Conserving Farmland—The Next Chapter in Land Protection for Arizona
By Jeanne Trupiano

For this edition of For Lands’ Sake, we highlight three examples of good work that supports our local growers and protects Arizona’s farmland. As CALT enters our third decade of land conservation, farmland preservation is becoming increasingly important. As with private ranchlands, farmers are also seeking ways to retain their agricultural land. In some cases, this may require changing local land use plans and policies. The conservation of farmland, like ranchlands, benefits our communities by conserving open lands that buffer from sprawl and by providing habitat for our resident and migratory wildlife species. Small farms also bring us access to fresh and tasty produce, artisanal foods, jobs, and specialty farm products.

Education and Outreach to Fit the Needs of Today’s Small Growers

With the goal of promoting sustainable local food production in Northern Arizona, a needs assessment was conducted for small growers in Yavapai and Coconino Counties and published in 2020 as part of a new Commercial Horticulture and Small Acreage (CHSA) program established by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. The effort was led by Dr. Isaac Mpanga, and his colleagues Jeff Schalau, and Dr. Ursula K. Schuch.

This assessment calculates responses from 30 agricultural stakeholders in Yavapai and Coconino Counties to direct the focus of this new program. The CHSA program promotes innovative practices to increase local food production in Northern Arizona. According to the assessment: “The growers are passionate about sustainable agriculture practices and operations that have low synthetic chemical inputs. Most of the growers have a ready market for their products by selling at the farmer’s market, to restaurants, and Community Support Agriculture (CSA) programs.” Growers see engaging with scientists and industry in research and extension activities as very important. Currently, free monthly Small Farmers Colloquium (SFC) events are online and open to all who are interested in networking and discussing issues related to small-scale farming in this two county region.

Creating a Tool Kit for Farmland Preservation in the Greater Phoenix Metro Area

Local First Arizona, a statewide non-profit organization with a mission to promote and support local businesses, has undertaken a sweeping effort to keep local growers in the West Valley of the Phoenix Metro Area in production. Targeting primarily small and medium farms, Helene Tack, Sustainability Liaison with Local First Arizona, stresses that Arizona’s farmers are some of the most productive in the country and contribute significantly to the state’s economy. In 2017, vegetables comprised 26% of the market value of agricultural products sold for Arizona, ranking above dairy, cattle, cotton, and forage crops. Yet when it comes to available land for growing fresh fruits and vegetables, Arizona farmers are facing a big challenge, most notably in the urban areas of Maricopa County. With a growing population, land that is most viable for growing food has been steadily transitioning from ploughed fields to paved subdivisions.

To address the loss of farmland, Local First Arizona has been researching solutions to the land access challenges for farmers in metro Phoenix. By interviewing farmers, land trusts, and land conservation organizations in Arizona and other parts of the country, they are bringing together stakeholders to form the Coalition for Farmland.

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**President’s Message**

**Dear CALT Supporter,**

By the time you receive this newsletter, the national Land Trust Alliance/Commission on Accreditation will have received our application for re-accreditation, which we opted to go through every 5 years. Make no mistake, this is HUGE!

What this means is that YOUR LOCAL LAND TRUST lives up to the many, specific standards required of the 370 accredited land trusts around the country, out of over 1360 land trusts nationwide. It means we demonstrate sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and sustainable stewardship, year after year.

Being re-accredited means CALT will again be among the most effective land trusts in the country. In fact, accredited land trusts steward 77% of all conservation easements from coast to coast. (Watch our Facebook page for the news we passed!)

Take a look at what YOUR support has helped CALT achieve just since 2017:

- We’ve added over 265 acres of permanently protected lands to our stewardship inventory including Coldwater Farm on the Agua Fria, seasonal home to two endangered species of migratory birds, and 254 acres of the Frontiere/Rogers Lake pine-clad grasslands, in Coconino County.
- We’ve expanded our service area beyond Yavapai to include Mohave, Coconino, Navajo, Apache and Gila counties.
- YOUR generous donations of over $50,000 helped CALT to secure the Biophilia Foundation challenge grant of $50,000 to ensure the permanent protection of 917 acres of the Orme Ranch in 2021!
- We’ve just applied for another Farm Bill grant to permanently protect more than 20,000 acres of ranchlands.
- And, we’ve elected four new board members with experience in finance, ranching, environmental education, and marketing/ graphic arts—two of whom, Brenda Hershkowitz and Anna Mary Rigden Glaab are featured in this newsletter.

We can’t begin to thank the many local landowners who’ve entrusted us with their family land protection, in perpetuity.

These many conservation efforts don’t come with ‘extra money’ to assure ongoing operations. For that, we turn to you, our community.

