



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Muir Heritage Land Trust Awarded Nearly \$2 Million for Fernandez Ranch Restoration and Public Access Project

Martinez, CA

Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman announced today that the Muir Heritage Land Trust (MHLT) has been awarded \$1.92 million from the highly competitive California River Parkways Grant Program for its Fernandez Ranch project off of Highway 4 between Martinez and Hercules, CA.

“We’re absolutely ecstatic and deeply grateful that the Fernandez Ranch project was selected for this grant. The property will offer tremendous public recreational opportunities and wonderful benefits to wildlife and water quality. With such generous funding from the California Resources Agency, MHLT will get the project done.” said MHLT Executive Director Linus Eukel upon hearing the news.

The River Parkways grant will provide two-thirds of the capital funding needed to open Fernandez Ranch to the public and complete a large-scale creek restoration and habitat enhancement plan. Project partners include the State Coastal Conservancy and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council.

Approximately \$1 million of this grant will be used to restore and enhance unstable and degraded sections of Rodeo Creek. More than 2,500 linear feet of riparian habitat will be restored with over 10,000 native plants. Approximately \$900,000 of the grant will support public-access amenities including a staging area for cars and equestrian trailers; a pedestrian and emergency-vehicle bridge spanning Rodeo Creek; approximately 3.5 miles of multi-use wildland trails, of which ½ mile will be ADA accessible, and four picnic areas with interpretive elements.

“Fernandez Ranch is the Land Trust’s most regionally and nationally significant project to date. It will become part of the San Francisco Bay Area Ridge Trail system and it provides significant habitat for federally listed threatened wildlife species.” says Eukel.

The project budget is \$2.8 million and matching funding will be provided by the State Coastal Conservancy, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council and the Oakmead Foundation among many others.

Creek cleanup and preparation work has already begun at the site by the East Bay Conservation Corps and volunteers. Final plans, permitting and major construction will start in 2008. Fernandez Ranch is expected to open to the public in 2010.

Environmental education is a priority of this project, and the Muir Heritage Land Trust plans to involve the East Bay Conservation Corps, Martinez Unified School District's Environmental Studies Academy, Contra Costa County Office of Education's Regional Occupational Program and local community volunteers in all phases of the work.

The Muir Heritage Land Trust acquired the 702-acre Fernandez Ranch in 2005 for \$3.2 million with funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board, State Coastal Conservancy and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation among many other smaller foundations and private donors.

The California River Parkway grant program came into being when California voters approved Proposition 50, the "Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act" in 2002. According to the California Resources Agency: "The act authorized the Legislature to appropriate funds for the acquisition, restoration, protection and development of river parkways. The California River Parkway Program, a competitive grant program administered by the Office of the Secretary for Resources, awards funds to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop river parkways in their communities."

For more information, please visit us on the web at: www.muirheritagelandtrust.org

The Muir Heritage Land Trust has been working to acquire lands and land preservation agreements since 1988. With members from all over the Bay Area, the trust focuses on the preservation of natural areas and environmental education throughout Contra Costa County, including the communities of Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Concord, Martinez, Alamo, Danville, San Ramon, Hercules, Pinole, Richmond, Rodeo and San Pablo. Since it's founding, the Muir Heritage Land Trust has protected over 2000 acres for people to enjoy through recreational opportunities that include wildlife observation, hiking, horse back riding and environmental education.