

MALT News

31 Years Preserving Marin County Farmland

Moretti Ranch © Paige Green

Your Support Saves an Organic Dairy

One afternoon this spring, ranchers Monique and Mike Moretti were stunned to learn that pastureland they had leased for 16 years to graze their herd of milking cows was in jeopardy.

The New York-based owner of the land had accepted an offer from a nonagricultural buyer. The 126-acre pasture with a century-old redwood barn flanked by rolling hills forms the backyard to the Morettis' Tomales ranch. The sale of this critical grazing land for estate development would have spelled the beginning of the end for this family's farm.

Mike and Monique started their dairy when Monique's parents, who own a dairy in nearby Two Rock, helped the high school sweethearts get into the business. For more than two decades the couple worked hard to build the operation while raising their children, Amanda and Danny.

They gained organic certification for the dairy last year, a process that required a significant investment of time, energy and money. For most dairies, that investment pays off. While conventional dairies struggle to remain profitable, organic dairy sales are growing 18 to 20 percent a year. However, the Morettis' certification depends on the herd's access to the pastureland that was at risk of being sold.

The loss of the dairy's organic status would place the viability of the business in question. In the last four years alone, 20 percent of the state's dairies have closed their barn doors for good.

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Moretti Ranch barn

© Paige Green



Century-old barn at Moretti Ranch

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Your Support Saves an Organic Dairy

"I grew sick to my stomach with each SUV that drove through our dairy on the easement road to view our pastureland," says Mike. "I knew each was a potential buyer who could end our livelihoods and change the land forever."

Even though their lease contained a first right of refusal that gave the Morettis 20 days to match the offer and purchase the property, it was priced for residential development, not agricultural use. That high price placed it out of their reach, as did the 20 days they had to match the offer.

The Morettis decided to turn to MALT for help. After working with MALT's easement team to evaluate the farmland, MALT let the Morettis know that they would work to help them.

"It was an overwhelming feeling to know that MALT really wanted to help us," Monique said. "It was the first time I thought, 'This could really happen.'"

MALT typically takes a year to purchase a conservation easement. It leverages private contributions to raise funds from public agencies and foundations in order to protect specific farms. However, the clock was ticking for the Morettis, which left MALT no time to bring in its funding partners.

"Without donor support, there is no doubt this farmland would have been lost."

~ Jeff Stump, Easement Program Director

"Helping families like the Morettis through this type of situation is what makes MALT's work uniquely important to the future of agriculture in the county," said Easement Program Director Jeff Stump. "We were able to react quickly only because we had funding set aside for exactly this kind of emergency. Without donor support, there is no doubt this farmland would have been lost."

MALT put together a plan that entailed purchasing an agricultural conservation easement for \$530,000 that would remove all development rights from the land in order to reduce the Morettis' cost. Private contributions covered the entire price of the easement. With your support, MALT gave the Morettis the ability to match the offer without a day to spare.

"Losing a family farm today is much more common than saving one, and the story of how this farm was almost lost illustrates how easily it can happen," says MALT Executive



Mike Moretti

© Paige Green



© Paige Green

Director Bob Berner. “The development of this key piece of pastureland, which is surrounded almost entirely by MALT-protected farms, would have not only jeopardized the future of this dairy but impacted wildlife corridors, grassland bird habitat and the water quality of Stemple Creek. It also would have introduced the conflicts that arise when nonagricultural residential development is located in the heart of working farms and ranches.”

Now that the farm is secure, Mike and Monique’s children will have the opportunity to join the growing ranks of young Marin farmers who are returning from college to join their families’ operations. That’s Amanda’s plan after she completes her degree in dairy science at Cornell University. And Danny will be able to continue his daily farm chores alongside his dad knowing his family’s farm is here to stay.



Mike, Monique, Amanda and Danny Moretti

© Paige Green

HIKES • TOURS • TALKS

JOIN MALT for “PICNIC IN THE PASTURE” at MORETTI RANCH!



Saturday, September 15
4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

\$75 adults / \$25 children, MALT members only
Bring a picnic blanket!

Take in an Indian summer evening with a farm-to-table picnic in a field with a century-old barn! Enjoy wine, beer, appetizers, a ranch-style barbeque, seasonal salads and dessert from local farms while listening to bluegrass music. Mike and Monique Moretti will be on hand to tell us about their organic operation. Children are welcome. A vegetarian dinner is available.

Not a member yet?

Sign up for the picnic
and become a member
at the same time to
save up to 25%!

