



THE LAY OF THE LAND

IMPACT REPORT: FISCAL YEAR 2025 (JULY 1, 2024-JUNE 30, 2025)

Conserving Local Land, One Acre at a Time



The Land Trust
for Santa Barbara County

A Note From Meredith

Reflecting on a year of shared progress.

Our work often carries us quickly from one project to the next, driven by the urgency and complexity of land conservation. This report offers a moment to pause and reflect — to recognize the progress we've made, the people who made it possible, and the long-term value of protecting land in Santa Barbara County.

Over the past year, we have continued to advance our mission through new land protection, ongoing stewardship, and expanded opportunities for the community to connect with the places we care for. These outcomes reflect not only successful projects, but also the dedication of our staff, board, partners, volunteers, and supporters who work behind the scenes to ensure lasting impact.

Conservation does not end when land is protected. It requires sustained care, thoughtful stewardship, and an enduring commitment to future generations. The support we receive from this community — year after year — makes that commitment possible and gives us confidence in the path ahead.

I am deeply grateful for everyone who contributes to this work. Together, we are ensuring that the lands we value today remain protected, cared for, and accessible for generations to come.



Meredith Hendricks
Executive Director



FY 25: BY THE NUMBERS

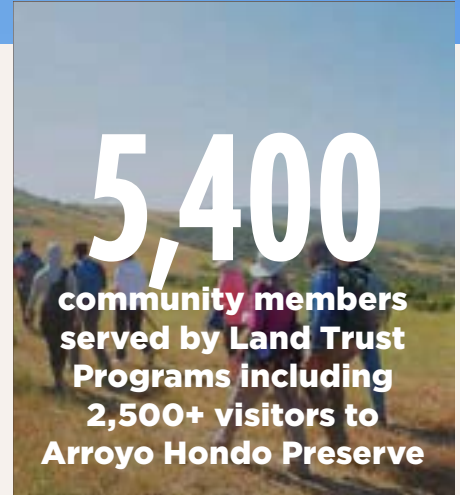
YEAR IN REVIEW



638
new acres
protected



\$10.3M
total funds
raised



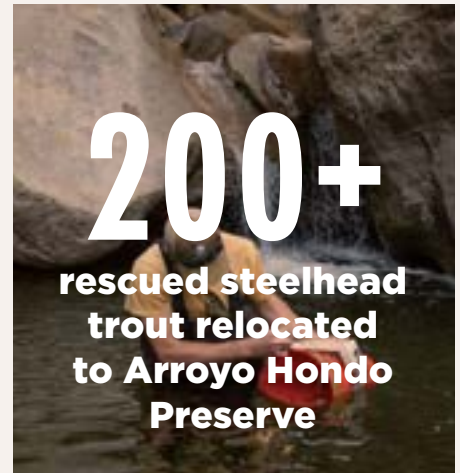
5,400
community members
served by Land Trust
Programs including
2,500+ visitors to
Arroyo Hondo Preserve



\$5.4M
invested in
land protection
projects



\$260K
raised at
2nd inaugural
Picnic at the Preserve



200+
rescued steelhead
trout relocated
to Arroyo Hondo
Preserve



Expanding Protection

Across Santa Barbara County

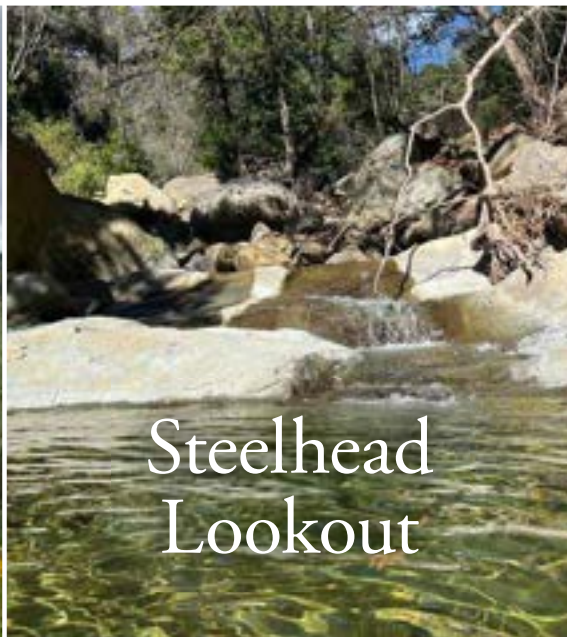
In FY2025, the Land Trust **protected three new properties totaling 638.5 acres**, strengthening habitat connectivity and expanding permanently conserved landscapes across Santa Barbara County.



