

San Benito Agricultural Land Trust (SBALT) History Timeline

“According to the State Department of Conservation, in 1984 there were 4,390 acres of urban and built-up land in San Benito County. By 2016, that same index was 8,145 acres, an 85% increase. Over the same period, San Benito County lost 21,674 acres of prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance (prime agricultural land on the Important Farmlands Categories system), a 39% decrease from its 1984 total of 55,614 acres.”

“BenitoLink Special Report: What is prime agricultural land, and who keeps track of it?”
Matthew Koller, *Benitolink*, October 17, 2020. <https://benitolink.com/bl-special-report-what-is-prime-agricultural-land-and-who-keeps-track-of-it/>

The San Benito Agricultural Land Trust (SBALT) is a non-profit [501(c)3] that oversees about 6,252 acres of conservation easements on prime farm and range lands throughout San Benito County. SBALT also owns two fee titles to 1,061 acres of agricultural and open space lands in San Juan Bautista.

1991-1992

“As I recall, back in 1991 and 1992, a small group of concerned citizens gathered to discuss the future of our county. These discussions gave birth to a land trust, a non-profit land conservation organization, that could help preserve productive agricultural land and our quality of life....”

SBALT Board Director Paul Hain, 1998 SBALT Fall Newsletter

Talks began among agriculturists and supporters who were interested about preserving agricultural land in San Benito County. The impetus was the proposed Paicines Ranch Resort on a nearly 9,000 acre historic working ranch.

Proposed Development. In 1989, Sonny Paullus, owner of the Ridgemark Corporation, bought the Paicines Ranch, an 8,927-acre working ranch, with the intention of developing it. The following year, Paullus submitted a proposal to local officials for the Paicines Ranch Resort that would include six 18-hole golf courses, a 300-room hotel, up to 4,500 dwellings, and a self-contained commercial village.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Symposium. Paul Hain and other individuals attended a symposium about agricultural conservation easements at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. They learned that a conservation easement was another viable tool for farmers and their heirs to hold their land and preserve agricultural land in perpetuity.

Participants. Among the ranchers, farmers, educators, and others who took part in forming SBALT were:

- Paul Hain, John Hain & Sons
- Mark Gibson, Gibson Farms
- Richard Smith, UC Cooperative Extension
- Mike Cullinan, Cullinan Appraisal & Realty
- Elliot Swank, Swank Farms
- Chuck Doglione, CPA
- Mary Paxton, San Benito County Planning Department
- Mike Novo, San Benito County Planning Department
- Franz Schneider, Teacher
- Bill Tiffany, Attorney, Balbas & Tiffany
- Matt Escover, Educator
- Joe and Julie Morris, T. O. Cattle Company

Sources:

- Cequanet Portal. <https://cequanet.opr.ca.gov/1988082320/2>
- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter
- SBALT Binders
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director

1993

“...the land trust was created in 1993 because of the pressure of losing rangeland to development in San Juan Bautista and Paicines.”

President Paul Hain quoted in “Protecting San Benito County Agricultural Lands for 25 Years,” by bstrohn, *Benitolink*, May 21, 2018, <https://benitolink.com/protecting-san-benito-county-agricultural-lands-for-25-years/>

In the summer, SBALT filed incorporation papers with the State of California to

formally establish itself. By November, the first SBALT Board of Directors was selected. In December, the board held its first celebration dinner at the Feed Lot.

