

MALT News

32 Years Preserving Marin County Farmland

Barboni Ranch

Farmland Forever Campaign raises funds to save historic ranch

For more than 100 years, the Barboni family has taken care of the land and in turn the land has taken care of them. MALT's recent purchase of two agricultural conservation easements on 1,200 acres of the family's ranch is the latest chapter of this ongoing story.

Located west of Novato in Hicks Valley, Barboni Ranch occupies a diverse, iconic Marin landscape that includes tabletop-flat pasture, gentle grass-covered hills, dense oak woodlands, diverse evergreen forest and the scenic Soulajule Reservoir. In the summer a blanket of cooling fog advances overnight from nearby Tomales Bay and pulls back as the day warms.

The ranch's varied habitat is home to a wide variety of wildlife. A biological assessment of the property identified 15 special status species including a pair of nesting Northern spotted owls, Cooper's hawks, burrowing owls, grasshopper



Bill and Rosemarie Barboni at Barboni Ranch.



Maggie, Sarah and Jamison Watts.

Welcome to the spring 2013 edition of MALT News. We have big news to share with you in this issue—the

protection of the 1,200-acre Barboni Ranch. With your support, MALT preserved this multigenerational cattle ranch and the verdant oak woodland and diverse wildlife it supports, forever.

Protecting this important ranch, along with two additional family farms MALT is currently working to preserve, means MALT will be well on its way to protecting nearly 50,000 acres within two years. Considering that agriculture was thought to be an antiquated industry 60 years ago by Marin County planners, that's a remarkable achievement.

What has made this possible, and will get us to the ultimate goal of protecting all at-risk farmland in Marin, is MALT's steadfast community of supporters—people like you. Working together, members and volunteers, farmers and ranchers, family foundations, government agencies, elected officials and partner organizations provide the support necessary for the continuation of agriculture in this special place we call home.

I believe we belong to a community that, as Aldo Leopold wrote, views "land as a community to which we belong" rather than a "commodity belonging to us." We value land for the livelihoods it sustains, the beauty it contributes to our lives, the delicious locally grown food it provides our families and the biodiversity it supports. Ultimately, though, it is our interconnectedness to the land and our common fate that urge us to protect it in perpetuity.

As Executive Director, I look forward to joining Marin's "land community" and working with each of you to ensure that agriculture remains a vibrant part of our landscape, economy and way of life in Marin, for a long, long time, one farm at a time.

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Barboni Ranch

sparrows, California red-legged frogs, river otters, American badgers and southwestern pond turtles. Soulajule Reservoir helps sustain adequate water flow to Walker Creek that provides habitat for steelhead trout.

The ranch looks much the way it did a century ago. The Barboni family used to run dairy cattle on the land, but today Bill Barboni II raises beef cattle and sheep that he sells under the Hicks Valley Cattle Co. brand. Not only are the cattle grass-fed and organic, the ranch's operations have been certified by Global Animal Partnership, a nonprofit organization that recognizes ranchers and producers for their animal welfare practices.

Bill's grandfather, Charles Barboni, purchased the "Home Ranch" in the early 1930's. The family was one of the original producers to ship milk to the Petaluma Cooperative Creamery. The Barbonis co-founded Marin Dairymen's Milk Company, later known as Marin Dell Milk Company, with a group of progressive Marin dairymen. They were the first producers of grade A milk.



Sheep graze at Barboni Ranch.

Three generations later, the ranch is helping provide for the family again. Bill's parents, Bill, 92, and Rosemarie, 88, who live on the ranch along with three of their five children, were facing an uncertain future. The MALT easements will enable Bill to continue with ranching and provide funding to assist the rest of the family with their needs. The elder Barbonis could have sold a portion of the ranch, but that would have opened the door to residential development and the end to a way of life practiced by the family for decades. Marin County would also lose a link to its agricultural past and the many environmental benefits the ranch provides to the region at large.

"It's a classic MALT situation," says Bill.

Bill grew up on the ranch along with his brother, Charlie, and three sisters, Stephanie, Bonnie and Julie. During this time he developed his love for cattle and horses. "It was just me, my

dog and my horse,” he recalls fondly. While his life may not be as carefree now (he is also a veterinarian and owner of Marin Pet Hospital in San Rafael), he still spends long days with dogs, cattle and horses on the ranch.

The Barboni family knew it had an alternative to putting

"Every ranch that's taken out of production affects the whole agricultural community."

—Bill Barboni II

the family's ranch up for sale. They had worked with MALT in 2002 to permanently protect 1,300 acres on an adjoining property. MALT and the family worked together again over the past four years. The new conservation easements enable them to distribute some of the equity of the ranch while still keeping the ranch alive. Without MALT's help, Bill says, the pressure to sell would have been strong.

