

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## CAMPAIGN TO SAVE ALMOND RANCH RECEIVES \$2 MILLION FROM CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD

Major Grant Puts John Muir Land Trust At \$3.75 Million Toward \$4 Million Fundraising Goal

August 29, 2019. MARTINEZ, CA — John Muir Land Trust ( JMLT, [jmlt.org](http://jmlt.org)) announces that it has received a major grant of \$2 million from the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB, [wcb.ca.gov](http://wcb.ca.gov)) toward the acquisition of Almond Ranch, a stunning 281-acre property south of downtown Martinez that has been a top priority of conservationists for decades. The grant was unanimously approved at the Wildlife Conservation Board Meeting on August 28, 2019. JMLT must raise \$4 million by the end of 2019 to complete the project. The new funding from WCB puts JMLT just \$250,000 short of that goal with four months to go.

Saving Almond Ranch from development—the alternative outcome—has many benefits. It would preserve a significant habitat corridor for wildlife, including several federally-listed species; protect three tributaries to the Alhambra Creek watershed; expand the Bay Area Ridge Trail Corridor and connect other major trails for the very first time; link large conserved landscapes; and open the property's beautiful rolling hills along the Franklin Ridge to hikers, dog walkers, cyclists, bird watchers, equestrians, and nature lovers of all ages.

“The mission of the California Wildlife Conservation Board is to protect California’s spectacular natural resources for wildlife and for the public’s use and enjoyment. We work in partnership with conservation organizations and agencies to allocate funds for high priority acquisition projects,” said John Donnelly, Executive Director of the California Wildlife Conservation Board. “Almond Ranch exemplifies the very special places we choose to protect, and John Muir Land Trust is precisely the sort of trusted partner we select. Permanently protecting Almond Ranch will be a huge win for everyone in California.”

The Campaign To Save Almond Ranch was launched with a first commitment of \$1 million from the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD, [ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org)) using funds made available by voters’ approval of Measure WW in 2008 for high priority community park projects. Additional funds are being raised from conservation-minded members of the general public.

“I cannot overstate how much the extraordinary grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board affirms the vital importance of protecting Almond Ranch, a fact established by the initial grant from the East Bay Regional Park District,” said Linus Eukel, Executive Director of John Muir Land Trust. “Almond Ranch is a treasure. Saving it protects critical habitat and clean water, offers close-to-home outdoor recreation, and makes vital trail connections that have been on everyone’s wish list for decades.”

Almond Ranch offers sweeping panoramic views of the Carquinez Strait and Bay Delta region to the north, Mount Diablo and the distant Sierra Nevada to the east, the rolling hills of Briones Regional Park

to the south, and San Francisco Bay to the west. Saving the ranch would add one of the most important missing segments to the visionary 550-mile Bay Area Ridge Trail, and it would connect for the first time three large landscapes in Contra Costa County that comprise fully 18,000 acres of protected open space. Varied terrain includes hilly grasslands, forested valleys of oak-bay woodlands, scrub plant communities and riparian areas. The property provides rich habitat for a variety of native, rare and special-status species. The land is designated critical habitat for the Alameda whipsnake, a federally threatened species. Stock ponds on the ranch support another threatened species: the California red-legged frog.

“This grant from WCB affirms that Almond Ranch should be on the list of anyone who is considering a donation to protect our state’s precious natural lands,” added Eukel. Those wishing to donate to The Campaign To Save Almond Ranch may do so at [jmlt.org](http://jmlt.org).

#### About California Wildlife Conservation Board

The California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) is an independent body of the state within the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The California legislature created WCB in 1947 to conserve California’s wildlife habitats through land acquisition, wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement, and the development of wildlife-oriented public access facilities. Since its inception, WCB has allocated over \$2.5 billion and has leveraged these funds to attract additional private and public resources that total close to \$2.3 billion. With these funds, WCB has successfully helped acquire and restore more than 1.5 million acres of important habitat. [wcb.ca.gov](http://wcb.ca.gov)

#### About John Muir Land Trust

John Muir Land Trust (JMLT) protects and cares for open space, ranches, farms, parkland and shoreline in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. In a generation, John Muir Land Trust has become one of the leading forces for conservation in northern California. With 3,200 acres protected, many beautiful places in the East Bay are permanently preserved for recreation, wildlife habitat and spectacular scenic views. JMLT believes that the vitality of our open spaces is essential to the health of our earth, air, water, native plants and animals — and all of us. [jmlt.org](http://jmlt.org)