Rancho del Lagarto Cornudo

The protection of Rancho del Lagarto Cornudo secured a major missing link in what is now **2,323 contiguous acres** of conserved land in the Purisima Hills.

The property supports oak woodland, coastal scrub, and grasslands, and includes **designated critical habitat for the California tiger salamander**.



Steelhead Lookout

The acquisition of Steelhead Lookout permanently protected the **final unprotected stretch of Arroyo Hondo Creek**, ensuring the entire watershed is now conserved as a connected system. The 80-acre property strengthens habitat continuity within the Arroyo Hondo Preserve and plays a critical role in supporting long-term ecological health along the creek corridor.



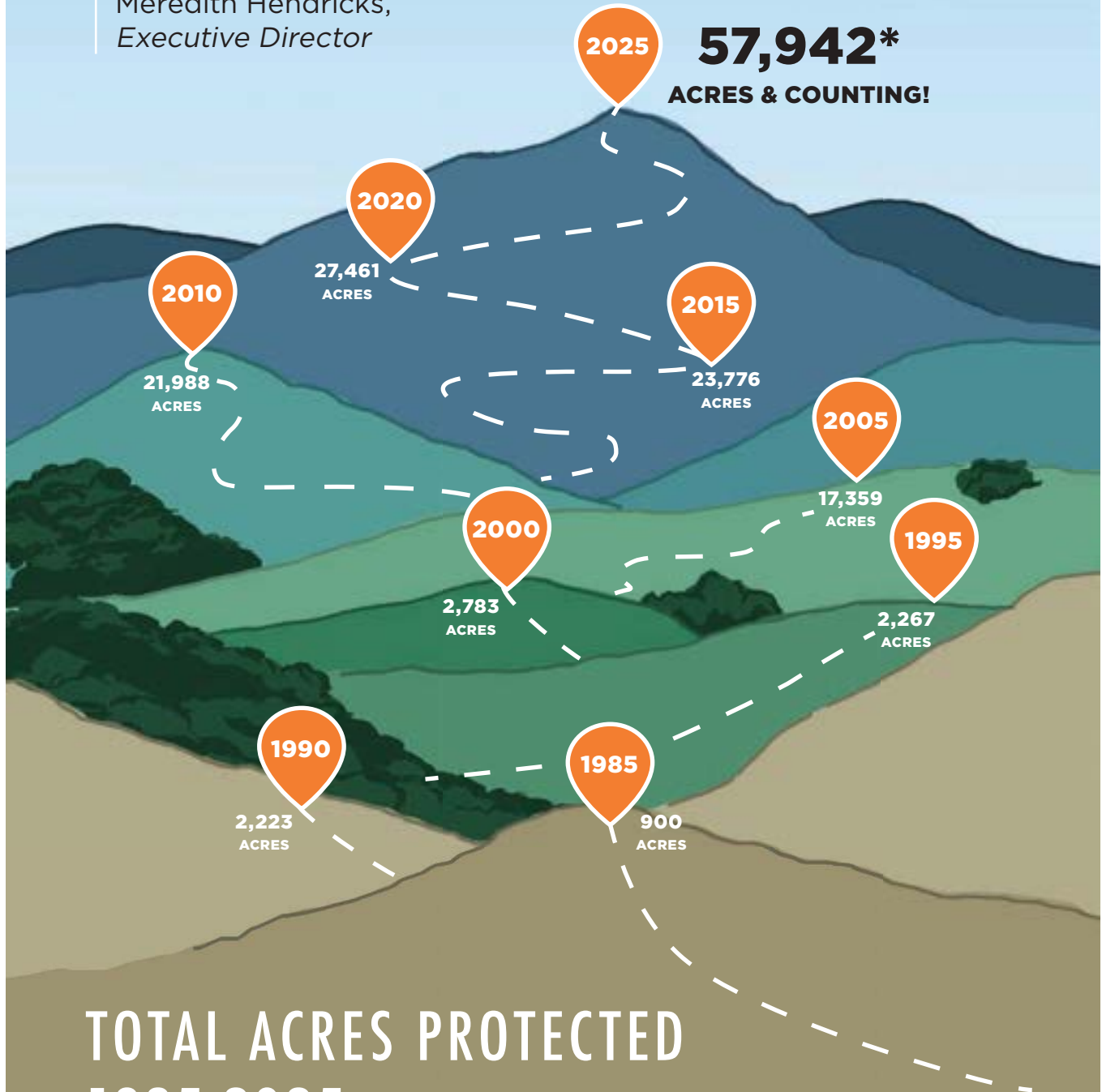
Rincon Gateway

Rincon Gateway added **2.5 acres of coastal scrub** to the Rincon Bluffs Preserve, expanding this protected community open space by **10%**. Though small in size, the acquisition plays an important role in safeguarding sensitive coastal habitat and reinforcing conservation efforts along this highly valued stretch of shoreline.

Since 2020, we've more than doubled the amount of land conserved across Santa Barbara County.

"It took us stepping back to realize we've added over 30,000 acres of conserved land in the last five years. We are excited to hit our stride as a countywide organization."

Meredith Hendricks,
Executive Director



**TOTAL ACRES PROTECTED
1985-2025**

*As of January 2026, total acres preserved is 58,650.

Help Restore Arroyo Hondo Preserve

In January 2026, storms caused significant damage to Arroyo Hondo Preserve, reshaping the creek, trails, and surrounding habitat. While the preserve is temporarily closed, recovery work is already underway — focused on restoring access, stabilizing sensitive areas, and supporting the long-term health of the watershed.

