



# YOLO LAND TRUST

PRESERVING OUR RURAL HERITAGE ... OUR LANDS. OUR FUTURE.



**Findings and Recommendations:  
Yolo Land Trust Community Opinion Survey  
FINAL: December 2013  
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Funded by: Land Trust Alliance**



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## Background and Approach

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The Yolo Land Trust is celebrating 25 years of protecting agricultural land in Yolo County. As part of celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Yolo Land Trust received a grant from the Land Trust Alliance to seek community input to understand:

- The level of community awareness of the Land Trust;
- Community opinion about the Land Trust and its accomplishments;
- The value of the Land Trust to the community; and
- The community's vision for the Land Trust 25 years hence.

Using a combination of email surveys, paper surveys and telephone interviews, qualitative input was gathered from:

- Yolo County Fair attendees
- Day in the Country attendees
- Attendees at two Art & Ag receptions
- Yolo Land Trust's database of contacts
- City and County officials
- Land Trust easement holders
- Community opinion leaders

This document summarizes the results and findings of the community opinion research, and identifies recommendations that Yolo Land Trust could undertake to:

- Build widespread community awareness about and support for the Land Trust;
- Leverage this support into increased fundraising; and
- Create a strong recognizable brand.

The results are intended to inform the Land Trust's next steps. Survey results are not statistically valid and therefore, do not represent the full breadth of community opinion countywide.

## Profile of Respondents

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### *Community Respondents*

Community respondents are a combination of attendees at the Yolo County Fair, Day in the Country, and two Art & Ag receptions; Yolo Land Trust database members; respondents to newspaper article survey links; and attendees at speaking engagements. Responses were received by both email and hard copy. A total of 143 responses were received from community respondents. 60.4% of these respondents live in a city in Yolo County, 20.9% live in the unincorporated County, and 18.7% outside of Yolo County.

### *City and County Officials*

Links to the email City and County official's survey were sent to the mayors, city council members of the four cities in Yolo County, and Yolo County Board of Supervisors. There were six email responses from this group.

### *Landowners*

A hard copy of the Landowner survey was sent by mail to each of the Land Trust's easement holders. A total of 30 surveys were mailed and 11 responses were received.

### ***Telephone Interviews***

The Land Trust contacted past board members, community leaders and potential collaborators asking them to participate in a short phone interview. A total of six individuals agreed to be interviewed and provided invaluable input and ideas. Interviewees included business owners, growers, educators, and community leaders.

## **Key Findings**

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### ***Level of Community Awareness***

- All community members agreed that permanent land protection was very or somewhat important.
- Reasons for why it is important to protect land ranged widely with most people citing multiple reasons. Most often cited reasons include:
  - food security
  - habitat and resource protection
  - mental health and quality of life
  - for future generations
  - once developed we cannot get it back
  - reduce sprawl and address growing population
  - maintaining the county's economic driver
- Farmland and natural landscapes were the most often cited lands to permanently preserve.
- Greatest threats to farmland preservation include:
  - Lack of public awareness/interest
  - Overpopulation/urban development and inefficient development patterns
  - Policies and regulations not supportive of agriculture
  - Reduction in Williamson Act funding
- Respondents indicated that the area where it is most important to protect farmland is between the cities so they don't grow together.
- The most important information for Yolo County residents to understand about agriculture include:
  - Information about prime farmland and its loss
  - Expected population growth.

### ***Opinion about the Land Trust***

- The majority of respondents have a very positive or positive opinion of the Land Trust and its activities.
- 69% of respondents are or have been donors. Reasons for stopping donations or not donating were economic in nature.



### **Value of the Land Trust to the Community**

- The majority of respondents indicated that the most important activities of the Land Trust are:
  - Working with farmers to protect farmland
  - Educating the community about protecting farmland in Yolo County
- The Land Trust is most important to the community because:
  - It is the only nonprofit with the primary mission of protecting farmland and ranchland in Yolo County.
  - It educates the community about the importance of protecting agricultural land.
- The activities that would best help the community better know YLT and what it does are:
  - Publicity (articles, speaking engagements, social media)
  - Partnering with like-minded organizations
  - Provide organized visits/hikes to farms and ranches
- Respondents generally felt that the Land Trust should not focus on only protecting prime farmland.

### **Consultant Recommendations**

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The following recommendations were developed by the project consultant and are based upon the comments, suggestions and ideas gleaned from the community survey process. It is envisioned that the Yolo Land Trust board will consider these recommendations in the context of its other responsibilities, prioritize them as appropriate, and incorporate them into the Land Trust's long range planning and visioning for the next 25 years. Ultimately, funding will need to be secured for implementation of any recommendation and potential partners will need to be identified to share costs and expand the reach of each project.

The Yolo Land Trust has been very successful in its land conservation efforts, securing over 10,000-acres of easements over the past 25 years. However, many respondents noted that it is impossible to protect all of Yolo County's agricultural lands through easements alone. Land protection must occur by building community awareness, support, and relevance. Therefore, the recommendations from this study relate to increasing community understanding with the ultimate goal of creating a broader base of supporters for agricultural preservation in general and for the Land Trust in particular.

In its Strategic Plan, Yolo Land Trust's fifth goal pertains to Education and Outreach:

*"We will increase and strengthen an educated constituency that supports YLT's mission."*

Desired outcomes of this goal are:

- More local people will understand what we do, trust in us will grow, and our reputation will grow as a result.
- Landowners will have a better understanding about what we do and have realistic expectations about how we can serve their needs.
- YLT will gain a wider range and number of supporters.
- The local community will gain a sense of ownership and pride in our work.

The recommendations from the community survey build upon the goal and desired outcomes above with the realization that an educated and aware community is one that will support agricultural land conservation, the preservation of the County's agricultural economy, and the quality of life associated with living in an agricultural community – local food, protected natural resources, clean air and water, areas to recreate and explore, and smart, city-centered growth.

The Land Trust's current education and outreach goals are focused more on the community understanding what the Land Trust does and how the Land Trust can get the community to support it. However, before the community can support what the Land Trust does, it is essential that the community understand why agriculture and its protection are important to them as individuals.