SBALT Board. The first slate of SBALT Board of Directors consisted of:

- Paul Hain, John Hain & Sons
- Mark Gibson, Gibson Farms
- Richard Smith, UC Cooperative Extension
- Mike Cullinan, Cullinan Appraisal & Realty
- Elliot Swank, Swank Farms
- Chuck Doglione, CPA
- Mary Paxton, San Benito County Planning Department
- Mike Novo, San Benito County Planning Department
- Franz Schneider, Teacher
- Bill Tiffany, Attorney, Balbas & Tiffany
- Matt Escover, Educator
- Joe Morris, T. O. Cattle Company

Elected as SBALT Officers were Paul Hain, Chairman; Mark Gibson, Vice Chair; Mike Novo, Secretary; and Matt Escover, Interim Treasurer

Brainstorming. At the November 22 Board meeting, the participants brainstormed why there is a need for agriculture. Responses included

“Family continuity, food production, local production, connect people to non-human world, fresh air, freedom, freedom to produce, rural lifestyle, elbow room, vistas, aesthetics, room for floods, clean water, healthy food, independence, mankind living with nature, less crime, good schools, children, food for posterity, wildlife, sensibility, culture, common sense, awareness, vaquero culture, agrarian roots, sustenance, religion, garden, preserving a non-renewable scarce resource, peace and quiet, good work, flexibility in using associated resources, financial security, diversity, democracy, health.”

Sources

- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter
- SBALT Binders
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director

1994

In April, SBALT was incorporated and registered as a non-profit with California State. In December, SBALT received tax-exempt status from the IRS. Throughout the year, SBALT submitted articles for the “Community Forum” section of the *Free Lance*.

Prime Agricultural Land. At the January 31 board meeting, directors discussed the status of agricultural land. Director Schneider noted that “Hollister still has 10,000 acres of infill available—three times what is needed over the next 20 years....” Director Cullinan indicated “...some land needs to be developed, but we need to save some areas — San Juan Valley, Buena Vista/Wright, and Santa Ana/McCloskey.”

Sources

- SBALT Binders
- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter

1995

The Board approved the SBALT logo in March. In the Fall, the Board set up an information booth at the San Benito County Fair.

Sources

- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter
- SBALT Binders

1996

SBALT began initiating talks with local farmers and ranchers about the advantages of having agricultural conservation easements on their property.

Sources

- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter
- SBALT Binders

1997

In April, SBALT received a \$3,000 grant from the Trust for Public Land to use for Board of Directors training with Eric Vink of the American Farmland Trust.

Easement Donations. SBALT received its first donations of conservation easements for a total of 1,762 acres of prime agricultural land in San Benito County.

- In May, the deed of conservation easement on the Brandenburg Property (68 acres) between the Brandenburg Revocable Trust and SBALT was recorded in the San Benito County Records.
- In December, the deeds of conservation easement on the Cook Ranch–West (1,079 acres) and Cook Ranch–East (615 acres) between the Cook Family and SBALT were recorded in the San Benito County Records.

Brandenburg Easement

The Brandenburg Easement is 68 acres of prime farmland in San Juan Valley, near the intersection of Union Road and Highway 156.

In the 1990s, Lee Brandenburg, a Bay Area developer, and his family owned land from the San Juan Valley floor up to San Juan Canyon Road. Brandenburg was interested in building a golf course development near the intersection of Union Road and Highway 156. Although the golf course would not be built on farmland, it was surrounded by prime agricultural land.

In 1994, Scott Fuller, the golf club manager approached SBALT about the owner's interest in donating a conservation easement on 65 acres of row crop land next to the golf course. The conservation easement proposal was on condition of the owner receiving local approval of building the golf course development. By September 1996, the proposed easement was increased to 68 acres.

According to Fuller in a 2020 *BenitoLink* article, the original owner wanted to show good faith as well as to acknowledge that they were building next to prime farmland in the San Juan Valley. The owner also wanted to discourage any future development in the area.

In 2009, the parcel with the Brandenburg Easement was sold to Dobler & Sons, which continues to grow row crops.

Sources

- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter
- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website
- Brandenburg Agricultural Conservation Easement Present Condition Report
- “BenitoLink Special Report: What are agricultural easements, and do they preserve San Benito County's rural character?” Matthew Koller, *BenitoLink*,

November 15, 2020, <https://benitolink.com/bl-special-report-what-are-agricultural-easements-and-do-they-preserve-san-benito-countys-rural-character/>

Cook Ranch Easement

The Cook Ranch Easement is 1,694 acres of rangeland in Tres Pinos, along Quien Sabe Road to Santa Ana Valley. It consists of two easements, Cook Ranch–East, 615 acres, and Cook Ranch–West, 1,079 acres.

