ranch](#) – POST recently partnered with the San Mateo County Department of Housing to secure funding that will allow [Fifth Crow Farm](#) to construct farmworker housing on a POST-owned



property, which will support Fifth Crow’s broader 150-acre operation. The funding includes a \$900,000 no-interest forgivable loan from the County’s Farm Labor Housing Loan program, with additional direct investments from both the farm and POST. The funding enables construction of a total of eight bedrooms to house farmworkers and their families. This project will bring the number of workers and family members housed on these four POST-protected properties to nearly 50, for a total investment of \$2.9M from the County, farmers, and POST since 2015.

“In our many years working to protect our region’s agriculture for the long-term, we have learned that we must invest in infrastructure as well as in the land itself,” explained **Laura O’Leary**, POST’s senior farmland project manager. “Housing for farmworkers, ecologically responsible water resources and farm infrastructure are all required for an agricultural operation to be successful and self-sustaining. It’s getting harder and harder for farmers to do this on

their own. That’s why POST is here.”

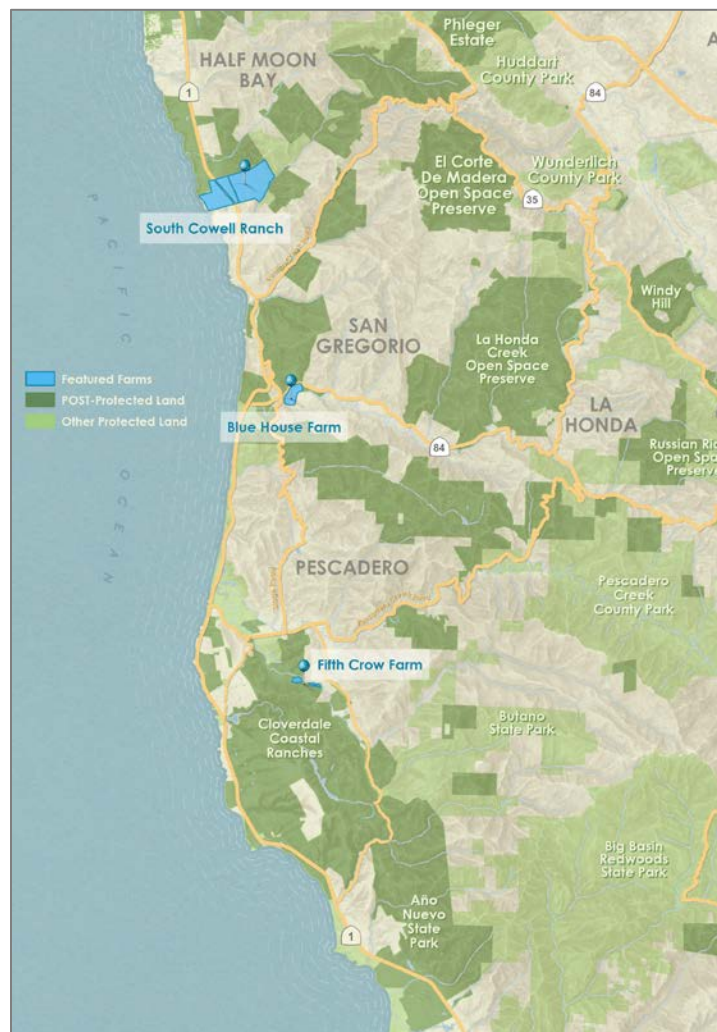
Supporting long-term sustainable farming takes a full network of partners. POST’s farmland program has been complemented by the important work of [Kitchen Table Advisors](#), [The Farmlink Project](#), [San Mateo County Resource Conservation District](#) and many others.

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About Peninsula Open Space Trust

POST protects open space on the Peninsula and in the South Bay for the benefit of all. As a private nonprofit land trust, POST has been responsible for protecting more than 87,000 acres since its founding in 1977. POST works with private landowners and public agencies to connect people and nature. Visit openspacetrust.org for more information.

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