

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy Acquires 15 Acres Through Innovative Real Estate Transaction

CARDIFF, Calif., May 16, 2004 - San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy has acquired 15 acres of land adjacent to the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve and Ford Wildlife Habitat Preserve. The acquisition involved an innovative real estate transaction that not only transfers ownership of the land but turns the purchase price into a permanent endowment that benefits SELC.

“The Rancho Santa Fe Foundation, California Coastal Conservancy, and San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy worked closely together to permanently protect this land,” said Doug Gibson, SELC executive director.

The land, known as the Van Liew property, consists of several parcels of land in the Escondido Creek watershed, north of La Bajada Bridge in Encinitas. It was donated by the Van Liew Family in 1985 to the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation and since then has served as open space between Rancho Santa Fe and the city of Encinitas.

“In donating the land, the Van Liew family wished to ensure that a portion of the Escondido Creek flood plain in the Olivenhain Valley was preserved for nature habitat and open space uses,” said John Seiber, member of the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation Board of Directors and a founding member of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy’s President’s Council.

During the last 19 years, the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation held this property while the Rancho Santa Fe Association carried insurance on the land, paid property taxes, and generally performed routine maintenance, such as weed abatement.

About one year ago, the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation offered to sell the Van Liew property to SELC with the goal of having biologists create and implement a habitat restoration plan. In order to move forward with the transaction, SELC contacted the California Coastal Conservancy, which had funds available for the acquisition of new properties. A significant feature of the transaction was agreement among the parties that the \$367,000 purchase price of the land be placed in a permanent endowment for SELC at the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation.

“In this way, both organizations were gaining,” said Gayle Gillies Mize, Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation. “The Foundation was gaining a significant endowment for an organization that we support and the SELC was gaining an endowment that would assist with the maintenance of the property in perpetuity.”

The California Coastal Conservancy (<http://www.coastalconservancy.ca.gov/>), established in 1976, is a state agency that uses entrepreneurial techniques to purchase, protect, restore, and enhance coastal resources, and to provide access to the shore.

The Rancho Santa Fe Foundation (www.rsffoundation.org/) gives financial support and encouragement to organizations whose activities serve to maintain and enhance the beauty and quality of life for all residents of Rancho Santa Fe.

Since 2000, the Conservancy has been instrumental in the acquisition of approximately 90 acres of land, resulting in a 10% increase in the amount of protected land within the reserve.