Go to www.malt.org
or call 415.663.1158

Farmland Forever

Campaign to Honor Executive Director Bob Berner



“Bob has our gratitude for his passion, perseverance and success in establishing MALT and its mission to preserve farmland forever. Future generations will be the beneficiaries of his vision. We are happy to see Marin family farms have the opportunity to continue the work of their families who have been husbanding the land to the benefit of us all for generations.”

— **Roger and Susan Schow**

“When a single farm is lost, it weakens the chance that Marin’s vibrant farming community and the many benefits it provides will survive. The 11th Hour Project, a program of The Schmidt Family Foundation, supports MALT’s work to save three critical family farms to help ensure that Marin County will continue to be a pioneer in diverse and resilient food production far into the future. Additionally, we are proud



of the leadership MALT continues to provide in bringing the once disparate worlds of conservation and agriculture together.”

— **Sarah Bell,
11th Hour Project,
a program of the
Schmidt Family
Foundation**

Food tastes better when it’s grown right. With your support, MALT has worked for more than 30 years to ensure Marin family farms that grow delicious food in harmony with nature can continue to do so — forever. Together we have protected more than 40 percent of Marin farmland that would have otherwise been subdivided and developed.

MALT’s longtime Executive Director Bob Berner will be retiring at the end of the year after 28 years of leadership. He has built a model land trust that has protected farmland here in Marin County while providing inspiration for hundreds of farmland trusts across the nation.

In honor of his lasting contribution to farmland preservation, MALT has launched a campaign to protect three farms that need our help right now. Saving these farms will help us reach the goal of protecting 50 percent of Marin’s family farms. Forever.

**Saving these farms will help us reach the goal of protecting 50 percent of Marin’s family farms.
Forever.**

The three farms that need our help provide food such as figs, leafy greens, beans, strawberries, and grass-fed beef. They also exemplify how diverse wildlife, freshwater wetlands, and forests thrive in working landscapes.

To protect these important farms we must raise a total of \$5 million. Public funders have committed \$3 million, leaving \$2 million to be raised from individual donors and family foundations. To date, generous supporters have contributed \$1,650,000 toward the \$2 million goal. Campaign donors will be recognized in MALT’s annual Year in Review.

Now, we need people like you to help raise the remaining \$350,000 before the end of the year. Your contribution of any amount in honor of Bob’s legacy will help us reach that goal.

Your support is critical to the success of this campaign. Join us in reaching the landmark goal of protecting half of Marin County farmland — forever!



For more information on the Farmland Forever Campaign, please contact Director of Development Stine Ball at kball@malt.org or 415.663.1158.

"Picnic in the Pasture" at Moretti Ranch

Saturday, 9/15

Take in an Indian summer evening with a farm-to-table picnic in a field with a century-old barn. Enjoy wine, beer, appetizers, a ranch-style barbeque, seasonal salads, and dessert from local farms while listening to bluegrass music. Mike and Monique Moretti will be on hand to tell us about their organic operation. Children are welcome. A vegetarian dinner is available.

Time: 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. **Place:** Moretti Dairy

Cost: \$75 adults / \$25 children, MALT members only

What to Bring: A picnic blanket!

Preregistration is required

Hog Island Oyster Co. & Straus Dairy

Tuesday, 9/18

Join local oystermen for a tour of this celebrated aquaculture farm. Taste oysters grown in Tomales Bay while enjoying the views and your picnic lunch. We'll drive to the Straus Dairy and learn about the organic ranch, the methane digester and other innovative practices. Watch the cows being milked and enjoy a delicious Straus treat.

Time: Noon – 4:00 p.m. **Place:** Hog Island Oyster Co.

Cost: \$35 MALT members / \$40 nonmembers

What to Bring: Water, picnic lunch, shoes that can get dirty, layered clothing **Preregistration is required**

Toluma Farms and Tomales Farmstead Creamery Family Tour

Saturday, 9/22

Experience this exciting sustainable and diversified Tomales farm. It has 200 goats, 25 sheep, 60 chickens, and a predator control bird (a peacock) on 160 organically certified acres. You will have a chance to milk a goat and learn how to make cheese at the farm's new Tomales Farmstead Creamery. Take a tractor ride, collect eggs and hike to the top of the property to savor the West Marin views. A fun day on the farm for adults and children alike.

