



PRESERVATION

Soap Lake Ranch, Part 2

Last month we introduced you to Soap Lake Ranch – 1,025 acres of grazing land protected by an SBALT conservation easement – and why the landowners chose to preserve it. This month we’ll highlight some of the ways this easement benefits us all.

Located north of Hollister, at the convergence of Pacheco Creek, Tequisquita Slough and Ortega Creek, the unique property serves an important function within the Pajaro River Watershed. Rain that falls in the Diablo Range drains to the ranch and spreads out across the ancient Soap Lake floodplain, recharging the aquifer that supports agriculture in the area. Protecting the land that absorbs these winter flows also provides flood protection benefits to our downstream neighbors in the communities of Pajaro and Watsonville.

Flooding during periods of heavy rains

turns Soap Lake Ranch into a natural wetland and an attractive stopover spot for migrating ducks, geese and

occasionally, White Pelicans. Year-round, the ranch provides habitat for many species of songbirds and raptors such as hawks, owls, kites and falcons.

For deer, bobcats, foxes, and other mammals, the property is a crucial link in a wildlife “corridor” between the Diablo and Santa Cruz Mountain ranges, allowing animals to move safely through a landscape criss-crossed with homes, highways and roads.

Soap Lake Ranch is a privately owned, working cattle ranch and is not open to the public. However, the entire watershed benefits from the stewardship of the landowners in partnership with your local land trust. Learn more or donate to SBALT here: www.sanbenitolandtrust.org. ■