

# MALT News

## 33 Years Preserving Marin County Farmland

### When We Say Farmland Forever—*We Mean It.*

When MALT was founded 33 years ago, cofounders Phyllis Faber and Ellen Straus blazed a trail to form the first agricultural land trust in the nation. The goal was to ensure that Marin's farmland was protected in perpetuity. The decades since have presented numerous challenges to the way MALT ensures this goal is achieved.

"When Ellen and I founded MALT, the challenge was whether or not we could devise a way to secure farmland from development," says Phyllis. "We met that challenge through forming MALT and creating one of the country's first agricultural conservation easement programs. It's been highly successful, far beyond our expectations."

The development pressure that led to for-sale signs blanketing the countryside in the 1970s and '80s has remained a threat to family farming in Marin, which lies within the country's sixth largest metropolitan area. MALT has protected more than 45,000 acres of farmland. But escalating land prices

#### PROJECT UPDATE

In the next two years  
MALT will work to:

Protect: 6 family farms and ranches

Acres: 3,888 acres

Appraised cost: \$11.2 million

Average cost per acre: \$2,880

Estimated public funding:  
\$5.6 million

Estimated funding from  
individuals and family foundations:  
\$5.6 million

## Executive Director's Message

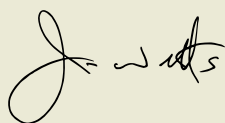
Preserving farmland for agricultural use is the heart of what we do here at MALT. But it's really a two-part mission: 1) preserving farmland, and 2) ensuring that it remains in agriculture forever. Many people believe the two go hand in hand, but that's not necessarily the case. The first part of our mission entails removing the development rights from family farms and ranches through agricultural conservation easements. With your strong and steady support, we've protected nearly half the agricultural land in Marin County, and we will continue doing so until the last at-risk farm or ranch needing our help is protected.

The second part of MALT's mission, which is equally important, is ensuring that, once protected, these lands continue being used for agriculture. This issue of MALT News is dedicated to how we are doing that. We are especially excited to tell you about a new tool in our conservation toolbox—a provision in our most recent conservation easements that mandates continuous agricultural use, which will help MALT face new challenges in keeping land in agriculture.

Another way we ensure that land remains in active agricultural use is through our Stewardship program, which offers farmers and ranchers technical and financial support. Each year, our staff visits each MALT-protected farm and ranch to talk to the landowner about what is happening on the ground. This provides them with valuable information, such as assistance with detecting, monitoring and controlling invasive weeds that can take over grasslands used for grazing. As we discuss in this issue, if prolific invasive weeds such as woolly distaff thistle get out of control, it can force an organic producer to lose their organic certification, or worse, put them out of business.

In addition, each year MALT's Stewardship Assistance Program provides funding for landowners to make important conservation improvements that benefit wildlife habitat and the long-term health of soils, water and vegetation. These improvements may include fencing along stream corridors, planting hedgerows and stopping gully erosion. The Stewardship Program and its initiatives are funded entirely through MALT's Stewardship Endowment Fund, which receives donations from generous Legacy Giving Circle donors who have included MALT in their estate plans.

Stewardship is the "foreverness" of what we do. Many thanks to all of you who have included MALT in your estate plans, and we encourage those of you who haven't to consider doing so. Your gifts truly allow for a legacy of protected farmland that remains in agriculture, forever.



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## When We Say Farmland Forever— We Mean It.

continue to pose challenges to protecting farms in the future, as well as ensuring that those who have been protected by easements will remain in active agricultural use. This challenge led MALT, in consultation with a group of local farmers, to ask whether or not our current tools are strong enough to support the continuation of agriculture in Marin.



Gale Ranch

"It was time for MALT to look to the future and prepare to address what's next," says Phyllis. "Today, it isn't good enough to protect farmland without helping to protect farming itself."

High land values in Marin make it difficult for first-generation farmers to buy land from retiring farmers. This is even true for land protected by MALT easements, which have removed its development rights and as a result lowered its value. This means a farm could reach a crossroads, for example, if there are no heirs to take over an operation or heirs are forced to sell in order to meet the needs of multiple owners. The farm could be sold to nonagricultural buyers who may have no interest in farming the land.