Your gift helps fund on-the-ground recovery efforts, from habitat restoration and trail repair to ongoing monitoring and stewardship that ensure Arroyo Hondo can safely reopen and continue serving students, wildlife, and the broader community.

Scan the QR code or use the enclosed envelope to make a contribution.



Every Acre Saved is Another Acre Stewarded

Protecting land is only the beginning. Stewardship ensures that conserved places remain healthy, resilient, and thriving through active care, monitoring, and collaboration.

850+
HRS

**dedicated to annual
easement monitoring
and reporting**

2,000+
HRS

**stewarding
fee-owned
lands**



Steelhead Return to Arroyo Hondo Creek

The protection of land is only the beginning of conservation. Its true impact is realized through stewardship — the ongoing care that allows ecosystems to function, recover, and support life. Nowhere was this more evident this year than at Arroyo Hondo Creek, where decades of land protection and active stewardship converged in a rare and hopeful milestone for endangered steelhead trout.

With the acquisition of Steelhead Lookout, the Land Trust permanently protected the final stretch of Arroyo Hondo Creek, ensuring the entire watershed is now conserved as a connected system. This continuity — from uplands to riparian corridors — is essential for the health of the creek and the species that depend on it.

That protection proved critical when a group of Southern California steelhead trout, rescued from Topanga Creek following wildfire impacts, needed a safe place to recover. Working in close partnership with state and federal wildlife agencies, the Land Trust helped relocate the rescued fish to protected

reaches of Arroyo Hondo Creek — habitat capable of supporting the species' complex life cycle.

Months later, monitoring confirmed what conservationists hoped for: the steelhead had successfully spawned. Juvenile fish were observed in the creek, marking a rare success for a species that has disappeared from much of its historic range.

