



FALL 2019

LEGACY

what's new!

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PROTECTING THE FARMS THAT FEED YOUR FAMILY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Charlotte Mitchell

Fall is a special time of year. In the farming world it is the culmination of the season's long hard days, guarded optimism regarding crop yields and market prices, a time to reflect on the year's successes and failures, and to start planning for next year. Here at CFT it means a time of reflection of the current year, plan for next year, the next 5 years, 10 years, and perpetuity. But most importantly it is time to enjoy family around the table of freshly prepared food. Food is the thread that binds us all.

In 2019, CFT worked with eight family farmers and protected 584 acres throughout two Central Valley counties which brought us to a total of nearly 16,400 acres of our 20,000 acres by 2020 goal. California's Central Valley is home to the most productive farmland in the world and these farmlands are under threat. Under threat from various economic challenges, regulatory programs, and conversion to non-agricultural uses. Securing lands with an agricultural conservation easement helps indicate to local jurisdictions that these lands must be left to grow the food for this growing state and challenge them to think about good land use planning. Building blocks of agricultural lands that will be protected for farming is an important priority to CFT.

Not only has 2019 earned additional protected acres, we also are excited to announce an addition to our Trustee Council, Ann Veneman. Ann has a distinguished career in public service from California, to the nation, and around the globe. She is also the only woman to ever serve as Secretary of the USDA and in 2009 Forbes World listed her as one of their 100 most powerful women. Her list of achievements is long and exceptional, please read more about her on our website. We are extremely honored to have Ann join our Trustee Council of distinctive members representing the agricultural industry.

Lastly, 2020 will prove again to be a busy year. Our board of directors will be focused on perpetuity planning to ensure our



organization is viable forever to ensure our farmland easements are stewarded by an organization who understands the industry. In the coming weeks we will be announcing a very special story of one of our easement holders and the history of the Merced area. Be watching our social medial channels and our website to see 'Concrete California'; a story of living on the farm and the struggle generations had to go through to keep it.

We hope you will consider making a year-end donation to the California Farmland Trust. Ninety-three cents of every dollar donated goes towards protecting the farmlands that feed our families. Help us reach our goal of 20,000 by 2020 and protect the food that is the thread that binds us all.

With my sincere appreciation,

OUR MISSION

Help Farmers Protect the Best Farmland in the World

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Ann Veneman
Paul Wenger

Contributors:

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Chelsea Molina
Aundria Montzingo
Raley's



Member in Good Standing



EASEMENT CELEBRATION



At the time of this celebration, nearly 220 additional acres of California farmland became conserved forever, resulting in a total of nearly 16,200 acres administered by CFT. Like-minded farmers worked with CFT to permanently protect their properties through agricultural conservation easements. The easements dedicate the land to farming and prohibit the conversion to non-agricultural uses, even if the land is sold or inherited.

CONTINUING GROWTH — OF PROTECTING FARMLAND



It has been a year full of growth for CFT, not only staff wise, but also for the number of acres protected through easements closed, combined with several new easement projects in process. By the conclusion of this year CFT will have officially closed on nine projects bringing our total acres of farmland protected to reach over 16,400! Keep in mind, CFT closed on nine projects in 2018 as well.

We are excited to keep up with this pace and continue our growth into 2020 as we pursue grant funding for 15 new projects from San Joaquin County to Fresno County! Working on this many conservation projects at one time and now down in Fresno County, is a long sought-after milestone for CFT. These properties

CFT hosted an easement celebration October 3rd at the Slater Trust Farm to recognize and thank those who chose to protect their farms. “My late father would be proud to know the first farm he purchased is now forever protected for agriculture,” said Gail Martin as part of her remarks to the morning crowd.

Thank you to Kruppa Farm, Kruppa Reed Farm, Slater Trust Farm, Tanner Farm, Gail Martin Trust Farm, Murphy Farm and the Magneson Property. With the protection of these farms, our total acreage protected has reached nearly 16,200! Your continued support, combined with the support of our partners and funders, including the Department of Conservation, plays a critical role in the work we do to protect the best farmland in the world.