By having a community that is widely aware of agriculture and its importance, the Land Trust is building a base of informed citizens, and more importantly voters. As mentioned above, easements play an important role in land protection, however, the most important decisions about agricultural land conservation are made by policy. Building a broad and well-educated base now will ultimately help agriculture in the future when agricultural decisions are made by County supervisors, city councils, and/or the vote of the community.

***Recommendation 1: Implement a community education campaign that aims to educate the community about agriculture, agricultural issues and the value of conserving agricultural land.***

Components of this campaign could include the following:

Yolo Land Trust's Meet the Farmer Program – Select successful family farmers, preferably but not necessarily, with Land Trust easements to profile on Facebook, on the Land Trust website and newsletter, and in the newspaper. Farmers could be interviewed and photographed and written materials could be showcased. Interviews with the farmers could also be filmed and then posted on the Land Trust's website as well as on You Tube and as links on the websites of partner organizations such as the Farm Bureau, Farm to Fork, etc. This project could be grant-funded with a pilot occurring over the course of a year. Related projects could include production of a calendar that could either be sold or given as a gift with donations. Willing farmers could also participate in the Farm Visit program described below.

Active Facebook and Twitter Accounts – Yolo Land Trust could make greater use of its Facebook page and set up a Twitter account. Both Facebook and Twitter could be used to showcase the Meet the Farmer Series above and also include photos, facts, statistics and links to articles about crops being harvested, what is in season, agricultural values, and farms and farmers. In both cases, information could be of general interest, thought-provoking and not just announcement and marketing based, allowing people to learn more about agriculture, ask questions, and share information.

Farm Visits – Farm visits were indicated as a priority method of helping those in urban Yolo County know more about agriculture. Yolo Land Trust currently partners with the Yolo Arts Council to coordinate nine to ten farm visits for artists annually. This model could be expanded to the broader community and include regular, perhaps quarterly, farm visits led by willing farmers and ranchers that may or may not have easements with the Land Trust. Hikes through farms and ranches in Yolo County led by the farmer or rancher would help participants gain a greater understanding about the business of agriculture. If possible, hikes could include opportunities for participants to actively participate in work on the farm.

Where possible, Yolo Land Trust could put in place (or partner with organizations such as school garden programs) opportunities for school children to visit farms and ranches in Yolo County. This program could be developed collaboratively with school districts with programming developed that fits with school curriculum.

Newspaper Articles – Yolo Land Trust could submit monthly articles to the local papers highlighting some aspect of agriculture and the business of agriculture. Articles could be educational and thought-provoking and address why agriculture is important to Yolo County as well as some of the issues and challenges of local agriculture. Articles could be related to Facebook postings and Tweets.

Crop Signage Program – As part of the community education process, Yolo Land Trust could spearhead a program providing signage to identify to passersby the crops being grown on the various farms in the County. Signs could feature the Yolo Land Trust logo. Yolo Land Trust could seek partners in this project that share the values of helping the community better understand agriculture and its importance to the County.

Collaboration and Convening – Survey respondents and telephone interviewees identified numerous organizations with which the Land Trust could potentially partner. The Land Trust could systematically consider the organizations suggested and develop a strategy to engage with those who seem to be logical partners.

The Land Trust could also consider collaborating with other organizations to sponsor an annual meeting of all entities interested in agriculture in the County. Each organization could provide a profile of its mission and activities and areas where it seeks to partner.

Website – The Land Trust website could be expanded to include more information and facts about agriculture in Yolo County. Facebook posts and the newspaper articles above could be integrated into the website. The design of the site could be updated to better showcase the Land Trust’s recently redesigned logo and marketing materials.

Branding – Using the recently recreated logo and marketing materials, the Land Trust could review all of its materials and assure that the branding is consistent across all materials and platforms. All the projects and activities suggested above could note the involvement of the Land Trust by including its logo and organizational information.

### ***Recommendation 2: Expand Engagement with Farmers and Ranchers***

Among the farming community there are some Land Trust supporters and some detractors. Some of the bad feelings stem from dealings with prior boards and staff members. Ideally, the Land Trust should have a relationship of trust with the farming community. Respondents indicated that the Land Trust could take more of a role in policy issues. However, part of the Land Trust’s role is to remain neutral. In order to strengthen the relationship between the Land Trust and Yolo County’s farmers and ranchers, the Land Trust could seek opportunities to talk regularly with farmers and ranchers in various parts of the County; explain its mission and goals and the roles it plays in the community; and ask farmers what the Land Trust can do to help them succeed.

Although the Land Trust cannot take a direct stand on policy issues, it can facilitate discussion of these issues by bringing various parties to the table as described in Recommendation 3, below.

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***Recommendation 3: Expand Engagement with Elected Officials***

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A number of respondents indicated that they have had success in providing tours of their land and facilities to the County's leaders. This has led to greater understanding of what it takes to make agriculture and farming successful in Yolo County. The Land Trust could continue to facilitate these discussions by arranging visits to its properties (and others) where County supervisors and city leaders could talk directly with farmers and growers about what needs to be done to make agriculture successful. By facilitating these discussions, the Land Trust is not taking a political or policy position but instead providing a forum for farmers to talk to decision makers.

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***Recommendation 4: Consider expanding the mission and goals of the Land Trust to better meet the needs of a changing community.***

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As the population grows and becomes increasingly urban, the Land Trust will need to assure that it is meeting community needs. Newer residents may not have the same values as those who have lived and worked in Yolo County for decades. Assuring that the Land Trust is relevant to the community of the future will be even more essential to its success than it is now. The Land Trust can be relevant to a changing community by:

- providing activities and information that are of interest and in demand; and
- reaching out to non-traditional supporters of the Land Trust to define areas of interest and common ground.

The mission of the Land Trust may need to consider accommodating/supporting more recreational opportunities. Studies indicate that urban residents desire recreation close to home that can be done in relative short periods of time. Linking recreation and agriculture whether it is through bike trails through agricultural areas or hikes on agricultural lands will expand the Land Trust's appeal to urban residents.

Although not in its mission currently, the Land Trust could consider acquiring recreation lands in the future. Several respondents mentioned the success of Sonoma County and others in passing sales tax measures for land conservation. In partnership with the County, the Land Trust could begin to build a broader base of support by acquiring lands with primary values of recreation or habitat.