Our unrestricted gift need is $20,000 by July 1. Every one of those dollars helps CALT to protect more grasslands, riparian areas, mountains, lakes, and tall pines. Please give online at www.centralazlandtrust.org or use the donation envelope provided here.

Your generous gift helps us work with more landowners and remain a strong, nimble, non-profit for generations to come.

Yours in conservation,

[Signature]

Becky Ruffner, President
Central Arizona Land Trust
Conserving Farmland—The Next Chapter in Land Protection for Arizona (cont.)

Preservation. Guided by a charter and oversight by a twelve person steering committee, the Coalition has begun raising awareness about land that is at-risk and helping the growers keep or find viable farmland. As the efforts increase to retain farmland in the Phoenix metro area, the Coalition’s working groups will provide the necessary research and outreach to help farmers focus on what they are experts at—keeping the community well supplied with delicious fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables.

Putting Research to Good Use for Water Conservation

In the Verde Valley, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has worked on land and water resource conservation since the early 2000s through its Verde River Program. Kim Schonek, Program Manager, leads a team that has successfully engaged in farmland preservation. In 2018, TNC successfully established the Hauser Farm Agricultural Conservation Easement with support from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Kim is also actively involved in water conservation projects that support local growers. TNC has made investments in irrigation water management on most of the large ditches along the Verde River and a few in the Oak Creek area. This management supports water conservation with the installation of piping, control structure improvements, and monitoring equipment. Kim also works with a variety of small and large landowners on improving their irrigation water delivery, which has included work with Sunnyside Farms and Tres Brisas Ranch.

CALT can offer our services as a certified land conservation organization to hold and defend conservation easements in perpetuity. Landowners who have granted conservation easements to CALT have found that each easement is drafted to speak to the purpose of the resource protection as well as the circumstances of the landowners.

In this way, the agreement offers flexibility while providing a permanent guarantee that the land will never be subdivided or developed and the water resources will stay with the land, ensuring that the agricultural use can be continued as the best use of the property for future farming generations.

To many young farmers, the granting of a conservation easement opens the door to ownership of a small farm. When land is encumbered with a conservation easement, often times the value of the land is reduced because it can never be developed. This action can provide opportunities for the next generation of growers to continue owning, farming and caring for the land.

Let’s Keep in Touch

While we publish our newsletter twice a year, we’d like to keep you up to date by email about our efforts to preserve the lands we all love. So please share your email address with us by sending an email at calt@centralazlandtrust.org or by signing up on our website www.centralazlandtrust.org.

Our local farmers markets provide important outlets for farm products.

Learn more about these farmland conservation efforts:

Small Farmers Coalition: www.extension.arizona.edu/events/2021-03-01/small-scale-farmers-colloquium-2021
Local First Arizona: www.localfirstaz.com
Flagstaff Farmers’ Market: www.flagstaffmarket.com
Prescott Farmers’ Market: www.prescottfarmersmarket.org

From CALT’s perspective, conservation of farmland can be more complex than ranchlands. In order for growers to continue farming, they need to be supported by land use and water supply policies, which guarantee that the water resources will always be there for agricultural purposes. With the growing need to support residential and commercial development, the direction of water to agricultural purposes can be uncertain. Additionally, once land is slated for development the cost to own land becomes an insurmountable obstacle for farmers. As we work to plan for what our future communities offer our children and grandchildren, it is critical that the long-term protection of our agricultural lands be given full consideration for the extensive community benefits they provide.
CALT Re-Accreditation Update

How do you ensure an organization will be around into the future to maintain its conservation easements? Accreditation is a BIG part of that. In our fall issue we included the public notice of beginning this process and thought we’d take a minute to update our supporters on this important process.

Accreditation (re-Accreditation in this case) means creating comprehensive, easy to understand systems for managing special gifts, restricted donations, and endowments. Because of the accreditation process, we have a complete inventory of each and every acre we protect with an easement including yearly inspections and insurance to defend legal threats to easements. We have adopted polices to guide our work in land acquisition and are concentrated on ensuring that we have sufficient funds to maintain our lands. Since CALT is very lean organization, board member Patricia Bruneau-Gaber and Matt Turner, Conservation Specialist, worked with other board members and consultants to get this documentation in place. It’s a huge effort but worth it to keep us on solid ground. Our application was delivered on time: April 8th.

Land trust accreditation is a mark of distinction, showing that a land trust meets high standards for land conservation. It sends a message to landowners and supporters: “Invest in us. We are a strong, effective organization you can trust to conserve your land forever.”