In the 1990s, Lew W. Cook and his family owned the Cook Ranch. The property was zoned for five-acre parcels and had the potential to be developed into over 300 home sites. John Irwin, who served as the Deputy Secretary of State under President Nixon, was the owner of the neighboring property, Quien Sabe Ranch. Irwin wanted to protect his ranch from encroaching development. Interested in purchasing the Cook Ranch, Irwin approached SBALT about putting an easement on the ranch before he bought it.

Because of different ownerships of the eastern and western portions of Cook Ranch, two easements were created. Lew Cook was the primary owner of the western portion, while Cook, his daughter, and his granddaughter were the owners of the eastern section. Immediately after the easements were recorded, the grant deed was transferred to Irwin’s company, the Potrero Peak Corporation. In 2012, the deed was transferred to Cook Ranch LLC, which is still owned by the Irwin Family.

Sources

- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter
- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website
- Cook Ranch – West Agricultural Conservation Easement Present Condition Report
- Cook Ranch – East Agricultural Conservation Easement Present Condition Report
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director

1998

The 1998 SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Mark Gibson, Vice President; Joe Morris, Treasurer; Mary Paxton, Secretary; Richard Smith, Director; Franz Schneider,

Director; Mike Cullinan, Director; Eliot Swank, Director; Matt Escover, Director; Bill Tiffany, Director; and Kerry Lorincz, Director.

Accomplishments. As a result of a training session in March about running a nonprofit organization, the Board accomplished several goals this year. The board members developed the SBALT mission statement, a business plan, job descriptions, and a set of criteria for evaluating conservation easements, among other administrative needs. Because SBALT did not have the financial ability to hire staff or open an office, directors took on specific tasks, such as bookkeeping, legal services, and conducting negotiations with potential easement donors.

Sources

- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter
- SBALT Binders

2001

In 2001, SBALT received its third conservation easement donation. It now monitors a total of 4,935 acres of prime agricultural land in San Benito County, which are perpetually protected from development.

- In August, the deed of conservation easement on the Wilkinson Ranch (3,173 acres), between Potrero Peak Corporation and SBALT, was recorded in the San Benito County Records.

Wilkinson Ranch Easement

The Wilkinson Ranch Easement is 3,173 acres of rangeland in the Diablo Mountains northwest of Panoche Valley, accessed by twelve miles of ranch road starting at the end of McCreery Ranch Rd.

In 2000, the Potrero Peak Corporation, owned by John Irwin, purchased the Wilkinson Ranch. Irwin, whose properties include Quien Sabe and Cook Ranches, was concerned that a large conservation program would come along and say the land on his property must be preserved, hence Irwin decided to do something about it first. By the following year, a conservation easement on the Wilkinson Ranch was granted to SBALT.

In 2002, the title of the Wilkinson Ranch was transferred to Slack and Riley, LLC.

Sources

- 1998 SBALT Fall newsletter
- SBALT Binders

- SBALT Website
- Wilkinson Ranch Agricultural Conservation Easement Present Condition Report
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director

2004

The 2004 SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Joe Morris, Treasurer; John Gregg, Secretary; Sam Armstrong, Director; Janet Brians, Director; Matt Escover, Director; Kerry Lorincz, Director; Eliot Swank, Director; Mark Paxton, Director; and Ron Ross, Director.

Title Owner. In November, SBALT became a property owner when it received a donation of open space land alongside the Gabilan mountain range outside of San Juan Bautista. With that acquisition, SBALT now monitored a total of 5,456 acres of protected agricultural and open spaces land in San Benito County.

- In November, the deed of ownership to San Benito Agricultural Land Trust of Rancho Larios Open Space (521 acres), also known as Parcel D, was recorded in the San Benito County Records.

