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The Land Trust
FOR SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Contact:

Vanessa Stowers, Development and Communications Director

Phone: 805-966-4520

Cell: 805-450-3169

Email: vstowers@sblandtrust.org

Land Trust for Santa Barbara County Set to Permanently Preserve Santa Barbara Ranch, Ending Decades-Long Fight Over Naples

Community campaign launched to get to the finish line with \$16 million left to raise

GAVIOTA, Calif. — [October 8, 2026] The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County announced today that it will enter escrow to acquire the 1,000+ acre Santa Barbara Ranch, widely known as Naples, on the Gaviota Coast. If completed, the purchase would end nearly 140 years of land use conflict over one of California's most pristine and contested stretches of coastline.

"For decades, this community worked toward protecting Naples. Advancing this project means that hope now has a closing date," said Meredith Hedricks, Executive Director of the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County. "This is one of the rarest opportunities in California conservation: a chance to finally resolve one of the longest-running land-use conflicts the Gaviota Coast and permanently preserve a property with such significant biodiversity."

Santa Barbara Ranch would anchor the eastern end of a 76-mile stretch of coastline that runs from Coal Oil Point to The Nature Conservancy's 24,000-acre Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve to the west at Point Sal. The Gaviota Coast represents roughly half of Southern California's remaining wild and intact coastline. It is one of the few mediterranean ecosystems in the world and a biodiversity hotspot, supporting numerous species found nowhere else in the world.

The acquisition is made possible through a partnership between the Land Trust and the Wild America Fund, a conservation organization founded in late 2025 to catalyze conservation transactions in the nation's highest-biodiversity regions. Together, the two organizations have structured a model for the purchase that both partners hope can serve as a template for future large-scale conservation efforts along the Gaviota Coast and beyond.

"The Gaviota Coast holds some of the richest, most imperiled biodiversity on the planet, set within one of the most competitive and complex real estate markets in the country. Wild America Fund is proud to partner with the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County in an effort to finally protect this special place," said Michael Bell, CEO of Wild America Fund. "This project will permanently protect the extraordinary natural and cultural resources of Santa Barbara Ranch, while also proving out a more effective conservation approach, one that can be applied across the Gaviota Coast and other high-biodiversity regions nationwide."

"As a Coastal Commissioner, county supervisor and now Assemblymember, I've worked to protect the coastline that makes Santa Barbara so special. Purchasing Santa Barbara Ranch and protecting it with the Land Trust is a rare opportunity to preserve this extraordinary landscape for future generations. It's one of the most consequential conservation actions we can take, and we should seize it," said Assemblymember Gregg Hart.

"This coastline is the heart of the district I represent. Since I first served on the county Planning Commission in 2012, I've worked to protect the Gaviota Coast — through the Gaviota Coast Plan, through years of standing against development that would have changed this place forever, and through the belief that some land is worth more permanently protected than developed," said Third District Supervisor Joan Hartmann.

Once the needed funds are raised and the deal closes—as early as December 2026 but could be extended into early 2027—the Land Trust will undertake a two-year natural resource assessment and planning process for the 1,000+ acre property. This includes working with tribes and stakeholders to develop a preserve concept that protects sensitive ecological and cultural resources and also creates carefully considered opportunities for the public to safely experience the preserve through trails, nature-based recreation, and other forms of access. It will take time to unwind over one hundred years of development attempts on the property and the Land Trust asks for patience as the preserve concept is developed and then implemented.

"The remaining \$16 million is all that stands between this extraordinary stretch of coastline and its permanent conservation. After more than three decades of vision, commitment, and hard work by our community, we have an opportunity to finish what was started and ensure this remarkable landscape is protected forever," said Laurel Fisher Perez, President of the Land Trust's Board of Trustees.

How to Help

With \$16 million left to raise, the Land Trust is inviting gifts of every size to help close the gap. Donors can contribute at sblandtrust.org/savenaplescampaing/ or by contacting Vanessa Stowers, Development and Communications Director, vstowers@sblandtrust.org, Cell: 805.450.3169, Office: 805.966.4520

About the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County

The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving natural resources, agricultural land, and open spaces throughout Santa Barbara County. Since its founding in 1985, the organization has protected 58,650 acres of land, ensuring the preservation of the county's diverse landscapes for future generations. For more information about The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County and its conservation efforts, visit www.sblandtrust.org and follow on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About Wild America Fund

Wild America Fund was founded to catalyze conservation transactions in the nation's most biodiverse regions. Our goal is to make conservation deal-making more effective and competitive in today's real estate markets by bringing ready capital, financial tools, and transaction expertise to bear. In partnership with local conservation organizations, we pursue deals once considered out of reach and turn them into conservation successes. www.wildamericafund.org/

Photos:

[Naples Imagery - Google Drive](#)

Broll Video:

<https://vimeo.com/user13582890/download/1233427800/034e5d4c96>

Footage by Gavin Palmer at VirtTour Media - Courtesy of Coastal Ranch | Kerry Mormann & Associates