## **Implementation**

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Implementation of the above activities could be funded through grants and donations to the Land Trust. If a program or activity is well-defined and compelling, the Land Trust may reach out to the community for donations to implement the program. Crowd funding may be a fundraising tool to explore in order to fund a discrete activity. The Land Trust could also develop partnerships to share both the costs and the labor of these programs and projects, and expand the number and breadth of community members reached.



## Detailed Survey Results: Level of Community Awareness

Survey results are summarized below by question. Certain questions were asked of all three groups – community members, elected officials, and landowners. Others were asked of only some of the groups. The results below indicate responses by the groups that were asked the question.

How important is it to you to permanently protect lands that provide habitat for plants and wildlife; open views and vistas; and opportunities for grazing, ranching, and farming?		
Answer Options	Community	Elected Officials
Very Important	91.5%	66.7%
Somewhat Important	7.7%	0.0%
Neither Important Nor Unimportant	0.0%	0.0%
Somewhat Unimportant	0.0%	16.7%
Very Unimportant	0.0%	16.7%

Close to 100 individual responses to the question “Why is it important to protect the lands listed above?” Many responses were multi-dimensional and touched on several reasons why land protection is important:

- *“It provides for the food we eat, for the health of the land and our water supply, for recreation opportunities, and for enhanced quality of life.”*
- *“In order to be truly sustainable, communities need to protect the ag land and habitat around their cities and towns so that everyone can benefit from LOCALISM - local food, and local ecological services provided by the open space and habitat.”*
- *“Located in a sub-region of California's Great Central Valley, Yolo County contains some of the most fertile and productive soils in the world. It is essential to encourage farming of these lands in order to maintain our ability to serve as major world food provider. We should also continue to model our patterns of dense city development to other local governments throughout the region and Central Valley. We've done it right in Yolo, and we should serve as an example of "doing it right".”*
- *“Ours is a rural environment with access to urban activities and a fine, international university, full of experts. It is wise to preserve high quality land for food production as it is not replaceable. The farm and conservation issues are well informed and actively debated in our community. The Land Trust has an obligation to responsibly participate in those issues.”*
- *“The combination of Class 1 soil and a Mediterranean climate is a rare and limited resource. What Yolo County offers - healthy food, healthy environment, and beautiful vistas, which are healthy for our souls -- is worth saving. Once land is paved, we can't get it back.”*

- *“These lands provide important sources of local food, wildlife movement corridors, groundwater recharge, soil retention, air pollution reduction, carbon sequestration, aesthetic enjoyment, outdoor recreation, and are important to limiting urban sprawl.”*
- *“Open space, whether in ag production or for direct, natural preservation, can keep Yolo County the magnificent wonder it is. We don't want to be another lost and polluted landscape like Orange County or Santa Clara Valley.”*
- *“Such lands are a part of the commons. Even if they are privately held, the services they provide - water quality, fresh air, pleasing views, biodiversity, etc. are for the benefit of all people.”*
- *“Protecting ag land is a serious quality of life issue. If we don't protect the environment, and preserve the ag economy of this region, we will lose so much and never be able to retrieve it. We are already behind the mark, it's now or never!”(Elected Official)*

In general the most frequently cited reasons to protect land are:

***To provide a safe, high quality and sustainable food supply, local food, not being dependent on others for our food (29)***

***To preserve biodiversity, habitat and the natural environment (24)***

- *“Protecting lands within Yolo County is the only way that is possible for protecting the naturally occurring plant and wildlife species that make up the natural heritage of Yolo County. Protecting natural lands is the most important task that the Land Trust could have.”*

***Natural beauty is essential to our mental health and quality of life (15)***

- *“We live in such a cluttered environment - from overdevelopment of land to the media assault we face each day, that protecting open spaces is essential to remember where we came from and have a place to escape and find peace.”*

***For future generations (16)***

- *“Yolo County is home to some of the most productive lands in the world as we know it today. It makes no sense to not preserve it for the health and well-being of future generations.”*

***Once it is developed we cannot get it back (12)***

- *“Better to plan than to try to “fix” destruction later!”*

***Resource protection - runoff (2), groundwater recharge (2), water supply (2), flood protection (1), fire protection (1), soil fertility (1), and other ecosystem services (2), most of which are not valued economically or among some members of society (developers) (2).***

- *“Sustainability is the buzzword today. Yolo County Agriculture has a built in sustainable core that is undeniable. Quality land, water, climate and an intellectual approach to farming are the backbone of this area. These resources need to be protected. The ability to individually profit from developing lands can be easily quantified whereas the societal value of maintaining open space is difficult to determine. The Land Trust provides a mechanism to level the playing field and places a value on open space.”*

***To reduce sprawl, limit development and support a growing population (10)***

***To maintain an economic driver of the county (9)***

- *“Preservation has to make economic sense for the farmers and ranchers. When our state and local government - in addition to the federal government - makes it impossible to farm (i.e. - the costs of inputs and legal/regulatory compliance exceed the value of the product in a global economy, or are so close there is no market incentive - it makes no sense to protect agricultural land.”*

***Sustainability and survival as a species (4)***

- *“Yolo has superior farming soil as well as wild areas with unique endemic species. Edward Abbey wrote, “Wilderness complements and completes civilization. ... Any society that feels itself too poor to afford the preservation of wilderness is not worthy of the name civilization.””*

***To maintain our rural/agricultural heritage (5)***

***To keep lands to farm as a farmer (2)***

***We have a responsibility as stewards (2)***

***To keep Yolo County an appealing place to live (2)***

- *“It is a quality of life issue. We may not all live in the country, but by preserving habitat we help maintain a balance of critical creatures that belong here and provide aesthetic as well as vital natural functions to keep our environment alive, clean and in balance. Walk to a slough and hear glorious life sounds!”*

***Recreation (3)***

***Synergy between agriculture and wilderness (4)***

- *“Soil fertility, sustainable farming and the synergy between agriculture and wilderness areas are vital to us. “*
- *“Farming, grazing, and ranching are where humans most commonly interact with wildlife. Farms and ranches are the sites of daily intersections between humans and wilderness and wildlife. Preserving that interface is crucial to also preserving wild lands themselves.”*

***Because it is the county's policy (2)***

<b>Which three of the following types of land are most important to permanently preserve and protect in Yolo County? (check three)</b>	
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Community</b>
Farmland	91.4%
Natural landscapes for plants and wildlife	75.7%
Grazing and ranch land	45.0%
Natural landscapes for outdoor recreation such as hiking and picnicking	42.9%
Places for children to learn about farming and ranching	20.7%
Scenic views and vistas	18.6%
Other (please specify)	2.1%

Other types of land suggested include historic sites, family farms, and lands designated in Natural Community Conservation Plans, including linkages and reserve areas.

