

Green Valley Land Conservation Project Twenty-eighth Annual Report and Proposed 2019-20 Budget to the Solano County Board of Supervisors

Introduction

This document is the 28th annual report since the establishment of the Green Valley Land Conservation project. In 1990, the City of Fairfield, County of Solano and residents of the rural Green Valley community finalized a unique agreement designed to foster the preservation of a viable agricultural base and maintain open space within Green Valley. In order to accomplish these goals, the Green Valley community voted to assess itself in order to generate funds for the acquisition of property and easements of open space and agricultural land, and, where necessary, to maintain the same. The City of Fairfield maintains the funds in a separate, interest-bearing account, and provides matching monies from a City-sponsored Mello-Roos tax district, the proceeds of which are to be used in the Green Valley area.

Purpose and Area Served

The purpose of the Green Valley Land Conservation Project is to preserve a viable agricultural industry and open space amenities within Green Valley. The service area for the Green Valley Project was set by the Green Valley settlement agreement and an agreement between the City of Fairfield, County of Solano and the non-profit Solano Land Trust (SLT), formerly known as Solano County Farmlands & Open Space Foundation. It is defined as follows:

“Beginning at the point where State Route 12 crosses the Napa-Solano County line, north and east along the Napa-County line to Suisun Valley Road, then south along Suisun Valley Road to Interstate 80, west to State Route 12, then west to the point of the beginning.”

The City and County have contracted with SLT to serve as trustee for the community in carrying out this project. Responsibilities include administrative functions reasonably related to the project purpose, and to hold title, easements, or less-than-fee interest in lands involved in the project area. The Board of Directors of SLT has established priorities based on advice from the Green Valley Landowners' Association as follows:

1. Floor of middle Green Valley,
2. Lands east of Green Valley and west of the floor of Green Valley,
3. More remote and rugged lands west, north and east of Green Valley, and
4. Other lands within the service area.

Tools for Conservation

The underlying concept of the project is voluntary cooperation. This is based on the assumption that the idea of agricultural and open space conservation coupled with available funding and the ability to pay market prices will prove attractive to landowners and they will participate voluntarily. All acquisitions by SLT require a willing seller. SLT does not have the right to use eminent domain proceedings to take property from unwilling sellers.

There are two categories of tools available to SLT to accomplish the Green Valley Project purposes, acquisition of fee simple interest and acquisition of conservation easements. Acquisition of conservation easements does not require public access to property. In addition, the property remains in private hands and on the tax rolls:

- *Fee Simple:* purchase of, or receipt of donation of, the fee title to land
- *Conservation Easement:* purchase of, or receipt of donation of, development rights to land

As part of the Green Valley settlement agreement, SLT expanded its Board to include two representatives of the Green Valley Landowners Association (GVLA). In September 2012, SLT revised its board structure to provide balanced representation of five groups, including public sector, agriculture, resource conservation, business community, and members-at-large. One of the at-large directors continues to be appointed by the GVLA board. The current GVLA representative is Mr. David Eimrol.

Green Valley Activities in 2018-19

The primary accomplishments of the past fiscal year were in the following areas:

1. Acquisition Projects and Project Development

Rockville Trail Preserve- the Solano County Board of Supervisors approved the CEQA documents for Rockville Trails Preserve and issued a Project Planning Overlay in 2017, which provides guidelines to follow moving forward with construction and implementation of the property as a public open space. SLT has been working with a trail designer to finalize trail designs and will be using a portion of GVOSMD funds, along with City of Fairfield CFD #2 funds, to initiate new trail construction in the Summer of 2019. Fundraising for the parking lot and other infrastructure will continue through 2020, with the goal of construction in 2020.

SLT continues to follow discussions regarding the Vallejo Lakes property with the GVLA, Solano County and the City of Vallejo. The Vallejo Lakes property is important grazing land, high quality habitat, and would be another vital piece in the regional trail connection puzzle. Vallejo Lakes has a mix of oak woodland habitat and grassland containing dozens of species of special concern.

2. Conservation Easement Monitoring

During the past year, Tracy Ellison, SLT's Conservation Program Manager, monitored the Rowe conservation easement.

3. Coordination with GVLA

David Eimrel is the GVLA representative on the SLT Board (since 2015), and is chair of SLT's Audit Committee. SLT, David and GVLA Board President, Roger Merrill meet, as needed, to discuss opportunities for SLT and GVLA coordination and make sure the public is aware of pertinent information regarding Rockville Trails.

4. Open Space Planning Effort

SLT completed its Solano Natural Areas Protection (SNAP) Plan in 2015 to prioritize its agricultural and natural resource protection work in the future. The SNAP Plan will be a companion plan to SLT's

Agricultural Conservation Easement Plan developed in 2002 that established priorities for protection of agricultural land in the county. Through the year there were continued efforts to identify those priority lands for landowner outreach and direct SLT's conservation work.

5. Agricultural Conservation Easement Planning

Over the past year, SLT continued work to identify high priority agricultural lands in Solano County through the creation of the SNAP tool, including lands in the Green Valley area.

6. Additional Conservation Activities Taking Place in the Green Valley

In 2018, SLT began talks with one Green Valley landowner that is a participant of the Middle Green Valley Specific Plan and in need of a conservation easement on his/her land. These talks will lay the ground work for all future easement needs. SLT has continued to stay in communication with County Planners as it relates to the Sales Participant Agreement and County needs. This project continues to move forward in 2019 with the potential close of a conservation easement in Green Valley by end of 2019

Green Valley Land Conservation Project – 2018-19 Financial Summary

The FY 18-19 financial summary for the Green Valley Open Space Maintenance District and the financial summary for the North Cordelia Facility District – CFD#2 are included as Attachment A. The proposed FY 19-20 budget for GVOS is summarized in Attachment B.

For further information regarding the Green Valley Land Conservation Project contact Nicole Braddock, Executive Director of Solano Land Trust, 700 Main Street, Suite 210, Suisun City CA, 94585.

Attachment A.

SOLANO LAND TRUST
GREEN VALLEY LAND CONSERVATION PROJECT
GVOS FINANCIAL SUMMARY FY 18-19 (as of 5/23/2019)

I. Green Valley Open Space Maintenance District (Fund 589)

REVENUES

Tax Receipts, 2018-2019	104,615
Interest, 2018-2019	<u>11,978</u>
Subtotal	116,593

EXPENSES

Trust Project Expenses	14,141
Solano County Collection Charges	1,068
City Engineer Report & Admin	2,250
City Finance/audit costs	<u>462</u>
Subtotal	17,921

ACQUISITION RESERVE FUND

Fund Balance, July 1, 2018	739,421
Net Revenue, 2018-2019	<u>98,672</u>
Reserve Fund Balance, May 23, 2019	838,093

Operating Balance at end of year	<u>10,000</u>
Total Cash Balance Fund 589 May 23, 2019	848,093