Jeanne Trupiano: Creator of Conservation Easements and Partnerships

By Claire Bronson

In this world of instant gratification, Jeanne’s work is the polar opposite. That’s because creating a permanent conservation easement tailored to the landowner and land’s needs require a long view, and in the case of conservation easements, this means forever. It includes lots of collaboration, real estate and legal work, conservation biology, and heaps of patience. CALT has been lucky beyond measure to have Jeanne’s guidance and professional skills for over 15 years.

Jeanne came to Arizona for her Masters in Environmental Planning at Arizona State University in 1990. Following graduation, she became the Natural Resource Planner at Arizona State Parks where she helped CALT negotiate an easement in the 1990s. This land is adjacent to Camp Navajo and Matt Turner, Conservation Specialist, worked with other board members and consultants to get this documentation in place. It’s a huge effort but worth it to keep us on solid ground. Our application was delivered on time: April 8th.

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**Donors Make It Happen**

We thank our generous donors for their support. All donors who made contributions to CALT from November, 2020 to March, 2021 are acknowledged in the following list.*

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**STEWARDS: $500 AND ABOVE**

- Anonymous 3
- Biophilia Foundation
- Norman and Loretta Brawley
- Edmond Case
- Billy Cordasco
- The Henry Dahlgren Foundation
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**TOP HANDS: $250-$499**

- Claire Bronson
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- Amazon Smiles
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- Gary and Molly Beverly
- Bronwyn Butterfield and Warren Miller
- Judith Campbell
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- Richard Downey
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**Special dedications:**

- Greg Baker in honor of RD and Valerie Baker
- Norman and Loretta Brawley in memory of the Pete Brawley family
- Tanqu Ranch
- Vaughn Delp-Smith in memory of Ron Smith
- Sam and Leigh Downing in honor of Richard and Carol Yetman
- Jock and Debra Favour in memory of Mark Seeger
- George and Maggie Fornara in memory of Margaret Fornara

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**CALT Welcomes New Board Members**

**Anna Mary Glaab** believes that preserving working ranches and allowing families to continue their generations-long work and lifestyle is vitally important to our country and society.

Born into the Rigden and Hays families, she grew up in Kirkland, AZ, getting her education on the family ranch and at the one room schoolhouse where her grandmother had taught in 1905. From there she attended and graduated from Prescott High School. She worked locally at the bank in Yarnell, then in 1983 was hired as a clerk at the Yarnell Justice Court. After the judge retired, she ran for his seat and was elected to serve as Justice of the Peace in Bagdad and Yarnell—a position she held for 26 years.

All along, she continued to help her family working on and managing the ranch—something she continues to do. Her lifelong involvement in ranching has taught her that nothing can compare to, or replace, the value of land and the freedom of open spaces.

**Brenda Hershkowitz** moved to Wickenburg Arizona, as a child, with her family in the early 1970’s. Growing up, she worked on the ranches of friends and family members where her love for horses and the open range grew. She attended Northern Arizona University where she studied accounting and business management.

Brenda married James Hershkowitz, whose great-grandfather, Harry Hershkowitz, was an Arizona pioneer. Harry moved to Arizona in the late 1800s, settling in Congress where he ran a general store for the mining camps.

Brenda’s love for wide open spaces and horseback riding through the Arizona landscapes brought her to become a volunteer for Central Arizona Land Trust. She is excited to be of service in preserving the open spaces in Arizona for generations to enjoy.

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* If we acknowledged your gift incorrectly, please let us know at info@centralazlandtrust.org. Thanks!
The winter storms continue to provide good moisture to the Ranch we look forward to the year ahead and the completion of the Orme Ranch conservation easement. Great progress was made in 2020 due to the generosity of so many donors to the Orme Ranch Forever campaign. Most importantly, because of this generous support, we are pleased to report that the Biophilia Foundation challenge grant was met in just 6 months! CALT received $50,000 in donations that were matched by the Biophilia Foundation totalling $100,000. This significant funding helped CALT to proceed with expediency to ensure the completion of the conservation easement in 2021.

As CALT proceeds to complete the Orme Ranch Conservation Easement this year, there is a significant opportunity to support this permanent protection effort. As with all conservation easements, a stewardship endowment will be established and held in trust to guarantee that CALT continues to have the funds to support our responsibility for annual monitoring and to ensure that the terms of the conservation easement are forever upheld. The Orme Ranch Forever campaign is offering a one-time opportunity to name the stewardship endowment for the perpetual conservation of the Orme Ranch with a donation of $50,000. This donation can be made to CALT’s Orme Ranch Forever campaign as a charitable contribution to our 501(c)(3) organization.

The permanent conservation of the Orme Ranch guarantees that the land and water resources of the Orme Ranch will continue its legacy of responsible and sustainable agriculture and be forever free from the threat of subdivision and development.