“Linking these properties through permanent conservation is a win-win for everyone,” said Charlotte Mitchell, CFT Executive Director, “the landowners, the public, and the land.”

are strategically near other conserved lands, that would create an additional 2,000 acres of farmland under protection if awarded grant funding.

Though we are just shy of our goal set back in 2015 by former CFT board member, John Herlihy, to protect 20,000 acres by 2020, we are continuing to work to secure as many new grants as possible with our agency partners and other entities. On the other hand, we have and are continuing to attain our main goal, to ensure that our precious farmlands can be protected for you and our next generations – because we want to protect the farms that feed your family. We care about farmers and will continue to pursue partnerships and collaborative projects that keep California farmers farming and California thriving.

By no means has this year been an easy feat. It has taken years of the support by everyone involved, from our farmers, landowners, staff, volunteers, board, supporters, and partners. We couldn't have done it without our strong foundation and your continued support.

We can't wait to provide our supporters of farmland with an update on the projects we will be moving forward with during 2020 and beyond in order to protect the best farmland in the world – stay tuned!

YOU WORK TOGETHER

A Family's Story of Perseverance



To Jean Okuye, nothing is more important than her family and friends.

That's why, in 1980, Jean didn't hesitate when a family member's sudden death left the farm unattended. She and her husband Paul, who grew up on the farm, immediately uprooted their two tween-age children and traded their new, custom 7-year-old Montecito, Santa Barbara tract-home for the weathered 60-year-old family farmhouse near Livingston.

"We all had to work together to survive," Jean recalls. Her lively green eyes dance as she remembers, with a nostalgic smile lighting her venerable features. Then a piano teacher, she was raised on the outskirts of a small town in Northern California. She enrolled in a course taught by the local farm advisor, and armed with her newfound knowledge on pruning, watering, and "all the legal stuff," got to work. She with Paul (an agricultural biologist), and their reluctant children in tow, were quickly put to the test. Two tractor fires, a house fire, and a host of other crises later, the family became bona-fide farmers. "That's one of the blessings about having a small farm," Jean explains. "You work together."

Over the farm's 111-year-history, "work together" has become the de facto family motto. Paul's grandfather, Seinosuke Okuye, emigrated from Japan in 1907. He landed in a peaceful enclave

on the northern edge of Merced County known as Yamato Colony, where the Japanese-American community embraced him. The Okuye family purchased 200+ acres, on which they farmed and hosted other immigrants. In the early 1900s, the property was dotted with 13 small cabins which were home to newly-arrived "Issei" (first-generation) men eager to work their way to a better life.



Life in Yamato Colony wasn't without difficulties. In February 1942, Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, requiring relocation of Japanese-Americans living

on the West Coast. Acting quickly to save the farms so carefully built up over 35 years, several Yamato Colony farmers worked together to form a co-op and hire a professional manager who oversaw the properties for the 2.5 years they were in camps in Colorado. The Okuye family counts itself among the fortunate few who were able to return home.



Jean fondly remembers being welcomed to Yamato Colony when she married Paul in 1965. When they returned to make Yamato Colony their permanent home in 1980, she quickly became a pillar of the community – playing piano for church and even driving a school bus. The neighbors reciprocated, lending equipment to replace tractors lost to fires and giving practical tree-planting advice as only farmers can. In 2001, Jean found herself a single farmer. Her children had grown and moved away, and her husband lost his battle with heart disease complicated by 24 years of Parkinson’s Disease. But thanks to her Yamato Colony extended family, she has never been alone.

Honoring her family’s commitment to the land, in 2008, Jean permanently protected her farm from development. “I applied

“AS LONG AS I’M HERE ABOVE THE GROUND, NOT UNDER IT, I’M GOING TO BE FIGHTING... IT’S NOT FOR ME THAT I’M DOING ALL THIS. WE ALWAYS NEED TO BE THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE.”

for a conservation easement on this property because I saw the threat of the city three miles away coming in and wanting to expand,” she explains. Following an ancient Iroquois philosophy, she is always thinking seven generations into the future. “If it’s going to affect seven generations down the road, then I shouldn’t do it,” she says with a shrug that suggests this thinking should be standard practice. Cities developing unchecked falls into her “shouldn’t do it” category. “Once you put a house on the land, it’s a one-time harvest,” she says. “We have to be careful where we put houses and be sure that we build sustainably.”

