



Group photo of volunteers at San Benito Agricultural Land Trust's first public event out on the land; Attendees gathered near the iconic barn on the Trust for Public Land's Nyland Property, in San Juan Bautista.

SBALT NEWS

Two important milestones for SBALT

By Karminder Brown

A Family Hike and Volunteer Work Party at the Nyland Property

On Presidents' Day, 25 residents of San Juan Bautista, Hollister, Tres Pinos, and Aromas attended SBALT's inaugural public event on the newly-acquired Nyland property south of Hwy 156 in San Juan Bautista. The 540-acre ranch is now



owned by The Trust for Public Land, managed by SBALT, and 101 Equipment runs the cattle operation. Since the property is not

normally open to the public, it was a special opportunity for the community to explore it with land trust staff and board as their guides.

The day began with a volunteer "work party" under bright blue skies with a bald

eagle flying overhead. Teams spread out and collected ranch debris from around the iconic barn and another structure, removed old pallets from a shed, removed old cattle panels, and dug out some small patches of weeds.

After about an hour of work, guests chose between two levels of hikes to join. One group took a short uphill walk to the two reservoirs that provide water for livestock and habitat for birds, reptiles, and other wildlife. Birdwatchers in this group were rewarded with sightings of a variety of migratory waterfowl, including bufflehead, American wigeon, canvasback, common goldeneye, and ring-necked duck, as well as coots, cormorants, and mallards. A half dozen Western pond turtles were also observed.

San Juan Bautista resident William Medina attended with his girlfriend Dorothy Villalon. They are both birdwatchers and relished the opportunity to explore the trails on the Nyland Property. "I have always wanted to check this place out," said Medina. "It's great to be here and be able to lend a hand with the clean-up."

The other group, led by Executive Director, Lynn Overtree, took a longer walk westward through the pastures and oak woodlands while cattle looked on with curiosity. Those who brought lunches finished the day with a picnic at the upper reservoir.

SBALT is grateful to all who attended and pitched in to clean up a portion of the ranch! Subscribe to our website to receive notice of future events on SBALT's conservation lands.

National Accreditation

Awarded to SBALT

On February 17, SBALT was awarded accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation



Commission! We join a network of over 450 accredited land trusts across the nation that have demonstrated their commitment to professional excellence and to maintaining the public's trust in their work. We thank the Community Foundation for San Benito County for several grants

that helped us to prepare over four years. We also thank the many donors whose contributions have sustained SBALT through this process. Visit www.sanbenitolandtrust.org to see the accreditation seal proudly displayed and to read more about what accreditation means. ■



Aromas residents Zooley Diggory and son Ren removing debris at SBALT's work party and hike at the Nyland Property.