

# *North Bay* Business Journal

## About 4,500 acres of Napa County gains protection

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A 4,461 acre ranch on the eastern shore of Lake Berryessa in Napa County will be protected from development via an agricultural easement. The property, the Monticello Ranch, is owned by the owners of Alpha Omega Winery in the county's Rutherford region and Pete Craig, whose family owns Sacrashe Vineyard, also in Rutherford.

Alpha Omega's announcement stated vintners Robin and Michelle Baggett of that winery and Craig had entered into an agricultural conservation easement. The Land Trust of Napa County worked with the California Department of Conservation (DOC) to bring the easement transaction to fruition through the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program. The conservation easement restricts future development on the land, but allows the land to stay in private ownership.

"The easement eliminates the potential for all but one house on the 4,461 acres," the winery stated.

"The Lake Berryessa region is one of Napa County's great spaces," Congressman Mike Thompson said. "Throughout my career, I've done everything I can to support conservation initiatives that protect our community's lands. I'm glad to see Robin and Michelle Baggett and Pete Craig taking the steps to preserve Monticello Ranch for generations to come."

Doug Parker, CEO of the Land Trust of Napa County, called the deal "one of the largest easements we have ever completed." Land Trust has worked with landowners to complete over 200 real estate projects, protecting more than 70,000 acres of land – over 14% of Napa County.

The Monticello Ranch includes large open grasslands that transition to oak woodlands and forested land ascending from Lake Berryessa to the ridge on the Napa-Yolo county line. "It's home to an abundance of raptors, such as bald eagles, hawks and osprey, as well as other wildlife," said Craig.

Craig added, "While at Cal Poly, one of my professors said the only way to get into the cattle business was to inherit it, marry into it, or be dumb. I can't say that I fall into the first two categories, but I have been a rancher for a long time now and with the help of Robin and Michelle and the Napa Land Trust, maybe I am getting a bit smarter...."