



**NORTHERN  
CALIFORNIA**  
REGIONAL LAND TRUST

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA REGIONAL LAND TRUST AND ABBEY OF NEW CLAIRVAUX ANNOUNCE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT, PERMANENTLY PROTECTING THE HISTORIC ABBEY ESTATE**

**Chico, California** (Dec. 22, 2023) –Today, Northern California Regional Land Trust announced finalization of a conservation easement with the monks of the Abbey of New Clairvaux, protecting their estate in perpetuity. This project was several years in the making, with NCRLT and The Abbey awarded a grant in 2021 through the California Strategic Growth Council’s Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in collaboration with the Department of Conservation. Conservation easements are a tool to shelter farms, ranches, and wild lands from current and future land conversion threats and subdivision, preserving scenic vistas and rich agricultural resources. Through this legal process, the agreement outlines collaborative stewardship objectives and permanently extinguishes development rights, with landowners continuing land management while leaving a unique legacy of open space for the North State. Since 1990, NCRLT has worked with our local community members to conserve land we love, totaling 41,983.98 acres. In this case, a well-known and historic estate will be protected with regional support and foresight by the community of monks who are current stewards of the land.

“To have the Abbey in conservation easement means that this land supports not just the present generation of monks, but that this property will remain sacred and serve future generations of monks and visitors. This reminds us that there is more than just “today” and that there will always be a future, a “tomorrow” that we must remember and reflect upon for another generation to benefit from, enjoy, and steward for handing on to future generations.” Father Paul Mark, current Abbot.

“Completing this agricultural easement acquisition, protecting the monastery’s fertile agricultural setting and preventing future subdivision of the property is truly transformational for the Abbey,” said Cynthia Graves Perrine, Executive Director at the Land Trust. “This historic and cultural gem is a unique project for the land trust. We feel incredibly privileged to have the opportunity to support the brothers of the Abbey of New Clairvaux in achieving their vision, preserving their agrarian lifestyle, and ensuring that this special place remains open to the public forever.”

While the Abbey of New Clairvaux has long been regarded as a national landmark and local treasure, it may not have been apparent to the thousands of visitors welcomed through the gates each year that the future of this historic site could be precarious. The property lies at the heart of what was once known as the Great Vina Ranch, the sprawling viticultural estate of railroad baron and past governor of California, Leland Stanford. Since the sale of Stanford’s 55,000-acre property in 1919, the land has been broken into increasingly smaller pieces. The land beneath what is now the Abbey of New Clairvaux was acquired in 1955 by Trappist-Cistercian monks to establish a monastery and continue the agricultural legacy of the

region. True to the Order's heritage in the Old World, these men laid the foundations for the multi-varietal vineyards, orchards, and award-winning Trappist winery that sustains the monastic community.

Sixty-five years later, the nearly 600-acre property is bordered on one side by the unincorporated town of Vina, sits just across the river from the growing city of Corning, and lies within a mile of General Plan areas designated for rural residential development. Population growth and rising housing costs in nearby urban areas continue to press housing demand and residential construction into rural areas. The Abbey's estate is now zoned for 20-acre minimum parcels, and subdivision of surrounding lands is an increasingly tangible threat.

Funds for this project were made available through the California Strategic Growth Council's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in collaboration with the Department of Conservation. SALC is part of [California Climate Investments](#), a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities. In a recent press release announcing the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program awardees, Lynn von Koch-Liebert, Executive Director of the California Strategic Growth Council, is quoted saying, "The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program is helping California fight climate change by advancing healthy soils and permanently protecting agricultural and working lands at risk of development."

One of only 15 Trappist-Cistercian monasteries left in the United States, the future of the Abbey of New Clairvaux has until now rested solely on the persistence of the monastic community. In recent years, another Trappist monastery in the American West was forced to close its doors, leaving the monastery and grounds vulnerable to public sale and redevelopment. The brothers of the Abbey of New Clairvaux have deep ties to this corner of Vina—to the rich loam, the carefully tended vineyards and orchards that provide their livelihoods, and the sacred 13<sup>th</sup> century stones that have been used to painstakingly construct the Abbey church. Since 2018, the monastic community has been working with the Northern California Regional Land Trust to ensure that the fate of this unique agricultural estate is not left to chance.

The Northern California Regional Land Trust, which celebrated its 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary in 2023, owns 600 acres and protects nearly 41,000 acres in conservation easements. Visit the Land Trust's website at [www.landconservation.org](http://www.landconservation.org) to learn more about how you can support important community projects, and advance their mission to *protect working and wild lands forever*.

### **About the Northern California Regional Land Trust**

The Northern California Regional Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that assists landowners and public agencies in the voluntary protection and conservation of agricultural land, open space, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources across Butte, Glenn, and Tehama County. To advance their mission, they negotiate conservation easements, facilitate land acquisitions or exchanges, and provide professional planning and technical assistance in natural resource management and conservation. They also support environmental education for people of all ages, host events that bring the community together to celebrate land, and work to increase public access to wild nature and to outdoor recreation opportunities in the region. The Land Trust is guided by a Board of Directors that generously volunteer their time, including Gerald Armour, Ross Turner, Noelle Ferdon Brimlow, Cindy Wolff, and Adam Groen. For more information about the Land Trust's work, how you can support regional conservation, or to explore ways to achieve your own estate planning and land protection goals, please visit their website at [www.landconservation.org](http://www.landconservation.org).

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