Rancho Larios Open Space

Rancho Larios Open Space is 521 acres of agricultural and open space lands that surround the subdivision of Rancho Larios, a gated community in the foothills of the Gabilan Range, two miles west of San Juan Bautista.

The subdivision was approved in 1986. The Larwin Company, owner and developer of Rancho Larios, received its development permit in 1998 when it signed over the development rights for its open space lands, identified as Parcel D, to the County of San Benito. Construction of the luxury homes began in 2000.

The Rancho Larios developer first approached SBALT in October 2002 to talk about its open space lands. By April 2004, the developers were discussing the possibility of donating Parcel D to SBALT. Several months later, Board President Hain signed the escrow papers for the Rancho Larios Open Space property. SBALT received the deed of ownership on November 12, 2004.

Sources

- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website

- Rancho Larios Open Space Management Plan
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director

2005

The 2005 SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Kerry Lorincz, Treasurer; John Gregg, Secretary; Sam Armstrong, Director; Janet Brians, Director; Matt Escover, Director; Mark Gibson, Director; Joe Morris, Director; Mark Paxton, Director; and Ron Ross, Director.

2006

The 2006 SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Kerry Lorincz, Treasurer; John Gregg, Secretary; Janet Brians, Director; Matt Escover, Director; Mark Gibson, Director; Mark Paxton, Director; and Ron Ross, Director.

2007 to 2010

From 2007 to 2010, the SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Mark Gibson, Vice President; Ron Ross, Treasurer; John Gregg, Secretary; Bill Tiffany, Legal Counsel; Janet Brians, Director; Matt Escover, Director; Phil Foster, Director; and Mark Paxton, Director.

2011 to 2013

From 2011 to 2013, the SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Mark Gibson, Vice President; Ron Ross, Treasurer; John Gregg, Secretary; Bill Tiffany, Legal Counsel; and Janet Brians, Director.

2014

The 2014 SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Mark Gibson, Vice President; Ron Ross, Treasurer; John Gregg, Secretary; Bill Tiffany, Legal Counsel; and Janet Brians, Director.

Easement Donations. SBALT received two more conservation easements donations totaling 1,266 acres. SBALT now monitored a total of 6,722 acres of prime agricultural land perpetually protected from development in San Benito County.

- In September, the deed of conservation easement on the Soap Lake Ranch (1,113

acres), between Soap Lake Ranch and SBALT, was recorded in the San Benito County Records.

- In October, the deed of conservation easement on the Silva Ranch (153 acres) between San Juan Oaks, LLC and SBALT, was recorded in the San Benito County Records.

Soap Lake Ranch Easement

The Soap Lake Ranch Easement consists of 1,113 acres of grasslands, wooded areas, and seasonal wetlands.

Soap Lake Ranch is located in north San Benito County, bordered by Santa Clara County and Highway 152. Part of the ranch is in Santa Clara County. The ranch lies on natural floodplains that are part of the upper Pajaro River watershed. Rainfall from the Diablo Range drains to the ranch where the Pacheco Creek, Tequisquita Slough, and Ortega Creek converge.

Dave Brigantino and other owners of the Soap Lake Ranch approached SBALT about placing a conservation easement on part of their property, including Soap Lake, also known as San Felipe Lake. Part of their interest for preserving their land was to add another layer of difficulty for potential state transportation projects, such as the California High-Speed Rail Project, to access the property.

In September 2014, SBALT was granted the conservation easement on Soap Lake Ranch.

Sources

- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website
- Soap Lake Ranch Agricultural Conservation Easement Present Condition Report
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director

Silva Ranch Easement

The Silva Ranch Easement is made up of 153 acres, of which 144 acres is prime farmland. The remaining acreage lies in the San Benito River riparian zone. Silva Ranch is located in San Juan Valley at the intersection of San Justo and Prescott Roads.