Time: Noon – 3:00 p.m. **Place:** Toluma Farms

Cost: Adults \$20 MALT members / \$25 nonmembers

Children \$10 MALT members / \$12 nonmembers

What to Bring: Water, hiking boots, picnic lunch, snacks and sun protection **Preregistration is required**

McEvoy Ranch Tour and Lunch

Friday, 9/28

Hike to the ridgetop at McEvoy Ranch to enjoy stunning panoramas of the olive orchards and landscapes beyond. Along the way, learn about the ecological practices that go into creating this premium olive oil. Following the tour, sit down to a local, seasonal lunch by caterer Pam Ferrari, which features McEvoy Ranch olive oil.

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. **Place:** McEvoy Ranch
(please arrive on time)

Cost: \$90 MALT members / \$100 nonmembers

What to Bring: Water, walking shoes

Preregistration is required

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HIKES • TOURS • TALKS

FALL 2012



16th Annual Black Mountain Hike

Saturday, 10/20

Join MALT staff, volunteers, ranchers, historians and naturalists for a strenuous hike to the top of this West Marin landmark—one of the largest properties protected by MALT. The mountain provides spectacular views and supports a grass-fed beef operation. Meet owner Margaret Nobmann, her son Dave Osborn and rancher Mike Giammona, who will introduce the beef-ranching operation as you picnic on the summit.

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Place: All must carpool from West Marin School, 11550 Hwy. 1, ¼ mile north of Point Reyes Station

Cost: Free

Difficulty: Strenuous

What to Bring: Water, picnic lunch, hiking shoes

No preregistration is required

Nicasio Valley Farms Pumpkin Patch Open daily, Thurs–Mon, 10/1–23

Bring the family to this MALT-protected farm for pumpkin picking, hayrides, maze, farm animals, farm stand, bouncy house and more. Nicasio Valley Farms will have delicious BBQ and ice cream for sale every weekend.

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Place: Nicasio Valley Farms, 5300 Nicasio Valley Rd., Nicasio

Special weekend events include:

Every Sunday, children's musician Tim Cain (11 a.m. – 12 p.m.)

Saturday and Sunday, music by Manzanita Moon (12:30 – 4:30 p.m.)

Cost: Admission is free. Call 415.662.9100 for weekday school group rates.

No preregistration is required

MALT Day at Nicasio Valley Farms Pumpkin Patch Sunday, 10/21

Join MALT for a day of family fun! There will be games and crafts, barn animals, local food, beer and wine, educational exhibits and more.

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Place: Nicasio Valley Farms, 5300 Nicasio Valley Rd., Nicasio

Cost: Admission is free

No preregistration is required



Don't Miss Out!

If you are member and we don't already have your email, send it to us and we will send you a box of our *Ranches & Rolling Hills Landscape Art Show* notecards. It's that simple! And you'll have the option to receive our monthly eNews, which will give you up-to-date MALT news and event information.

Please submit your email to Development Associate Michael Woolsey at mwoolsey@malt.org or call 415.663.1158.

(MALT never, ever shares its emails with third parties. Cards are available while supplies last.)

Photos © Paige Green

Register online at www.malt.org
or call 415.663.1158



"Autodesk is headquartered in Marin, so our employees live, work and play here. We are happy to support MALT because the local food and stunning landscape that family farms provide benefit all of us."

~ Julie Wilder, Autodesk

Local Businesses Saving Local Farms

Marin's 150-year-old agricultural community is an important part of what makes the Bay Area a special place to live and work. It contributes to a thriving local economy, access to local food, to an iconic coastal landscape, and to the preservation of wildlife corridors and clean air and water.

Yet 50 percent of family farms are at risk of being lost forever to development. Bay Area businesses play a significant role in supporting MALT's effort to preserve these remaining farms and ranches so that the many benefits they provide can be enjoyed for generations to come.

That's why MALT is launching its Corporate Circle Program, which offers local businesses a host of new opportunities to get involved in supporting MALT's work. These include sponsoring MALT's public events, participating in volunteer workdays on MALT-protected farms, bringing in MALT speakers to in-office lunchtime events, and much more.

Each \$2,500 raised through this program helps MALT protect another acre of farmland. ***Join our Corporate Circle Program and help protect local farmland, forever!***

For more information, please go to www.malt.org/corporatecircle or contact Noelle Moss or Michael Woolsey at 415.663.1158.



"As a co-founder of Cowgirl Creamery in Point Reyes Station, I personally appreciate MALT's work in farmland preservation. Without viable dairies in Marin, my company could not count on quality milk for cheesemaking, and there are numerous other businesses like mine that either directly or indirectly benefit from Marin's family farms and ranches."

~ Sue Conley, Cowgirl Creamery

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Moretti Ranch © Paige Green

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~ Marin County rancher Monique Moretti



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 nearly 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.