MALT has answered these challenges, blazing a trail in farmland conservation by including a new affirmative provision in its easements called Mandatory Agricultural Use. The provision is designed to ensure that MALT-protected farmland will remain in productive agriculture, forever. We have made significant improvements to our agricultural conservation easements over the past 33 years," says Easement Program Director Jeff Stump. "But this is the first time we have included an affirmative requirement that land remain in commercial agricultural use. MALT is among the first agricultural land trusts in the country to include this provision as a mandatory part of our easement program."



The mandatory agricultural use provision requires landowners to maintain an active commercial agricultural operation. The specific use is described in an agricultural management plan that is developed by the landowner in partnership with a certified rangeland manager or other conservation professional and approved by MALT. This plan guides the landowner and any subsequent owners, and also guides MALT as it monitors and enforces the easement.

When a new owner acquires a MALT-protected property, they will be required to continue that agricultural use designated by the management plan or revise it to a use suitable for the land and consistent with the easement's mandate. For someone not interested in running their own agricultural operation, that could include leasing the land to a local farmer or rancher. Rick Lafranchi, MALT Board Chair and owner of Nicasio Valley Cheese Company, says the provision will play a key role in helping secure the future of farming in the county.

"This provision helps protect the rural economy and agricultural infrastructure of West Marin," he says. "If a critical mass of land were to fall out of agricultural use over time, the infrastructure that farmers depend on—truck drivers, large animal veterinarians, feed and supply stores and more—would disappear and jeopardize their survival."

Keeping farmland in farming will ensure that local food, rural landscape, clean waterways and abundant wildlife will continue to thrive in Marin for many generations to come.



Gale Ranch



## A RIDE TO BENEFIT MARIN AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST

**July 27, 8 a.m.–3 p.m.**  
**Nicasio Valley Farms**

Join a community of local food and farm supporters for this special bike ride in the West Marin countryside. The 40- and 60-mile rides begin at the MALT-protected Lafranchi Family Dairy. MALT Executive Director Jamison Watts will join riders for the 60-mile loop. Farms and ranches along the routes will host SAG stops. The ride will end in MALT style, with a farm-to-table lunch of Black Mountain beef sliders accompanied by farm-fresh salads and sides. Lagunitas beer and a refreshing summer MALT "mocktail" will be served with lunch. Three Twins delicious ice cream will complete this local feast. Learn more about the ride and how to register on page 5.

*Thank you, Tour de MALT sponsors:*

La Boulange, Marin Country Mart, PG&E, United Markets, Whole Foods Market, Cowgirl Creamery, Edible Marin & Wine Country, Pam Ferrari Custom Catering, Partisan Arts, Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company, Roost, and Three Twins Ice Cream.

# In the Weeds on West Marin Ranches



Margaret Moore and Carlo Woolsey. Photo: Michael Woolsey

**I**nvasive exotic weeds are a growing problem in West Marin. Aggressive grassland invaders, such as woolly distaff thistle, thrive in the coastal environment and can pose serious problems for local ranches.

Woolly distaff thistle has no predators, which isn't surprising given the prickly, sticky and generally unappealing nature of these plants. They are prolific and can form dense stands because they outcompete other species. A single plant can produce 18,000 seeds and can take over an entire hillside in less than a decade. This changes the plant community and the wildlife that can inhabit it.

For local farmers and ranchers, invasive weeds pose serious problems. Once woolly distaff thistle becomes established on a ranch, it can quickly take over grasslands that cattle, sheep and goats depend on for forage. The spiny foliage and flower heads can also injure the eyes and mouths of livestock grazing in heavily infested areas.

Not only is it prolific in nature, it is very difficult to control. Management techniques available to Marin's many organic

producers are extremely labor intensive and include hoeing, mowing, shoveling, pulling and burning. These methods are expensive and only effective in small areas.

That's why MALT's Stewardship Program has been supporting landowners through its monitoring program and "early detection, rapid response" approach to invasive exotic weed control.

"If we can catch it when it is first spotted on a ranch, we can work with the landowner to remove it," says Stewardship Director Patricia Hickey. "Otherwise, it can just overwhelm a ranch by taking over grasslands and reducing feed for livestock. If this happens, it has the potential to force a ranch out of organic status or even out of business."