"It allows my parents to settle up with life," says Bill. "I see it as conserving the land, keeping it open and preserving a way of life."

MALT worked with the family for four years to protect the ranch, which was complicated because of the number of funders involved. This portion of the Barboni Ranch contains two parcels, the 746-acre Barboni "Home Ranch" and the 448-acre Bassi Ranch, a property that Bill's father and mother acquired in the 1950s.

In the end, MALT was able to leverage donor funds raised through Farmland Forever: Campaign to Honor Executive Director Bob Berner to raise public funds to complete the purchase, which totaled \$3,686,000. The campaign raised \$1,372,000 for the Barboni easement purchase from generous donors, including the 11th Hour Project, to honor Bob, who retired at the end of last year.

Funding from The Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board and California Department of Transportation made up \$2,314,000 of the purchase price. The Wildlife Conservation Board's funds were granted to protect the property's diverse oak woodlands and the California Department of Transportation funds to permanently protect a 204-acre portion of the ranch as habitat for the endangered California red-legged frog.

Now that sale of the ranch is completed, Bill can do what he loves best and a historic Marin County ranch will live on to offer a home for people and animals, wild and domestic. "I promised my grandfather we'd always have cattle here," says Bill. "It's part of my family heritage." That's a promise he can keep.



RANCHES & ROLLING HILLS

May 18 & 19

Ranches & Rolling Hills Landscape Art Show & Sale

Celebrate and mingle with a group of California artists who have been painting on MALT-protected ranches and farms for the 16th Ranches & Rolling Hills art show. Special preview farm-to-table lunch will feature food grown on MALT farms and will give you first opportunity to preview and purchase art.

Druids Hall, Nicasio



Preview Lunch

Enjoy a champagne and hors d'oeuvres reception followed by a lunch outdoors. Tickets are \$150 per person.

Saturday the 18th

11a.m.–2p.m.: Preview Lunch

\$150 Preregistration required, limited space available

2p.m.–5p.m.: Open to the Public

Sunday the 19th

10–4pm: Open to the public. Lunch and drinks will be available for purchase from local food purveyors, including MALT-protected Black Mountain Ranch.

Save the Date

Tickets for the preview lunch will go on sale Monday, March 18. Space is limited so make sure to purchase tickets early online at www.malt.org/art-show or by phone at 415.663.1158.

Farmland Forever

Campaign to Honor Executive Director Bob Berner

MALT's former Executive Director Bob Berner retired at the end of 2012 after 28 years of leadership. In honor of his lasting contribution to protecting Marin's family farms and ranches and his role as a national conservation leader, MALT supporters contributed \$2.2 million—surpassing the \$2 million goal—to help protect three at-risk farms and ranches, including the Barboni Ranch.

Thank you for your support.



Jocelyn Knight

\$50,000+

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For the Love of Cheese: Tasting & Farm Tour *March 2*

Get out on the farm this spring and taste the bounty of Marin artisanal cheeses paired with local libations. Tour the MALT-protected Giacomini Dairy and Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co. and then gather around a table and enjoy cheese from MALT-protected farms along with local wine pairings. Cheese makers will be sharing stories, recipes and nuances that make West Marin cheeses special.

Time: 1 p.m.–4 p.m. (rain or shine)

Place: Giacomini Dairy

Cost: \$75 MALT Members/\$100 Nonmembers

What to Bring: Boots and rain gear for outside portion of event

Hike Distance: Walk about farm, easy

Age Appropriate: 21 and over

Guest Limit: 50



Wildflowers in the Fields: A Farm Walk at Leiss Ranch *April 6*

Hike over pastures and through woods to see more than 45 different wildflowers that blanket the ranch during the spring season. Phyllis Faber, MALT co-founder and botanist, along with wildflower expert Doreen Smith will help us identify the flowers, and Nancy Chaffin, who grew up on the ranch, will be sharing stories of history and life on the farm.

Time: 10 a.m.–2 p.m. (rain cancels)

Place: Leiss Ranch

Cost: \$5 per adult, kids free. Preregistration required

What to Bring: Picnic lunch, hiking boots, water

Hike Distance: 1.5 miles round trip, easy

Age Appropriate: 8 years and up

Guest Limit: 65



Nightfall with Owls *April 20*

Owls play many important roles on the farm. Join us at the Moore Ranch, a MALT-protected farm, for a magical evening observing and learning about owls. There will be live owls present and conversation from the Hungry Owl Project experts. We will end the evening with a short walk around the ranch to look and listen for the resident owls. Hot chocolate and cookies will be provided.