This outcome was not accidental. It was made possible by years of land protection paired with active stewardship — monitoring waterways, restoring habitat, and collaborating across agencies to care for the land long after it is conserved. With Arroyo Hondo Creek now fully protected and stewarded as a single system, it can continue to serve as a refuge for steelhead and other native species.

The return of steelhead to Arroyo Hondo is a powerful reminder that conservation is more than preserving land on a map. **Through stewardship, protected places become living landscapes — capable of recovery, resilience, and renewal.**

Land Programs

Our Land Programs create opportunities for people of all ages to learn from, care for, and connect with conserved lands across Santa Barbara County. Through education, public programs, and volunteer stewardship, we use conserved lands as outdoor classrooms, community gathering spaces, and places of shared responsibility.

5,400
people served
by all Land Trust
Programs



Connecting ACROSS THE COUNTY

Local community members participate in free, guided Land Trust Treks and programs like Discover Outside, exploring our local preserved lands and connecting with other community members.

55
total Land Trust
Program events



Outdoor Education

AT ARROYO HONDO PRESERVE

At Arroyo Hondo Preserve, students engage in hands-on, science-based learning through stream ecology, field study, and observation of seasonal habitat change.

1,500
students
visited

30
schools
served



Volunteer

STEWARDSHIP & SUPPORT

Volunteers—including docents, Trek leaders, stewardship and trail crews, and event support teams—play a vital role in maintaining our protected lands and supporting public access.

12
volunteer
restoration/
stewardship
events

139
active
volunteers





Annual Picnic at the Preserve

\$260K+ raised in support of land conservation

180 community members attended

Fundraising & Support

THE SUPPORT BEHIND THE WORK

Every acre protected, every program offered, and every community connection begins with generosity. Our work is made possible by individuals, families, foundations, and public partners who believe in protecting Santa Barbara County’s land — not just for today, but for generations to come.

Through a combination of individual giving, foundation support, and public funding, we are able to pursue conservation opportunities as they arise, care for the lands entrusted to us, and invest in long-term stewardship and community engagement.

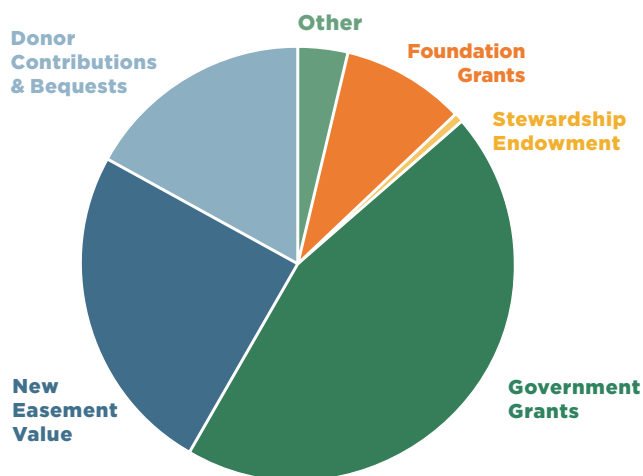
Thank you to the 654 donors who made our work possible during the 2024–2025 fiscal year. Your support helps protect land, sustain stewardship, and strengthen our community’s connection to nature.

Scan the QR code to view our list of donors.



FY23-25 INCOME

Donor Contributions & Bequests	\$6,733,260
Foundation Grants	\$9,678,511
Government Grants	\$17,859,509
Stewardship Endowment	\$321,551
New Easement Value	\$3,585,826
Other	\$1,437,463
TOTAL INCOME	\$39,616,120