To help monitor and remove invasive weeds like woolly distaff thistle, MALT has launched its Weed Rangers volunteer program. This group of trained volunteers works with Stewardship staff to monitor farmland and help remove plants when needed. (To learn more, see page 8.)



Thistle pull at Black Mountain. Photo: Michael Woolsey

If you would like to spend a day lending a hand to help ranchers control this weed, please join MALT for its first annual Thistle Pull Hoedown at Black Mountain Ranch.

## Thistle Pull Hoedown on Black Mountain Ranch

*June 21, 1-5 p.m.*

Come lend a hand on the ranch for a day and work alongside our Stewardship team pulling invasive woolly distaff thistle. This community effort eradicating this nonnative from the fields makes all the difference.

A ranch-style BBQ and live bluegrass music will help us celebrate after a hard day's work together.

Learn more on page 5.



### Ranches and Rolling Hills Landscape Art Show & Sale

*May 18 & 19*

Celebrate and mingle with renowned California landscape artists who have painted on MALT-protected farms and ranches for the 16th annual art show.

#### Farm-to-Table Lunch in the Field:

Come to the table to celebrate the spring bounty with a farm-to-table lunch in the field located behind the gallery. This popular lunch is always lively and fun and will be accompanied by music by The Easy Leaves.

*May 18, 11 a.m.–2 p.m.* \$150 per person.

Reservations are required. Space is limited.

#### Public Art Show:

*Saturday 18th, 2–5 p.m.*

open to the public with coffee bar by Devils Gulch Ranch Haitian Coffee Project along with wine and beer from the MALT bar.

*Sunday 19th, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.* Open to the public with food available for sale from Black Mountain BBQ and wine and beer from the MALT bar.

**Place:** Druids Hall, Nicasio



### Thistle Pull Hoedown on Black Mountain Ranch

*June 21*

Come lend a hand on the ranch for a day and work alongside our Stewardship team pulling invasive woolly distaff thistle. This community effort eradicating this nonnative from the fields makes all the difference. A ranch-style BBQ and live bluegrass music will help us celebrate after a hard day's work together.

**Time:** 1–5 p.m.

**Place:** Black Mountain Ranch, Point Reyes Station

**Cost:** \$5 members/  
\$10 nonmembers/children free

**What to Bring:** Work boots, gloves, water container, hats, sunscreen

**Hike Distance:** Gentle hills but strenuous weeding work

**Age Appropriate:** All ages

**Guest Limit:** None



### Spaletta Ranch Stewardship Hike with Coastal Picnic

*June 23*

Join MALT's Stewardship Director Patricia Hickey with guest naturalists for a roundtrip 4-mile hike. The MALT-protected Spaletta Ranch is one of the few ranches with coastal access. We will enjoy our picnic on the beach and appreciate the spectacular views where farm meets ocean.

**Time:** 10 a.m.–3 p.m. (rain cancels)

**Place:** Spaletta Ranch

**Cost:** \$5 members/  
\$10 nonmembers/children free

**Age Appropriate:** 8 years and over



### Tour de MALT

*July 27*

This community bike ride and farm-to-table lunch will benefit the protection of local family farms. Pre-registration is required. Limited edition MALT bike jerseys are available for preorder at 415.663.1158 or online at [www.malt.org/events](http://www.malt.org/events).

**Time:** 8 a.m.–3 p.m.

**Place:** Nicasio Valley Farms

**Cost:** \$85 members/  
\$125 nonmembers

**What to Bring:** Bike

**Ride Distance:** 40- to 60-mile routes with some challenging hills



Leiss Ranch

**Visit MALT online at  
[www.malt.org](http://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](http://www.malt.org) or call 415.663.1158

## Meet the Locals

### *Field-to-Fork Supper Series*

Join us for this intimate summer supper series, gather in conversation and share a spectacular meal prepared by some of the Bay Area's most celebrated chefs who support local growers and want to get out of the kitchen and cook on the land. You'll meet the locals who grow, raise and cook the spectacular bounty of food grown on MALT-protected lands.

#### **Pozzi Ranch, Tomales** *June 29*

Meet rancher Joe Pozzi with guest chefs Sean Baker of Gather Restaurant in Berkeley and Nick Balla (nominated for a 2013 James Beard Award) and Courtney Burns of Bar Tartine in San Francisco, who will be cooking an intimate barn supper. Joe will take us on a tour of his renowned sheep ranch. We'll learn about his ranching practices while taking in the breathtaking views.