Time: 7 p.m.–9 p.m. (rain cancels)

Place: Moore Ranch

Cost: \$30 members/\$40 nonmembers/\$10 children

What to Bring: Water, lawn chair or blanket, flashlight, boots for mud walking

Hike Distance: Short, easy stroll

Age Appropriate: 8 years and up

Guest Limit: 45



9th Annual Marin County Wine Celebration at Historic Escalle Winery *May 11*

Join us for this unique opportunity to taste award-winning and new wines produced with grapes sourced from Marin County, many that are grown on MALT-protected farmland. This is a very popular event produced by the Marin County Winegrowers Association and a fundraiser for MALT held at the historic, private Escalle Winery located in Larkspur.

Time: 3 p.m.–7 p.m. (rain or shine)

Place: Escalle Winery:
771 Magnolia Ave., Larkspur

Cost: \$55 per person. Includes valet parking, wine & cheese tastings and wine glass. Tickets available at www.malt.org

Age Appropriate: 21 and over



Michael Woolsey

**Visit MALT online at
www.malt.org today to**

Become a MALT member and save up to 25% on MALT Hikes, Tours & Tastings.

AND sign up for MALT's free monthly eNews and receive alerts for our new "pop-up" events. These seasonal farm activities include sheep shearing, cheese making, weed ranger actions and spontaneous picnics.

Register online at www.malt.org or call 415.663.1158

Ranches and Rolling Hills Landscape Art Show & Sale

May 18 & 19

Celebrate and mingle with a group of California artists who have been painting on MALT-protected ranches and farms for the 16th annual Ranches & Rolling Hills Art Show. Special preview farm-to-table lunch will feature food grown on MALT farms and will give you first opportunity to preview and purchase art.

Time:

Saturday 18th 11a.m.–2p.m. \$150
Preregistration required, limited
space available. *2p.m.–5p.m.* Open
to the public



Sunday 19th 10–4p.m. Open to
the public, food available for sale
from Black Mountain BBQ

Place: Druids Hall, Nicasio

Preview Lunch

Enjoy a champagne and hors d'oeuvres reception while previewing this year's art, followed by a farm-to-table lunch outdoors. \$150. Space is limited. Registration opens Monday, March 18.

Cattle Round-up at Stemple Creek Ranch June 1

Come lend a hand on the ranch by helping move cattle across the beautiful pastures of Stemple Creek. This is a lovely, peaceful experience and opportunity to learn about the techniques used to work with nature to keep the land abundant and the animals healthy and happy. Afterward we will grill Stemple Creek grass-fed burgers and enjoy local beer.

Time: 1p.m.–4p.m.

Place: Stemple Creek Ranch

Cost: Members Only Event
\$45 per adult, \$20 per child

What to Bring: Boots for walking
in fields, water

Hike Distance: 1 mile or less

Age Appropriate: 8 years and up

Guest Limit: 45



Igniting the Green Fire: Finding Hope in Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic March 15-17

The Geography of Hope Conference is presented by Point Reyes Books and co-sponsored by MALT. It is the first West Coast gathering of the world's foremost Aldo Leopold experts and the only opportunity to meet and hear from the creators and stars of Green Fire, the 2012 Emmy Award-winning film about Aldo Leopold's life and conservation legacy. Naturalist-led field trips to West Marin parks, farm and ranchland will allow participants to experience Leopold's land ethic firsthand along with meals featuring food produced by West Marin's farms and ranches.

Details at www.ptreyesbooks.com

7th Annual California Artisan Cheese Festival

March 22-24

This weekend-long celebration of cheese features artisan and farmstead cheese makers, including those who source milk from MALT-protected farms. The event is held at The Sheraton Sonoma County-Petaluma. A portion of the proceeds benefit MALT.

To find out more and to register, please go to www.artisancheesefestival.com



Register online at www.malt.org or call 415.663.1158

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Planning to attend a MALT event? Sign up for MyMALT

MyMALT is MALT's new online community. Sign up today in order to receive your membership discount if you are a MALT member* while registering online for our popular Hikes, Tours & Tastings events. MyMALT members are also eligible for select special offers throughout the year, have access to event photos, can view their membership status and easily update contact information. Each month through June, all new MyMALT members for that month are entered into a raffle for prizes such as:

- *Tickets for two to MALT's new Meet the Locals supper*
- *Hikes, Tours & Tastings gift certificate*
- *Cowgirl Creamery seasonal cheese basket*
- *Gorgeous landscape art cards*

Join MyMALT online at www.malt.org

*MALT memberships start at \$40 a year. To find out more, please go to www.malt.org/membership or contact Annual Fund Manager Noelle Moss at 415.633.1158 (ext. 312) or at nmoss@malt.org.

Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) is a member-supported nonprofit organization created in 1980 by a coalition of ranchers and environmentalists to preserve farmland in Marin County, California.

With financial support from individuals, public agencies and private foundations, MALT has permanently protected more than half of the working farm and ranch land in Marin County. MALT also encourages public policies that support and enhance agriculture.

To learn about Marin's working farms and ranches and the food they produce, visit:
www.malt.org