Since the early 2000s, the San Juan Oaks owner was interested in developing a 55+ community on its golf course. To convert prime farmland for development, the owner would need to preserve an equal number of acres either on-site or off-site. San Juan Oaks purchased the Silva Ranch for the sole purpose of transferring development credits. Through SBALT, the developer placed a conservation easement on Silva Ranch, thus allowing him to build on an

equivalent number of acres on his San Juan Oaks property.

San Juan Oaks sold Silva Ranch to the David and Susan Gill Family Trust of King City.

Sources

- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website
- Silva Ranch Agricultural Conservation Easement Present Condition Report
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director

2015

The 2015 SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Mark Gibson, Vice President; Ron Ross, Treasurer; John Gregg, Secretary; Bill Tiffany, Legal Counsel; and Janet Brians, Director.

2016 to 2017

In 2016 and 2017, the SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Ron Ross, Treasurer; Sara Steiner, Acting Secretary; Bill Tiffany, Legal Counsel; Dave Brigantino, Director; and Dan Dungy, Director.

2018

The 2018 SBALT Board of Directors were Paul Hain, President; Ron Ross, Treasurer; Sara Steiner, Secretary; Dan Dungy, Director; Emily Renzel, Director; and Zoey Diggory, Director.

In 2018, SBALT saw a revitalization after several years of inactivity. The SBALT by-laws were revised, as well as current practices were assessed and modified. Fundraising and volunteer campaigns were launched. New directors came on board, while staff was hired through small contracts, and a physical office was opened at 103 Third Street in San Juan Bautista. SBALT also joined the Land Trust Alliance.

Sources

- Lynn Overtree
- SBALT binders
- Land Trust Alliance Website, <https://landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts/explore/san-benito-agricultural-land-trust-ca>

2019

The 2019 SBALT Board of Directors were Dan Dungy, President; Emily Renzel, Vice President; Ron Ross, Treasurer; Sara Steiner, Secretary; and Paul Hain, Director.

Grants. SBALT received two grants this year.

- In June, SBALT received a capacity building grant from the Community Foundation for San Benito County, with matching funds from Nob Hill Grocery, to support the completion of property reports and milestone achievements towards Land Trust Alliance Accreditation.
- In December, SBALT received a grant from The California Strategic Growth Council through its Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program.

Certification. In December, SBALT was granted certification from the California Green Business in December.

Easement Donation. SBALT received its sixth conservation easement donation. SBALT now monitored a total of 6,749 acres of prime agricultural land in San Benito County, which are perpetually protected from development.

- In August, the deed of conservation easement on the Foster Ranch (27 acres), between the Philip W. and Katherine M. Foster Revocable Living Trust and SBALT, was recorded in the San Benito County Records.

Foster Ranch Easement

The Foster Ranch Easement consists of two parcels for a total of 51 acres. SBALT obtained the first parcel (27 acres) in August 2019 and the second parcel (24 acres) in July 2023.

The Phil Foster Ranch, also known as Pinnacle Organically Grown, is located at 400 Duncan Road in the San Juan Valley. Phil and Katherine Foster have been the owners of the organic farm since the late 1980s. They wanted to put their whole property in a conservation easement.

SBALT received about \$400,000 in mitigation fees that the county imposed on the Southside Estate developers for building homes on 27 acres of prime farmland. Charged with using the funds to purchase agricultural conservation easements, the SBALT Board decided to partner with Phil and Katherine Foster.

Owner Phil Foster stated in a *SanBenitoLive.com* article:

“The funds we receive for the ag conservation easement with SBALT on part of our farmland will

be beneficial to the economic viability of our farm, and will aid in future transition of our farmland to employee or younger farmer ownership with the development value of the land removed.”

Sources

- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website
- Foster Ranch Agricultural Conservation Easement Present Condition Report
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director
- “Land Trust to help preserve Phil Foster Ranch through easement,” Kollin Kosmicki, *SanBenitoLive.com*, <https://sanbenitolive.com/land-trust-to-help-preserve-phil-foster-ranch-through-easement/>
- “Promontory Development Begins Construction,” Noe Magaña, *BenitoLink.com*, <https://benitolink.com/promontory-development-begins-construction/>

2020

The 2020 SBALT Board of Directors were Dan Dungy, President; Emily Renzel, Vice President; Ron Ross, Treasurer; Sara Steiner, Secretary; Michael Reeves, Director; and Paul Hain, Director.