**Time:** 4 p.m. (rain cancels)

**Place:** Pozzi Ranch

**Cost:** \$225 members. Includes supper paired with local wines.

**What to Bring:** Walking shoes, layers of clothing

**Hike Distance:** Ranch walk

**Age Appropriate:** 21 years and up

**Guest Limit:** 45



#### **Fresh Run Farm, Bolinas** *Aug 10*

Join farmer Peter Martinelli and Ken Cook, champion of sustainable agriculture and president and cofounder of Environmental Working Group, for a supper among the 40 organic fruit, vegetable and edible flower varieties that grow at the farm, alongside breathtaking wildlands that surround it. Guest chef Sarah Hodge of Cowgirl Creamery, notable Bay Area restaurateur and a procurer of all things gastronomical, will prepare a supper with locally grown and foraged ingredients.

**Time:** 5 p.m. (rain cancels)

**Place:** Fresh Run Farm

**Cost:** \$225 members. Includes supper paired with local wines.

**What to Bring:** Walking shoes, layers of clothing

**Hike Distance:** Farm walk

**Age Appropriate:** 21 years and up

**Guest Limit:** 45



*Visit [www.malt.org](http://www.malt.org) to join us at the table; seats are limited, so sign up early.*

#### **Escalle Winery**

Join MALT on Saturday, May 11, 3-7 p.m. for a special opportunity to taste a rare collection of newly released Marin-grown wines, including some library selections, poured by the vintners and growers at the historic Escalle Winery in Larkspur. From celebrated Pinot Noir to Cabernet Sauvignon and dry Riesling, these critically acclaimed "small lot" wines are truly handmade and reflect the unique terroir of Marin County and its vintners' and growers' entrepreneurial spirit. For more information and to register, please go to [www.malt.org/events](http://www.malt.org/events).



Deb Wilson



# Out and About with MALT

## Farmland Forever Campaign Thank-You



Tamara Hicks and Cynthia Rigatti



Lynn Giacomini Stray and Barbara Boucke



Stacy Jackson

## Conversation with Jamison at Escalle Winery



Gail Stern



Neal Gottlieb and Mary Tiscornia



George Dirkes and Marilyn Krieger-Hughes

## Legacy Giving Circle at El Paseo



Shiva Schultz



Sue Conley, Allison Puglisi and Shannon Wilson



Tyler Florence

MALT hosts several events for our donors during the year, including the upcoming Black Mountain Hike on June 8. To find out more about these events, please go to [www.malt.org/member-events](http://www.malt.org/member-events) or contact Annual Fund Manager Noelle Moss at [nmoss@malt.org](mailto:nmoss@malt.org) or call 415.663.1158 ext. 312.

Photos, bottom two rows: Michael Woolsey

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Michael Woolsey



Michael Woolsey



## MALT Weed Rangers

### *Get out on the range!*

Join MALT's new Weed Rangers Stewardship volunteer program. Under the guidance of MALT's Stewardship staff, volunteers will become amateur grassland ecologists who will be trained to identify, map and monitor grassland species. Marin's lush grasslands are essential forage for its cows, sheep and goats that provide the celebrated milk, cheese and grass-fed meat enjoyed by people in the Bay Area and beyond. Monitoring these lands helps farmers and ranchers ensure that the native plants and wildlife that depend on them thrive. Volunteers will learn about:

- *invasive species ecology*
- *important habitat values on working lands*
- *assessing grassland health and productivity*
- *reading a working landscape*
- *basic mapping technology*

Weed Rangers will put this training to work in support of individual MALT ranches and farms. Volunteers will work in teams helping to map, monitor and protect important natural resource values. Volunteers will also have opportunities to participate in habitat restoration or enhancement projects such as revegetating stream corridors, planting hedgerows, and installing and monitoring duck nesting boxes.

*To learn more about this program, please go to [www.malt.org/volunteer](http://www.malt.org/volunteer) or contact Stewardship Director Patricia Hickey at [phickey@malt.org](mailto:phickey@malt.org) or 415.663.1158 ext. 304.*

MALT thanks PG&E for its partial sponsorship of the Weed Rangers program.

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](http://www.malt.org)**