<b>Based upon what you know, which three of the following are the greatest threats to farmland preservation in Yolo County? (check three)</b>			
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Elected Officials</b>	<b>Landowners</b>
Lack of public awareness/interest	54.4%	33.3%	45.5%
Decline of public funding for conservation easement acquisition	37.5%	16.7%	27.3%
Reduction in Williamson Act funding at the State level	36.8%	50.0%	63.6%
Aging of farmers	32.4%	0.0%	18.2%
Overpopulation, urban development, and inefficient development patterns	61.8%	50.0%	18.2%
Habitat conversion	16.5%	50.0%	9.1%
Cost of farming	17.4%	16.7%	27.3%
Policies and regulations that are not supportive of agriculture	46.8%	33.3%	90.9%
Other (please specify)	11.0%	16.7%	18.2%

Other threats identified included:

**General**

- Lack of awareness by landowners that all lands in the county are significant for conserving the county's natural heritage.
- There are very few lands that are open to the public in Yolo County. Without being able to experience the land there is little desire to protect it.
- Programs designed to benefit profitable "environmental" groups with little or no benefits to species or the general public
- Both overpopulation and policies stem from a lack of public interest.

**Environmental**

- Climate change
- Water supply and quality
- Open space

**Agricultural**

- Not enough access to markets for small and medium size farmers.
- Lack of "families" to take over the farm
- Negative views of farmers
- Conversion of farm land to other uses (i.e. PGE in Winters)

**Development-related**

- Inefficient development patterns
- Unsustainable but profitable management of the land
- Garbage and waste
- Casino

Where do you think it is most important to protect farmland in the next 25 years?			
Answer Options	Community	Elected Officials	Landowners
Adjacent to cities	19.8%	0.0%	27.3%
Space between the cities so they don't grow together	64.9%	80.0%	36.4%
Within five miles of cities	6.9%	0.0%	18.2%
Beyond five miles of cities	8.4%	20.0%	18.2%

Reasons for selecting adjacent to cities included that these lands were most threatened. Reasons for selecting land between cities included to control urban sprawl and because it acts like a greenbelt. Reasons for selecting within five miles relate to the land closest to the cities being targeted for development. Those who indicated beyond five miles of cities felt it was important to keep growth together.

- *“Because it is further from urban boundaries, the development current pressure is lower and therefore the easement value should be lower. You can protect more acres for a given amount of funding. I worry about easements next to cities as farming on the urban boundary is problematic.”* (Landowner)



- *“I think the cities get it. My concern is for the farms and ranches being restricted in the outlying areas by so called "conservation" entities who are trying to limit access and restrict farming operations.” (Official)*

<b>What three pieces of information are most important for people in Yolo County to know about agriculture and farmland protection? (check three)</b>				
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Elected Officials</b>	<b>Landowners</b>	
Yolo County has 255,000 acres of prime farmland, the 7th largest amount of prime farmland in California (24th in total area)	52.8%	16.7%	63.6%	
Prime farmland is defined by soil quality and irrigation status. It is a finite resource – once developed, it is impossible to replicate elsewhere. It is being lost statewide at a rapid pace. The rate of loss is slower in Yolo County, however, since 1992, Yolo County has lost 7% of its prime farmland to non-agricultural uses.	83.0%	83.3%		Prime Farmland
By 2030, Yolo County’s population is expected to grow by 24% to 250,000 people.	52.8%	50.0%	54.5%	Population Growth
The 2012 gross value of ag production in Yolo Co. was \$645,766,504, an all-time high	35.8%	16.7%	45.5%	Value of Ag
In 2012, agriculture was Yolo County’s 7th largest industry by number of employees	28.3%	16.7%		
California produces 99% of the processing tomatoes consumed in the US. Yolo County ranks third in the state for growing these tomatoes (behind Fresno and Kings Counties). Yolo Co. produced 3.2% of world production in processing tomatoes.	11.3%	16.7%	18.2%	Crops and Production
Yolo County produces 7% of California’s rice and the 11th largest wine grape producing county in California.	10.4%	16.7%		
Other	15.1%	16.7%	18.2%	Other

Other items the community should understand:

### **Agricultural-Related Information**

- *“The diversity of crops (list them) grown locally and available locally via farmers markets and stores.”*
- *“Yolo County is the number 1 direct marketing county in the country.”*
- *“Agricultural lands in Yolo County comprise a variety of land uses, including field crops like alfalfa and safflower, row crops like tomatoes, orchards and vineyards, and grazing lands. All of these agriculturally designated land uses have ecological and conservation services associated with them which differ among the uses. By protecting agricultural lands uses the county also protects ecological services that these lands provide.”*
- *“Yolo needs to protect its farming diversity, organic and conventional, and avoid relying on one type of crop.”*

### **Habitat**

- *“Information about the environmental and habitat values of open space and farmland.”*  
(Landowner)

### **Economics**

- *“It's most important for people to understand the cost of farming and the true cost of food so there can be a shift in values.”*
- *“Many common agricultural production practices are unsustainable.”*
- *“Developers are very eager to convert farm, ranch and wild lands to urban uses and they have vast financial resources to do so. Once converted, these precious lands cannot be recovered.”*
- *“Educate people on the importance of agriculture to the Nation's economy and to our trade balance of payments.”*
- *“Farmland provides multiple values such as food, fiber, water and natural resources.”*

### **Water**

- Water related information - replenishing groundwater, water quality, and water conservation efforts.
- *“Link water (and reasonable water supply security in Yolo Co) and land - it takes almost 1 ac-ft. (0.9) to grow the food each of us consumes in one year. Educate on climate benefits of Yolo Co. ag land.”*

### **Yolo County as a Model**

- *“Yolo County is a natural leader in the buy local food and the Farm to Fork movement. YC has an amazing mixture of small and large farms and is a model of what our food system should look like.”*

### **Farmland Conversion and Loss/Uncontrolled Growth**

- *“How much prime farmland has been converted to other uses in Yolo County - and is permanently lost.”*
- *“Not only is CA farmland threatened by urban development; we lost thousands of acres of productive capacity per year due to erosion, salinization, flooding, wind and solar development.”*
- *Examples of cities with uncontrolled growth (e.g. LA).”* (Landowner)

**Land Protection**

- “How lands are protected (i.e., what does it mean to be protected).”

