



An agricultural conservation easement (ACE) ensures that farmland remains in agriculture forever. SBALT's Silva Ranch ACE in San Juan Valley.

## SBALT REPORT

# On the path toward accreditation

By Karminder Brown

As your only local land trust, SBALT takes the responsibility of conserving San Benito County's farm and ranch lands very seriously. An agricultural conservation easement (ACE) is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that permanently restricts land use to agriculture, in perpetuity, in exchange for benefits to the landowner and society as a whole. To ensure the long-term integrity of ACEs, the nonprofit land trusts that execute the agreements and hold the easements set high standards for themselves. Easements are often funded through a combination of private donations and public and private grants, which brings additional scrutiny to land trusts.

One of the ways that land trusts can demonstrate their fitness to hold conservation easements and receive charitable donations is to become accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). Accreditation is a

## San Benito Agricultural



meticulous process that evaluates an organization's commitment to sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship. Accredited land trusts you may have heard of include the California Rangeland Trust, Peninsula Open Space Trust, and the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.

SBALT will submit a pre-application for LTA accreditation in March 2021. Our board and staff have been preparing the organization for this rigorous process during the past two years. We look forward to pursuing this path toward joining a nationwide network of over 400 land trusts committed to excellence. Learn more about SBALT and how you can support our work at [www.sanbenitolandtrust.org](http://www.sanbenitolandtrust.org). ■



Land trust accreditation increases partner and donor confidence and ensures best practices. SBALT's Wilkinson Ranch ACE in Panoche.