

## SBALT NEWS

# Cultivating our future of agriculture and open space

By Lynn Overtree

Throughout 2023, SBALT celebrated its 30th anniversary. We learned about our history and acknowledged the vision of our founding directors (*Mission Village Voice*, March 2023); we collected 30 recipes featuring locally produced ingredients (*Mission Village Voice*, November 2023), and we gathered with our founders, past board members, and other key volunteers for an amazing afternoon at the Overlook at Paicines Ranch. Throughout the year, we heard stories from San Benito County residents about the importance of agriculture. They are proud of our extensive grazing lands, and they struggle over how to balance the need for economic growth with the responsibility to preserve our agricultural lands and heritage.

Increasingly, I hear about the benefits that our agricultural lands add to our commu-



Above: Cattle on pastures with storm clouds by Bob Connolly.

nity. Those who commute outside the County feel refreshed as they leave behind the city congestion and return to our open vistas. Our Ranch Day participants embrace the opportunity to do work on Nyland and

Rancho Larios that connects them to the land. The hikers who joined us on the Post-Thanksgiving Hike remarked that we don't have enough local trails where the public can exercise or enjoy nature. A rancher told



San Benito Agricultural Land Trust

me that she is proud that her ranch, and many others, provide important habitat for wildlife.

SBALT is well respected for its agricultural conservation work locally, thanks to our volunteers and donors. As we enter our next decade, we accept the responsibility to incorporate a wide array of community values. In December, we launched a multi-year campaign to raise \$600,000 to fund land conservation and stewardship, as well as overhead costs, replacing the collapsing barn at the Nyland property, and our endowment at the Community Foundation for San Benito County.

Please help us cultivate our future of agriculture and open space by sharing the values most important to you. Email your story to [info@sanbenitolandtrust.org](mailto:info@sanbenitolandtrust.org). Visit our website at [www.sanbenitolandtrust.org](http://www.sanbenitolandtrust.org). ■