**Detailed Survey Results: Opinions about the Land Trust**

Only the County Fair respondents were asked if they were aware of Yolo Land Trust and its activities. 44% of respondents were aware of the Land Trust and 30% were not. 26% were not sure.

Based upon what you know, what is your opinion of Yolo Land Trust and its activities?			
Answer Options	Community	Elected Officials	Landowners
<b>Very positive</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>
Positive	21.3%	16.7%	50.0%
Neutral	4.6%	16.7%	0.0%
Negative	2.8%	16.7%	0.0%
Very Negative	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Comments:

**Kudos**

- “Good management and leadership; appropriate goals for this region.”
- “Only know what I’ve read in the Enterprise. Sounds good.”
- “You are doing a great job. I have never heard any negative comments related to the YLT.”
- “With limited resources, you do a terrific conservation job! It helps to have excellent relations with local governments and the public.”
- “The Yolo Land Trust has done excellent work.”
- “I am very proud that we have such an active land trust.”
- “Excellent history of farm land preservation activities in the community.”
- “Yolo Land Trust and its activities are helping to educate children and adults about the need to preserve our farmlands.”
- “Excellent board, excellent staff! Enjoy working with YLT very much. Perhaps the most important organization there is in Yolo County.”
- “YLT is protecting the continuance of local farming.” (Elected Official)
- “Well run diverse board, classy events. Low administrative overhead.” (Elected Official)
- “I think you accomplish much with limited resources.” (Landowner)
- “Very helpful in setting up easement.” (Landowner)
- “YLT does a lot with limited staff. A very efficient organization.” (Landowner)

**Criticisms**

- “So many ex-Monsanto connected people on the Yolo Board gives me pause.”
- “My impression of the Land Trust is that it is overly biased toward protecting farmland and farmer interests and against protecting natural landscape elements and natural ecosystem services. This is not a suitable focus for a county-wide land trust that seeks to implement conservation programs on a regional scale. The land trust needs to actively amend its overall focus to adopt a more pro-active role in protecting natural landscape elements.”

- *"I believe the organization has missed opportunities to advance a larger scale vision of land conservation in Yolo County. I still do not understand why there has not been a special initiative to protect farmland between Davis/Woodland and along the Willow Slough corridor. This would be a natural to integrate ag and natural habitat protection. For that matter, I think Yolo Land Trust has missed important opportunities by being solely focused on ag land. Natural land protection is also important in the County and offers even greater potential for public engagement than protecting ag land. "*
- *"Organization seems to not have a clear vision, and no interest in nature based recreation.*
- *"I think the Yolo Land Trust is naive. It fails to recognize the financial issues that face farmers and ranchers."*
- *"YLT does good work but probably doesn't have as much impact as we need, particularly as cities continue to grow and the pressure to subdivide into ranchettes in rural areas keeps up."*
- *"A quiet and somewhat closed organization. Not doing enough to reach out to the community."*
- *"YLT is doing a good job, but we still need to educate many young people on the importance of the land (not just for housing). Perhaps studying the early people's designs for villages and cities, as well as their methods of farming."*
- *"In recent years it seems like the Land Trust has withdrawn from participating in substantive policy issues which directly impact the preservation of farmland."*
- *"Incredibly great job, but you need to do a better job acknowledging individual donors."*

Have you ever donated to the Yolo Land Trust?	
Answer Options	Community
Yes, I am a current donor	50.4%
Yes, I am a past donor	19.1%
No	30.5%

Why or why not? (check all that apply)	
Answer Options	Community
I believe in what the Yolo Land Trust does	60.6%
I attended a Yolo Land Trust event	36.2%
I do not have the funds to donate	18.1%
I was asked	14.2%
I was not asked	10.2%
I am not familiar with Yolo Land Trust	6.3%
Other (please specify)	12.6%

Reasons for not donating were mostly related to economic circumstances; rotating charitable priorities; and many environmental nonprofits competing for donations. Other reasons include:

- *"I understand the mission but do not think it serves farmers and ranchers as universally as is claimed."*
- *"I stopped support YLT when they stopped engaging in policy work."*
- *"Mission statement used to include recreation and open space lands, but no longer does."*

## Detailed Survey Results: Value of the Land Trust to the Community

<b>Which three of the following activities of Yolo Land Trust are most important to you? (check three)</b>	
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Community</b>
Working with farmers to protect farmland	79.6%
Educating the community about the importance of protecting farmland in Yolo County	76.9%
Protecting wildlife habitat	50.0%
Working with ranchers to protect ranches and grazing land	42.6%
Protecting organic farms and ranches	25.9%
Protecting conventional farms and ranches	11.1%
Other (please specify)	12.0%

<b>What are the top three reasons Yolo Land Trust is important to the Yolo County community? (check three)</b>	
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Community</b>
YLT is the only nonprofit whose primary mission is to protect farmland and ranchland in Yolo County	56.7%
YLT educates the community about the importance of protecting agricultural land	54.8%
YLT protects wildlife habitat associated with farming	39.4%
YLT helps protect our local food sources	34.6%
YLT protects both conventional and organic farms and ranches	27.9%
YLT has protected over 10,000 acres of farmland	26.9%
YLT helps protect the county's rural agricultural heritage	26.0%
YLT helps farmers and ranchers maintain their livelihood	24.0%
Other (please specify)	9.6%



Other roles of the Land Trust identified by community members include:

#### **General Comments**

- *"The community is broader than Yolo County. We are from Sacramento and we value what the Land Trust does."*
- *"All of the reasons above are important -- they are tied to each other and one message cannot stand along without all the others... it shows the value of the Yolo Land Trust and all the fine work you are doing."*