Sources

- SBALT Binders

2021

The 2021 SBALT Board of Directors were Emily Renzel, President; Paul Hain, Vice President; Michael Reeves, Treasurer; Cathy Summa Wolfe, Secretary; Jessica Brem, Director; Laura Naccarato, Director; and Jeremy Lackey, Director.

Executive Director. SBALT hired Lynn Overtree to be the organization’s first Executive Director.

Sources

- Lynn Overtree
- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website

2022

The 2022 SBALT Board of Directors were Michael Reeves, President; Paul Hain, Vice-President; Emily Renzel, Secretary; Rick Carpenedo, Treasurer; Jessica Brem, Director; Nikhilesh Dholakia, Director; and Sara Steiner, Director.

Accreditation. In February, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission granted SBALT received accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission for a five-year term, from February 16, 2022 to February 15, 2027.

Ranch Days. In the Spring, SBALT established a monthly ‘Ranch Day.’ Every first Sunday of the month, the public is invited to join the SBALT board, staff, and volunteers to hike and/or do ranch work on SBALT-owned property (Rancho Larios Open Space and the Nyland Property).

Sources

- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website
- “San Benito Agricultural Land Trust earns national accreditation,” BenitoLink Staff, *BenitoLink.com*, <https://benitolink.com/san-benito-agricultural-land-trust-earns-national-accreditation/>
- Land Trust Accreditation Commission Website, <https://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/index.php>

2023

The 2023 SBALT Board of Directors were Michael Reeves, President; Paul Hain, Vice-President; Emily Renzel, Secretary; Rick Carpenedo, Treasurer; Jessica Brem, Director; Nikhilesh Dholakia, Director; and Sara Steiner, Director.

Grant. In June, SBALT receives funding to assist in the creation of a San Benito County Wildfire Resilience Program.

San Benito County Wildfire Resilience Program

In June, the State Coastal Conservancy gave a \$758,000 grant to the Regents of University of California for a San Benito County Wildfire Resilience Program. SBALT will work with the University of California Extension and the San Benito Resource Conservation District to develop a San Benito Wildfire Regional Prioritization Plan, which includes prescribed burns, and a portfolio of four to eight priority projects. They will also be responsible for updating the

county's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Part of the grant provides SBALT with funds to hire a staff member for two years to assist with the wildfire resilience program and to expand the land trust's capacity to address fire-related issues within conservation easements and properties.

Sources

- SBALT Website
- State Coastal Conservancy
https://scc.ca.gov/webmaster/ftp/pdf/sccbb/2023/2306/20230601Board19_Wildfire_Resilience%20Program.pdf
- "San Benito County Gets \$758K for Wildfire Resilience," Staff Report, *San Benito.com*
<https://sanbenito.com/san-benito-county-gets-758k-for-wildfire-resilience/>

More Protected Agricultural Lands. In 2023, SBALT added another 564 acres of protected farmlands to its stewardship. SBALT now oversaw the management of 1,061 acres of prime agricultural and open space lands, as well as monitored 6,252 acres of conservation easements for a total of 7,313 acres in San Benito County.

- In June, the deed of ownership of the Nyland Property (540 acres) to SBALT was recorded in the San Benito County Records.
- In July, the deed of conservation easement on the Foster Ranch (24 acres) between the Philip Wilson and Katherine Mook Foster Revocable Living Trust and SBALT was recorded in the San Benito County Records.

Nyland Property

The Nyland Property is 540 acres of ranchland located southwest of the City of San Juan Bautista. Bordering the property on the west is the Rancho Larios Open Space. The Nyland Property was owned by Harvey Nyland, a San Benito County Sheriff, and his wife Gladys Nyland.