Team & Finances

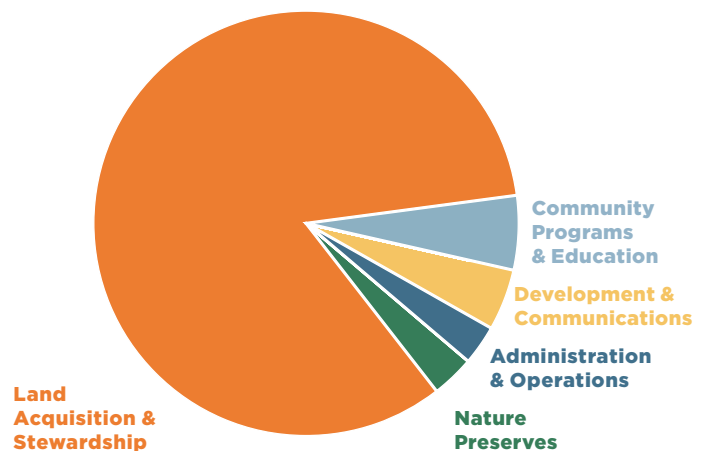
TURNING SUPPORT INTO LASTING IMPACT

Behind every protected property and public program is a dedicated team working across conservation, stewardship, education, and operations. Our staff bring together expertise in land protection, ecological care, community engagement, and organizational leadership — ensuring that support is used thoughtfully and effectively.

We prioritize investing resources where they have the greatest long-term impact: conserving land, caring for it in perpetuity, and building meaningful connections between people and place.

FY23-25 EXPENSES

Administration & Operations	\$955,449
Development & Communications	\$1,459,958
Community Programs & Education	\$1,765,109
Land Acquisition & Stewardship	\$26,205,159
Nature Preserves	\$1,043,869
TOTAL INCOME	\$31,429,544



The financials reported in our impact report are derived from the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County's financial statements for the three years ending June 30, 2025. Land Trust financial statements are unlike many other organizations in that land acquisitions and the ongoing costs associated with them can span many years. This makes it difficult to measure land trusts' efficiency when looking at a single year on its own.

Your ongoing support translates to significant conservation wins throughout the county. Thank you for your support and for moving our shared mission forward.

*Our Stewardship Endowment represents additions to our funds to monitor and steward all of our 59 conservation easements, as well as owned properties, in perpetuity.

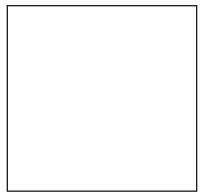
**New easements acquired are appraised and that valuation is reflected in our financial reporting.

***Other income is comprised of dividends and interest, fees from reimbursable projects, and other revenue.



The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County

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sblandtrust.org



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Laurel Fisher Perez, <i>President</i>	Maurie McGuire
Greg Parker, <i>Vice President</i>	Ted Mullen
Ann Lippincott, <i>Secretary</i>	William O'Donnell
Joe Weiland, <i>Treasurer</i>	Sheri Overall
Emily Cotter	James Phillippi
Henry Glasheen	Teresa Romero
Jim Hammock	Ben Romo
Valerie Hoffman	Jim Selbert
Bradley Lundgren	Scott Van Der Kar
Ken Marshall	

STAFF & CONSULTANTS

Meredith Hendricks, *Executive Director*
CJ Benavidez, *Marketing & Communications Manager*
John Bowlin, *Donor Engagement Manager*
Vanessa Brooks, *Volunteer Coordinator*
Leslie Chan, *Land Programs Director*
Carla Frisk, *Project Consultant*
James Grennan, *North County Site Supervisor*
Dan Gullett, *Land Use Planner*
Eden Hagen, *Development Associate*
George Hallam, *Donor Relations Analyst*
Sally Isaacson, *Education & Volunteer Coordinator*
Kyle Kusa, *Land Stewardship Manager*
Kim Morucci, *Land Transaction Manager*
Alison Petro, *Land Stewardship Director*
Zulima Rojas, *Staff Accountant*
Devin Rothman, *Director of Land Conservation*
Gavin Spencer, *Preserve Steward*
Vanessa Stowers, *Development & Communications Director*
Sue Ulu, *Office Manager*
John Warner & Jennifer Dunn, *Arroyo Hondo Preserve Co-Managers*
Sarah Webber, *Development Intern*
Dave Wirt, *Director of Finance & Administration*

OUR MISSION:

The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County conserves natural resources, agricultural land and open spaces for the benefit of present and future generations.

