

Sonoma Land Trust Press Releases

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The Cedars **Preserving the rarest ecosystem in Sonoma County**



Concealed deep within the heart of Sonoma County, out of sight and hard to find, is the Cedars — a mysterious, unearthly region largely forgotten until just a few decades ago, and still known to only a few. Even now, the Cedars, located north of Cazadero, is largely inaccessible, requiring seven dicey creek crossings in a high clearance vehicle. But with risk comes reward and this journey brings the sojourner to an unexpected new world — a world of deep serpentine canyons, strange mineralized formations, moonscape-like terrain, and rare and unusual plants. A world where the mantle, usually miles below, has been pushed through the surface of the earth.

Conservation of the Cedars, a geologically and botanically unique ecosystem that is arguably the most extraordinary natural feature of our county, has been a priority for the Sonoma Land Trust for the past several years. In 2007, we purchased 45 acres at the gateway to the region with private funds donated by two of our members, and in 2009, we published a comprehensive conservation plan for the Cedars.

Fortunately, the extraordinary 500-acre main canyon of the Cedars was purchased for conservation some years ago by renowned botanists Roger Raiche and David McCrory, who generously made the property available for scientific research. Recently, implementation of SLT's Cedars Conservation Plan took a giant step forward. In collaboration with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the California Coastal Conservancy, Save the Redwoods League facilitated the transfer of the Raiche-McCrory "Main Canyon" property to the Bureau of Land Management for permanent protection. The Bureau of Land Management, which already owns an adjacent 1,500 acres in the Cedars, will designate the property as an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern," BLM's highest level of protection.

Currently, with funding provided by Resources Legacy Fund through its Bay Area Conservation Initiative, negotiations are underway for the purchase of a conservation easement over another 160 acres in the ecological transition zone surrounding the core serpentine canyons. Over the years, we hope to work with surrounding landowners to ensure the permanent protection of the entire Cedars region.

While the Cedars is too fragile, remote and difficult to access to support unbridled public recreation, Sonoma Land Trust is planning to offer guided tours starting in 2012.

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