Protecting the family farm is just one of the many ways Jean is promoting sustainability. A tireless advocate, she is active in a handful of nonprofits. From regularly appearing at lengthy county supervisors meetings, to writing grant applications at 3 am, she has an Energizer-bunny like dedication to her cause. Whether her latest project is healthy soils, solar panels, or farmland conservation, it all ties together. “It’s all for saving farmland and taking care of our earth,” she says. “I’m just blessed to be 79 years old and still be able to do this stuff.”

Jean’s never-ending advocacy hasn’t gone unnoticed. Plaques, certificates, and letters bearing official signatures adorn the walls of her open concept living space. “She’s a jewel and a big asset to the community and to the country, because she looks out for everybody and anything that needs to be saved,” longtime friend and neighbor Tom Nakashima says. Jean is unabashed about her work. “As long as I’m here above the ground, not under it, I’m going to be fighting,” she says. “It’s not for me that I’m doing all this. We always need to be thinking about the future.”



To learn more about Jean’s story, watch the video ‘Concrete California’ at www.cafarmtrust.org/okuye/.

GIVING SEASON IS HERE!

#GIVINGTUESDAY

Your year-end gift protects farmland now, and forever. You can protect the farms that feed your family by mailing a gift using the envelop in this issue, donating online at our website, or visiting our Facebook page on Giving Tuesday (December 3), a global

day of giving. After Black Friday and Cyber Monday – join us in giving back on Giving Tuesday. And if you’re one of the millions of Americans who is no longer itemizing your taxes, but would still like a tax benefit for your donation – don’t worry! There are several ways you can support farmland conservation and reduce your tax burden. Follow the flow chart below to figure out what method is best for you. To learn more, visit www.cafarmtrust.org/giving.



WELCOME ANN VENEMAN, TRUSTEE COUNCIL



We are very pleased to announce, and welcome, Ann Veneman to the Trustee Council for California Farmland Trust! Ms. Veneman has a distinguished career in public service, serving as the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) from 2005 to 2010 and as the United States Secretary of Agriculture from 2001 to 2005. Veneman's leadership and vision have been recognized both nationally and internationally. In 2009 she was named to the Forbes World's 100 Most Powerful Women list. We are grateful to have her expertise, insight, and support on our Trustee Council to help guide our mission-driven work to protect the farms that feed your family. Read Ann's full bio at: www.cafarmtrust.org/our-team/

ANOTHER SIP & PAINT SUCCESS!



We can't think of a better way to appreciate farmland than painting it, while sipping on the fruits of it! What's not to like about wine, food, and painting the sunset? A big thank you to our host – Bokisch Vineyards, our painter – Lindsey from Pinot's Palette, our sponsor – Capitol Digital, and our attendees. Keep an eye out on future events for more paint and sip fun. See more pictures at: www.cafarmtrust.org/sunset-vine-paint-wine-2019/

ACCREDITATION RENEWAL ACHIEVED



CFT has renewed its land trust accreditation – proving once again that, as part of a network of over 400 accredited land trusts across the nation, it is committed to professional excellence and to maintaining landowners' and the public's trust in its conservation work.

"Being able to say California Farmland Trust is accredited provides a "security" to donors and landowners that the mission and endeavors of CFT have been scrutinized by an impartial third party and that we are able to perform our duties openly, fairly and efficiently," said Ron Freitas, President CFT. "We are a stronger organization than ever for having gone through the rigorous accreditation renewal process." Read more at: www.cafarmtrust.org/cft-earns-national-recognition/

RALEY'S FIELD TRIPS ON THE FARM



Ms. Ostlund's class from Garin Elementary had a great time visiting First Generation Farmers – from learning about chickens and goats, to learning about compost and so many different crops. From the farm, the class got to go to Raley's for a behind the scenes tour of the store. Thank you, First Generation Farmers and Raley's for making these trips possible.



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