#### **NCCP/HCP Implementer**

- *"YLT has been designated as the primary land trust for implementing the NCCP/HCP. As such it must play a role in protecting the conservation values identified in the NCCP/HCP, which will benefit current and future landowners as well as the natural heritage associated with Yolo County lands."*

#### **Community Engagement**

- *"YLT puts on great events that bring people together over wonderful food."*
- *"Working with all stakeholders to promote and provide enhanced conservation of the environment on all farms and ranches."*
- *"Reach out to diverse cultural and ethnic groups in the county----and to the successful organic farmers in the area. Also, engage UCD and support and join the concept of Yolo as a World Food Center."*
- *"Working with citizens and government agencies to secure long-term protection for a conservation framework in Yolo County, particularly including natural landscape elements such as oak woodlands and riparian areas. This includes championing these conservation efforts with the farm community. "*

#### **Education**

- *"Hesitated to put educate the community because it's not really the Land Trust's main mission and it's difficult to measure success. You should only do this if you can clearly demonstrate how it is making an impact on land protection."*
- *"Funding for schools to learn more about the field of agriculture as a career."*
- *"Ripple effect of agriculture on the local economy."*

#### **Fundraising**

- *"Secure funding to accomplish goals."*

#### **Don't Pit Conventional Against Organic**

- *"You need to treat and view conventional and organic equally, your organization should be unbiased as to our production method."*
- *"Please don't set up a choice between conventional and organic - we need it all - done well."*
- *"I don't want to see ranchers pitted against farmers or conventional ag against organic."*

#### **More Involvement in Policy Issues**

- *One of the major calamities facing Yolo County right now is the intrusion of PGE into the middle of active farming by creating a "heavy industry" use on their property 3 miles outside of Winters. It is obvious leap frogging and will be environmentally damaging to the entire region. Sadly, YLT has done nothing to help prevent this very serious breach of their philosophy."*

- *Hopefully, YLT will be an active stakeholder in policy issues related to farmland preservation.”*
- *“Work to help allow more ag processing on ag land.”*
- *“Changing poor zoning regulations.”*
- *“Working with local government and stakeholders on policies to preserve and protect farmland and habitat lands. YLT seems to have lost this vision/mission. Policy is every bit as important as direct land protection.”*
- *“Use some mitigation monies to enhance lands already in the public domain such as parks, walkways, bike paths, state and local lands already acquired but unfunded”.*

<b>Which two of the following would help the community better know who YLT is and what it does? (check two)</b>			
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Elected</b>	<b>Landowner</b>
Publicity (articles, speaking engagements, social media, etc.)	45.7%	66.7%	77.8%
Partner with like-minded organizations providing local food, education, agricultural events, etc.	50.5%	33.3%	66.7%
Provide organized visits/hikes to farms and ranches	48.6%	33.3%	11.1%
Provide educational events about agriculture	29.5%	50.0%	44.4%
Provide hands on education for children about agriculture	29.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Other (please describe)	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%

Other suggestions as to how the Land Trust could better let the community know who it is and what it does include:

**General**

- *“If you’re not a farmer/rancher or involved in ag the majority of folks do not know the mission of YLT.”*

**Membership Drive**

- *“A very public and member-driven membership drive with specific target, i.e., 35% increase.”*

**Outreach**

- *“The educational/outreach focus should be on the importance of preserving ag lands into perpetuity. There are other organizations that can and do have educational opportunities for children, farm tours, and events.”*
- *“Provide educational events in which the Land Trust explains how various kinds of agriculture practiced in Yolo County help conserve and support the natural heritage of Yolo County citizens now and in the future. (The JPA can help to organize and provide information about how different kinds of agricultural uses support different kinds of natural heritage values. Local*

organizations like the Yolo Audubon Society can also help in identifying and explaining these relationships.)”

- “We should mark the easements with well-designed signs that say – preserved for the future by Yolo Land Trust.” (Elected Official)
- “Advertise parcels that are in the Land Trust program.” (Landowner)

**Publicity**

- “Perhaps a regular column in the Daily Democrat.”

**Policy Development and Support**

- “ACTIVELY participate in policy development for farmland preservation.”
- “More active approach to regional threats – Delta Tunnel Project.” (Landowner)

Should Yolo Land Trust only protect Prime Farmland because it is a diminishing and finite resource?			
Answer Options	Community	Elected	Landowner
Yes	24.8%	33.3%	22.2%
No	42.6%	16.7%	77.8%
I need to know more	32.7%	50.0%	n/a

Comments received indicated that prime farmland was important but shouldn’t be the only land protected because high-quality crops can be grown on many different types of soil and there are habitat lands that also need protection.

- “Prime farmland is probably the most important but other agricultural lands are important because of location, crops or livestock produced and other desirable uses such as habitat, recreation, watershed, urban buffer or containment.”
- “The Yolo Land Trust is already embarked on an expanded mission (relative to its initial founding). To accomplish this expanded mission the Land Trust must broaden its coverage to include all agricultural activities in the county as well as the relationships among various kinds of agriculture and the natural heritage values associated with agricultural land uses.”
- “Yes, but the term “prime” farm land should be retired. That concept I has been outmoded by the availability of drip irrigation and the lack of prime land. Currently Yolo County has very large plantings of almond, prunes and grapes on class 4 soils. All farm land is valuable. SAVE OUR FARMLAND should be the rallying cry.”
- “I think that all land should be protected because we have changed our farming methods so that non-prime land is now able to support certain crops, whereas in the past it was overlooked.”
- “YLT should protect the whole suite of farmland types, including riparian habitat, species habitat, hedgerows and open space. All of these land types positively affect farmed land by providing buffers, habitat, and aesthetic beauty” (Landowner)

## Detailed Survey Results: Other Comments

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### *“Keep up the good work.” (6)*

### *“Thank you for your efforts.” (4)*

- *“Thank you for all that you are doing to bring the issues of farming to the public and to the politicians.”*

### *“Thank you for asking the public’s opinion.” (2)*

### **Fundraising**

- *“Look at what works for other land trusts – MALT, Sonoma Land Trust, etc. We could look at a ¼ cent sales tax to preserve our best soils.” (Elected Official)*

