



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY **CONSERVATION BLUEPRINT**

THE NEED FOR A CONSERVATION STRATEGY PLAN

Santa Barbara County is a special place with unmatched scenery, abundant recreation opportunities, incredible diversity of plants and animals, and productive agricultural lands – all of which contribute to our economy and quality of life. County residents have been good stewards of these resources with a long history of effective land management, conservation and environmental protection. Yet, there is no comprehensive compilation of the natural resources, conservation values or land conservation opportunities in the county.

THE OPPORTUNITY

With increasing pressure to accommodate population growth on open space and agriculture lands, along with the new realities of climate change, it is critical that we have a collective vision and strategy for the future of our community's most important wild and working landscapes. This is best accomplished through creation of comprehensive countywide plan that reflects our shared values and objectives for preserving our special lands. We are launching a community engagement process leading to a **CONSERVATION BLUEPRINT** that will provide a science based decision making platform for conservation and land protection.

PROJECT LEADERS

The Santa Barbara County **CONSERVATION BLUEPRINT** is being developed in partnership with Santa Barbara Foundation's LEAF Initiative (Landscapes, Ecosystems, Agriculture, Food Systems), the Cachuma Resource Conservation District and the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County. The Blueprint is funded by a consortium of foundations and donors through the Land Trust and the LEAF Initiative fund.

APPROACH

Over the course of 18-24 months, an 'atlas' describing natural resources and land assets in Santa Barbara County will be developed with community input. The information will be presented in a report and through a mapping 'tool' with the ability to analyze data for wide range of end users and planning scenarios. The assessment modeling tool will be the basis for informed discussions on shared values and community needs, such as working farms and ranches, open space, parks, recreational opportunities or housing, culminating in a comprehensive written plan to serve as a roadmap for conservation planning in the county.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

We anticipate a wide range of stakeholders utilizing the final plan and assessment tool for their own strategies and goals. We also envision there will be greater collaboration and working relationships through networks formed as part of the process – conservation practitioners, developers, land owners and managers, farmers and ranchers, planners, housing advocates, energy advocates, and conservation funders. There are many potential outcomes through the inclusive community process, but many agree this will be transformational for our region.

SUCCESS STORIES FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES

BAY AREA CONSERVATION LANDS NETWORK

The Network established conservation priorities across San Francisco Bay area counties; increased cross agency focus on common values and threats to conservation; and fostered conservation of over 100,000 acres of land in the first 3 years.

SANTA CLARA VALLEY

The Open Space Authority's 'Greenprint' identified conservation priorities, increased public understanding of conservation trade-offs, and fostered conservation partnerships that led to passage of an Open Space, Habitat, Clean Water and Public Access measure that generated funding for implementation.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Their conservation planning 'Blueprint' is the accepted frame of reference for most development and conservation decisions. It is described as 'transformational' for uniting different aspects of their community behind a strategic approach.



The Cachuma Resource Conservation District was founded in 1944 – one of the first RCDs in California. Their mission is to promote land stewardship ethics that result in long-term, sustainable use of natural resources while protecting and enhancing the environment. For more information: Anne Coates at acoates@rcdsantabarbara.org



The Land Trust works to preserve and enhance our county's natural open spaces and agricultural heritage for present and future generations. Since its inception in 1985 the Land Trust of Santa Barbara County has helped to preserve over 24,000 acres of natural resource and agricultural land. For more information: visit www.sblandtrust.org



The Santa Barbara Foundation is committed to building philanthropy, strengthening the nonprofit sector and solving community problems. The foundation has launched the LEAF Initiative to address landscapes, ecosystems, agriculture and food systems in our county. For more information: Sharyn Main, Director of LEAF Initiative at smain@sbfoundation.org

Examples of what is possible:

- **Develop a science based platform** for community dialog based on common language
- **Increase funds** for conservation, restoration and best practices
- **Increase land conservation** with strategic planning and prioritization
- **Promote greater appreciation** and support for conservation and ecosystem health
- **Create community resiliency** to development pressure and climate change

FOUR WAYS YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

Your participation is critical to the success of this effort. Working groups and community engagement opportunities will allow for your voice to be heard (beginning Fall 2015):

1. Help us identify the conservation values you treasure.
2. Provide input on your vision for conservation priorities.
3. Spread the word about conservation as an essential element of preserving the things you love most about this beautiful place we live.
4. Assist us in fostering a greater community understanding of the connections between conservation planning and local food, clean water, natural habitat, working lands and the remaining open space.