



VHC Press Release – March 27, 2015

Ventura Hillside Conservancy awarded \$1 million to buy 300 acre hillside property

(VENTURA, Calif.) - The Ventura Hillside Conservancy is excited to announce that we have been awarded a \$1 million grant from the California Natural Resources Agency to purchase roughly 300 acres of the 2,123-acre Walker-Hearne Ranch property. The land, located directly east of the Clearpoint residential community in East Ventura, represents the first major purchase of hillside land for the Conservancy. It includes oak woodland, riparian and coastal sage habitat types and stunning views of the Channel Islands and Santa Clara river valley. The grant, awarded through CNRA's Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, serves to mitigate some of the environmental impacts to coastal sage scrub and riparian habitats associated with the U.S. Highway 101 widening project along the Rincon. While the Conservancy has acquired seven properties totaling over 26 acres of land in the Ventura River watershed, this grant represents our largest acquisition yet.

State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson said "I am very pleased that the Ventura Hillside Conservancy has received critical funding that will go toward the acquisition and preservation of more than 1,700 acres in western Ventura County. This will preserve wetlands and wildlife habitat, provide nature trails for our residents, and protect this land for generations to come."

Ventura County Supervisor Steve Bennett said "This million-dollar grant from the State recognizes the importance of preserving the Ventura Hillside Conservancy and reflects the strength and capacity of the Ventura Hillside Conservancy. This a keystone acquisition which will hopefully be the first of many to preserve the Ventura Hillside Conservancy and open them for public recreation. All of the Board members and supporters of the Hillside Conservancy deserve our thanks and congratulations for bringing our community to this historic point."

David Hadlen, managing partner of the property, said "The Walker-Hearne Ranch is owned by the eight great grandchildren of William Sexton, who, along with his brother Joseph, purchased the land grant property in 1883 (it was Joseph who planted the 13 eucalyptus trees above Ventura in 1898). After working closely with the Ventura Hillside Conservancy and talking to members of the Ventura community over the past three and a half years, the family and the Conservancy have discussed a balanced plan for the future of the Walker-Hearne Ranch. The initial sale of approximately 300 acres to the Conservancy is a solid first step toward the goal of a much broader Conservancy ownership and/or management and one that provides access by the public."

David Comden, president of the Conservancy is "delighted that this purchase enables us to begin implementing our vision for preserving the hillside Conservancy for the benefit of our

community, which has been VHC's mission since its inception."

Derek Poultney, Conservation Manager: "We expect escrow to close later this year and we'll continue working on obtaining additional funding sources to purchase more acreage. The Conservancy has been working on conserving the property since December 2011 and we're looking forward to achieving our project goals over the next few years.

The **Ventura Hillsides Conservancy** is a land trust operating in the Ventura region to protect and conserve open space resources through acquisition of land and easements, stewardship of protected lands, and public education about local natural resources.

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