### **Board of Directors**

- *“I have supported YLT for years. I have never heard any criticism of your Board of Directors until now. Some are concerned that the Board may be drifting too far from the agricultural roots and is too corporate in nature. I appreciate the dedication and commitment of all volunteers but you need to be aware that the composition of a board is a great indicator of the direction of an organization and is the face of such. This is not a criticism from me....just passing along some information.”*

### **Building Community Awareness**

- *“It would be nice to see a map of lands YLT has already protected, as well as a vision of what future lands are being considered.”*
- *“Ought to have info booths at farmers' markets occasionally.”*
- *“You need to publicize your success. Show maps of the large amount of parcels accumulated so far.” (Landowner)*

### **Expanded Focus**

- *“Focus needs to expand from just agriculture. Land trusts in adjacent counties also do open space protection for parks and public access.”*
- *“I applaud the Land Trust’s vision and willingness to become more than just a defender of agriculture and farmers. The Land Trust has an opportunity to champion the long-term protection and preservation of the natural heritage of Yolo County’s citizens, now and in the future. It takes great vision and dedication to undertake this mission, and I’m pleased that the Land Trust is willing to do it.”*

### **Community Engagement**

- *“Develop a better relationship with interests in West Sac, Solano Co. and Sacramento to grow the constituencies to support YLT’s work. More interaction, educational opportunities and field trips (in partnership with other organizations) for people who don’t normally come into contact with privately held rural lands. Themes are food, habitat, recreation, environmental education. People love to visit farms and leave some money behind if they feel like they are having a unique experience such as food, recreational opportunities or informal education opportunities. A lot of local hiking groups for example would probably be willing to pay a fee for a unique opportunity to hike around a farm, learn about the local agriculture and consume a great meal or snack, or*

wine-tasting. Farm dinners regularly sell out. Witness farm tours, u-pick, harvest festivals, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, animal and petting experiences, etc. These are all opportunities to educate people and to provide experiences that help them take some ownership of rural lands preservation. Involving restaurants, performing and visual artists, off site producers, can make the experiences even richer. Look at the San Joaquin River Trust calendar for the potential of what a truly robust conservation organization can achieve

[http://www.riverparkway.org/index.php/calendar/year.listevents/2013/10/30/-](http://www.riverparkway.org/index.php/calendar/year.listevents/2013/10/30/)“

### **Policy Needs**

- *“Help get government off our back. We continue to get hammered with rules, regulations, and fees. And threatened with thousands of dollars per day penalties.” (Landowner)*
- *Please wake up and protect our precious farm land from the intrusion of non-farm use. Conversion from an Ag 1 designation to anything else is a slippery slope, leading to the eventual loss of our rural character and food production. Orange County and Santa Clara County are examples of what is the future of Yolo County if we ignore this threat. Please take some action.”*
- *“YLT seems to have lost its way in the past few years and seems to have stopped engaging in policy issues which directly impact farmland protection.”*
- *“I think we should consider enacting a 50-acre minimum subdivision zoning ordinance by initiative petition so it cannot be overturned by the Board of Supervisors.”*

### **General Comments**

- *“Does the Land Trust model really fit the times? It is a world food market.”*
- *“We won't get a second chance, NOW is the time to preserve agriculture and habitat. Once it is paved, there is no returning the critters and reclaiming the soil.”*
- *“Keep up the great work! I wish there was more funding from both the private and public sector to purchase conservation easements. Farmland protection should be given a much higher priority within the upcoming Farm Bill than it has in the past.”*

### **Telephone Survey Results**

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#### ***How important is it to protect farmland and rangeland in Yolo County and why?***

All interviewees felt it was very important to protect farmland and rangeland in Yolo County. Reasons provided for this include:

- Urban encroachment
- Losing it at a rapid pace
- Money trumps
- Ag is an economic engine
- California is #1 state for ag production; it has the best weather. There is a tension between development and preserving the ag bounty. County is growing and California is growing. LA and Santa Clara counties were like this in the 50s.
- Important for all reasons – economic, environmental, ecosystem services, adds to sense of place, social benefits.
- Important economic engine. Best way to protect farmland is to assure that a farmer can make money on the land. Easements don't guarantee economic return.

#### ***What do you believe are the three greatest threats to farmland protection in Yolo County?***

- Urban encroachment



- Population growth and development (2)
  - Some development is good but policy makers need to drive development towards land less suited for farming.
  - Need a culture where everyone believes protecting farmland is good.
- Williamson Act funding
- Change of tradition and history with newly elected officials
- Environmental regulations/mitigation that take lands out of production
- Development pressure – will only provide one time economic benefit
- Adequate supply of committed local growers
- Need to continue to make ag profitable so development dollars don't sway farmers to develop their land.
- Loss of processing.
- Loss of profitability. Way to protect ag is to make it profitable – better transportation, more processing.

***Where in Yolo County is it most important to protect agricultural land and why?***

- Class 1 soils
- Identify the best Ag land we have on a map and protect that – we can't get these lands back
- Most fertile farmland. Encourage infill in cities and best use of marginal properties. Encourage more recycling and less landfills. Cluster along transportation routes. Develop on land not suitable for ag.
- Periphery of cities; places highly valuable from an ag perspective or ranchette lands.
- Need to be strategic and opportunistic
- In the Delta – good soils, high quality water, per acre product is higher than the rest of the county. Wine grapes will soon surpass tomatoes in this area.
- Anywhere where you can protect water quality. Enhance water supply without making farming difficult.

***What do non-farmers in Yolo County need to understand about agriculture and farmland protection in order to value its protection and continued productivity?***

- Reduced pollution
- Reduced crime
- Need continued education efforts to the community about why we need ag and open space. Reasons include reduced crime and pollution.
- Need to understand farmland loss and its impacts – less land to grow on; more imported foods result in food security issues – safety, pesticides and pathogens
- Need to understand business of agriculture and farming; this is people's livelihood; ag produces jobs.
- Need to understand how productive Yolo County is – employment, diverse crops. Explain benefit of ag to the county, beneficial impacts on air quality, healthy kids. Support farming for the well-being of society.
- Need to understand that farming is a business, not a lifestyle. Need to make money.
- Urban people like the scenic qualities of ag but don't realize that they are private businesses struggling every day to make a profit. Things that help improve ag are good for urban residents too. Most non-farmers don't appreciate the risk involved – weather, environment, roads, bridges, lack of processing.

