

For Immediate Release: May 12, 2005 Contact:

California State Parks – Roy Stearns (916) 654-7538

Department of Conservation – Ed Wilson (916) 324-0864

TPL –Debra Geiler (415) 495-5660 x496 or Mary Menees (415) 495-5660 x375

Federal, State and Private Partners Jointly Fund Purchase of 5,000 Year Old Native American Archeological Site, Agricultural Operations, and Pristine Beach

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, CA—The California Resources Agency announced today that the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit land conservation group, along with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Conservation, the Coastal Conservancy, Caltrans and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, have partnered to permanently shield from development the 154-acre Sand Hill Bluff property. Valued at \$12 million, part of the property will be added to the California State Parks system.

“This site has many resources, including a tremendous archaeological site, rich historic farmland, and sheer beauty,” California Resources Secretary Michael Chrisman said. “We’re very pleased that it has been permanently protected for future generations to enjoy.”

Agri-Culture, a nonprofit organization that educates the public about agriculture and preserves agricultural land, will manage 64 acres of farmland on Sand Hill Bluff, ensuring that it continues as farmland. TPL negotiated the deal and purchased the 154-acre property for \$9.6 million, a savings of \$2.4 million for the public.

Just off Highway One south of Davenport, Sand Hill Bluff is wedged between Coast Dairies—a vast 7,000-acre property protected by TPL in 1998—and Wilder Ranch State Park. Sand Hill Bluff is one of the last links in a chain of acquisitions that adds up to more than 13 miles of coastline and nearly 12,000 acres of land. Once the property is open to the public, visitors will be able to view the ocean from the high

1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311, Sacramento, CA 95814 Ph. 916.653.5656 Fax 916.653.8102 <http://resources.ca.gov>

coastal bluffs and sun themselves on the property's clean, protected beach. They will also be able to visit the impressive 5,000-year-old archeological site left behind by ancestral Ohlone peoples.

"This is a small site of major historic significance," explained State Park Director Ruth Coleman.

"Through this unique partnership, we are preserving a beautiful stretch of coastline. But even more importantly, we are protecting a place that is one of the oldest known sites of human occupation and one of the best preserved archeological sites in California, a place that dates back thousands of years. Sand Hill Bluff is a great addition to the state park system."

Public access won't happen immediately: State Parks, Agri-Culture, and the community will work with park staff to allow public access that won't cause problems for the farm or damage the irreplaceable cultural resources found on the property.

"This site has many resources, including a tremendous archaeological site, rich historic farmland, and sheer beauty," says Reed Holderman, executive director of TPL-California. "TPL could not have helped protect this amazing property without the incredible partnership of local, state, and federal government agencies, and the ongoing support of TPL's generous donors."

The California Department of Parks and Recreation acquired from TPL a 90-acre portion closest to the shoreline to manage for public access and recreation, protection of the coastal resources and the shell midden, and agricultural leasing. Funding came from voter-approved Proposition 40 state bond funds through the California Department of Parks and Recreation for \$3,100,000 and from the Caltrans Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation program for \$500,000.

The State Department of Conservation's Farmland Conservancy Program and the State Coastal Conservancy each contributed \$2,000,000, from voter-approved Propositions 12, 40, and 50, toward the purchase of the remaining 64 acres with the intent that this land stay in agricultural production as it has for more than 100 years. TPL transferred this portion of the property to Agri-Culture who will own and manage it until they find a farmer to purchase the property restricted with an agricultural conservation easement. The non-profit will then hold the easement. Much of Sand Hill Bluff has been designated farmland of statewide importance. One of TPL's objectives was to ensure that the farming of a variety of crops, such as Brussels sprouts and artichokes, could continue on the land.

"Sand Hills Bluff is an excellent example of farmland under pressure from development, and the

Department of Conservation is very pleased to have helped preserve it for permanent agricultural use,” said DOC Interim Director Debbie Sareeram. “The goal of our grants program is to help balance the needs of the traditional agricultural economy with the needs of a growing population. Preserving outstanding farmland is an increasingly important issue.”

The California Congressional delegation, led by Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (D-14) secured \$2,000,000 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program.

Senator Feinstein, a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee said, “The Sand Hill Bluff property is a historic gem and I am pleased that it will be preserved for future generations to appreciate its rich farmland and beautiful coastal views. I am glad that I could be a part of this significant conservation effort that was led by the Trust for Public Land.”

A tireless crusader on behalf of the environment, Representative Eshoo said, “The public purchase of Sand Hill Bluff helps protect California’s natural, agricultural, and historic legacy, now and for future generations. I am proud to be a part of this important effort to provide more public access to our magnificent coastline.”

This effort was also supported by Congressman Sam Farr (D-17), a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

The protection of Sand Hill Bluff is a testament to the cooperation between disparate groups with different visions. “This is a great success story for the protection of coastal resources and for the long-term viability of coastal agriculture,” says Sam Schuchat, executive director of the California Coastal Conservancy.

California Assemblyman John Laird and Santa Cruz County Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt provided key state and local support for the acquisition.

The winner of numerous environmental awards and well known for his work protecting the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, creating the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and fighting for environmental issues statewide, Assemblymember Laird said, “Thanks to this investment in the conservation of Sand Hill Bluff, it will be available for future generations to

explore and enjoy.”

Longtime advocate for agricultural and natural resource protection, Santa Cruz County Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt added, “The Sand Hill Bluff property brings together environmentalist and agricultural advocates. Both sides have worked hard together to protect this extraordinary place.”

“This is a unique area. We’re very excited about Sand Hill Bluff,” says Bill Ringe, president of Agriculture. “Our goal is to protect farmlands and to ensure that agriculture stays alive. And I’m hoping that this will mean that my great-grandchildren are going to be able to know what a farm is in California,” he says. That’s important to Ringe, whose great-grandparents started farming in California in 1863.

TPL is a national nonprofit land conservation organization dedicated to conserving land for people as parks, greenways, wilderness areas and natural, historic and cultural resources for future generations. Founded in 1972, TPL has protected more than 2 million acres nationwide.

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