In 2017, the property was put up for sale for about \$4 million. In March 2017, WY2M submitted a pre-application to the San Benito County Resource Management Agency to build a Motor and Technology Center of Excellence on the Nyland Property. The proposed project would include five components: vehicle testing facilities; a re-configurable race track for Formula One Grand Prix races, GP Moto racing, and vehicle test drives; luxury condominiums; a luxury hotel and convention center; and hospitality facilities. The project was met with resistance by the citizens of San Juan Bautista and was withdrawn.

In October 2017, SBALT met with John Nyland to introduce the idea of a conservation easement on the Nyland Property. He was noncommittal about the easement, but mentioned his interest in developing the eastern side of the property that was under the Williamson Act until August 2018.

In December 2017, SBALT met with John Nyland and Alex Size of the Trust for Public Lands to discuss the possibility of purchasing the Nyland Property. The following year, SBALT partnered with the Trust for Public Lands to raise funds to acquire the 540-acre Nyland Property. On September, 17, 2021, the Trust for Public Land bought the Nyland Property.

In June 2023, the Trust for Public Lands transferred the title of the Nyland Property to SBALT. By the following month, SBALT granted a conservation easement on the property to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County as well as a cultural easement to the Amah Mutson Land Trust.

Sources

- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website
- Nyland Property Conservation Management Plan
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director
- WY2M pre-application packet,
 - https://cms6.revize.com/revize/sanjuanbautistaca/document_center/Planning/WY2M,%20Inc.%20Motor%20&%20Technology/san-juan-bautista.ca.us_f-1-raceway-proposal.pdf
- “San Juan Bautista Planning Commission to hear proposal for Formula One racetrack project,” [Benitolink.com](https://benitolink.com/san-juan-bautista-planning-commission-to-hear-proposal-for-formula-one-racetrack-project/), <https://benitolink.com/san-juan-bautista-planning-commission-to-hear-proposal-for-formula-one-racetrack-project/>
- “Mayor Says Proposal For Second U.S. F1 Race Is 'Unworkable',” [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com/sites/csylt/2017/11/03/exclusive-mayor-says-proposal-for-second-us-f1-race-is-unworkable/?sh=7f5cf45e3ae5), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/csylt/2017/11/03/exclusive-mayor-says-proposal-for-second-us-f1-race-is-unworkable/?sh=7f5cf45e3ae5>
- “Protecting San Benito County Agricultural Lands for 25 years,” [Benitolink.com](https://benitolink.com/protecting-san-benito-county-agricultural-lands-for-25-years/), <https://benitolink.com/protecting-san-benito-county-agricultural-lands-for-25-years/>
- “The Trust for Public Land Partners with Local Land Trusts to Protect Historic 540-acre Ranch in San Benito County,” <https://www.tpl.org/media-room/trust-public-land-partners-local-land-trusts-protect-historic-540-acre-ranch-san-benito>

Foster Ranch Easement (West)

The Foster Ranch Easement consists of two parcels for a total of 51 acres. SBALT obtained the first parcel (27.3 acres) in August 2019 and the second parcel (24.23 acres) in July 2023.

The Phil Foster Ranch, also known as Pinnacle Organically Grown, is located at 400 Duncan Road in the San Juan Valley. Having been owners of the organic farm since the late 1980s, Phil and Katherine Foster wanted to put their whole property in a conservation easement.

SBALT obtained grants from the California Strategic Growth Council's Sustainable Agricultural Conservation Program and the USDA Conservation Easement Program to purchase an easement on the second parcel of the Foster Ranch.

Sources

- SBALT Binders
- SBALT Website
- Foster Ranch Agricultural Conservation Easement (West) Baseline Condition Report
- October 14, 2023 interview with Paul Hain, SBALT Director
- “Trust, Foster Ranch protect more ag acreage,” Staff Report, *San Benito.com*,
<https://sanbenito.com/trust-foster-ranch-protect-more-ag-acreage/>