- Provide what people want. This builds value. People want recreation. Need to find some way to marry ag and recreation. Consider recreation easements – bike easement along farm roads. Allow people to ride bikes, hike on Yolo Bypass rather than chasing people off.
- Provide organized farm tours with willing farmers. People would like this. Building support this way will help when a critical vote is needed. Farmers like to talk about what they do. This will help reinforce Yolo’s sense of place.
- Put up signs showing what is growing on the farms in the County (in plain English).
- Small things help people value what is going on around them.
- Can’t buy all the land – need a political strategy.

***What could Yolo Land Trust do to help increase community understanding of and support for agriculture and agricultural land conservation?***

- Day in the Country and other events help
- Participate in major community happenings
- Have a booth two or three times a year at farmers markets – they are enlightened people already and would be supportive.
- Arrange visits from school garden programs – have every kid in the county visit a farm so they know where their food comes from.
- Invite people to farms to see and understand how they contribute to society and the economy.
- Events that connect people and farmers – farmers to farmers markets and people to farms.
- People need to understand how thin the profit margin is in farming.
- Need to support transportation improvements that help ag; support the location of processing on less viable lands. Better processing and transportation would increase the ag footprint and associated income.
- Among farmers, many do not believe that climate change is a long term trend. Need to acknowledge that there are two points of view but that some things we do in response to climate change may be the right things to do anyways.
- Promote more collaboration among organizations – Farm Bureau, Center for Land-Based Learning.
- Ongoing sessions where farmers share with others what’s happening in ag – trends, what is being planted, value added to the economy. Reach out to civic leaders – Rotary, Kiwanis, elected officials.
- Help people understand the hard choices – e.g. Davis easement issue.
- 

***What could Yolo Land Trust do to increase community awareness of the Land Trust and its mission of protecting agricultural and ranchlands?***

- Articles – Davis Enterprise
- Event booths
- Need to indicate your uniqueness from all the other NGOs asking for money
- Yolo Land Trust is well-understood by the general population.
- Young people are not the target people to put their land into easements but they are the people you want.
- Partner with Whole Foods; All Things Right and Relevant; Trader Joe’s – they have the infrastructure to help spread the word.
- Co-op has quarterly wine/beer tastings benefitting nonprofits. Arrange one of these.

***What community organizations should Yolo Land Trust work with to promote awareness about its agricultural land protection efforts?***

- Talk to the County Supervisors with this question – they might know urban groups to reach out to. Go to meetings of these organizations.
- Young people – engagement not necessarily money.
- Whole Foods; All Things Right and Relevant; Trader Joe’s; Co-op for wine events
- Other non-profits; California Association of Family Farmers; California Ag in the Classroom. May be competing for same funding but find common ground.
- Growers in favor of what the Land Trust does.
- Yolo Farm to Fork.
- School visits. Studies show that more kids raised in Yolo County are staying in Yolo County. Engage them as young kids.
- Reach out to school boards.
- Midtown Community School.
- Look at programs where kids from jail work on farms. Found to be life changing for many of the kids. Helps work off anger and energy.
- School gardens in the poorest schools
- American Horticultural Society
- Rabbi David Wechsler-Azen, Fresh Producers – food boxes, employs at risk youth.
- Farm Bureau
- Yolo County Landowners Association – helping them to understand the benefits of ag would help agriculture in the county. They are too reactionary and have poor social/political skills.
- Speak for the ag community – ag folks don’t participate in the political system – be the voice for the ag community.
- Work with the supervisors and policy makers to help them understand agriculture, its challenges, how it works.
- Provide farm tours to supervisors and state officials
- Go to meetings in various parts of the county. Let farmers know who YLT is, how you think, what you believe and how you can help farmers.
- Land Trust should be a convener – partner with like-minded orgs to create and promote a vision for agriculture across organizations and businesses.
- Find ways to match farmers with teen labor

***What reasons would you give to urban residents to encourage them to donate to the Land Trust?***

- The money to drive major land purchases won’t come from donations.
- Money raised doesn’t hold a candle to what is needed.
- Fundraising is good when a major piece of land comes forward and you can fundraise around that.
- Emphasize it’s a local movement. Thriving family farms equals food security.
- A campaign for one spectacular place would be helpful.
- Underscore that the funds are staying in Yolo County for open space and farmers. Keep the farms owned and run by Californians – not those outside the country.
- Profile the farmers.
- Do a coffee-table book on Yolo County’s ag. Could focus on easement holders. Importance of family farms. Should be in every office for people to look at. Focus on profitable growers who work hard, are smart and have a vision. Community doesn’t see this. Tell the stories.

- What are people donating for? Fundraising should tie to tangible things and roles the Land Trust can play – e.g. fundraising to support a youth employment educator. Can't buy all the land – need to focus on building support for ag. Or for a special piece of property.
- Work towards a sales tax to fund conservation. Need to build support for a long time before that can happen. Build that climate.

***Based upon what you know, what is your opinion of Yolo Land Trust and what it does? Why do you hold this opinion?***

- Always enjoyed interactions with the Land Trust.
- Farmland must be preserved. We've lost so much. Yolo Land Trust brings this to a local level.
- Great. Love the events and opportunities to meet farmers. Love that they are supporting the health of kids.
- Negative opinion due to dealings with prior ED who had unrealistic views of ag economy and how it works. "Narrow, urban, enviro view." Organization didn't offer any benefit to ag. If this is the view of the Land Trust, there can be no common ground.

***Do you have any further comments or questions?***

- Alliances with others are important and will allow you to go after diminishing dollars.
- The Land Trust has a unique and specific mission. Don't want to dilute that by merging unless in another county. We share similar goals with other counties.
- Explore crowd funding strategies. This will bring in additional donor dollars and attract young people
- Need to maintain Facebook page and have a Twitter feed. It's easy to tweet and the Land Trust could provide all sorts of interesting, educational facts to the community. On Facebook, feature a farmer every month. Consider using the UC Davis business school to develop a social media strategy at no cost.
- Consider expanding the mission to conserve other types of land. Sometimes NGOs get too micro and inwardly focused. Look at the big picture.
- Land Trust needs to find a way to marry the broad, deep spiritual concerns.