

# Miles of California coastline to be preserved

**Tony Barboza, Los Angeles Times, 4-14-12**

A spectacular stretch of Northern California coastline that includes ocean-side bluffs, beaches, rolling hills and redwood groves will be permanently protected from development under a landmark deal approved this week by the state Coastal Commission.

The 6,800 acres of undeveloped shoreline, wooded areas and farmland in northern Santa Cruz County — known as Coast Dairies — will be transferred to the state and federal government, which will operate it as open space and preserve portions for agriculture.

Much of the land will be open to the public.

The coastal panel's unanimous vote at a meeting Thursday in Ventura, Calif., protects seven miles of coastline that had been one of the three largest pieces of private coastal property between the Golden Gate Bridge and the Mexican border, according to the agency.

The 10-square-mile expanse, former Spanish land grants that were acquired by Swiss farming families in the 1860s, was purchased by the Trust For Public Land in 1998 as rumors swirled that developers had plans to build homes on the land.

"This is important, an incredible part of the Central California coast that's going to be retained in the form it was years and years ago," said Dan Carl, the commission's Central Coast District director. "It's something you don't see a lot in California as development moves and marches forward."

The deal to safeguard the land from builders, in the works for more than a decade, was heralded as going to the heart of the state's stringent coastal protection law.

It comes 40 years after the passage of Proposition 20, the 1972 voter-approved initiative that created the California Coastal Commission and gave it control over development along the state's 1,100-mile coastline. That authority was cemented by the 1976 state Coastal Act.

"This really is a reflection of 40 years of work," said Coastal Commission Executive Director Charles Lester. "The Coastal Act played a fundamental role in making these types of acquisitions possible."

The decision came at the commission's first meeting since the April 1 death of its longtime executive, Peter Douglas, whose decades of leading the agency through high-profile conservation battles is credited with keeping much of the California coast from being paved over.

To keep that from happening to the Coast Dairies ranch, the commission required restrictions that limit use of the land to public recreation, open space and agriculture.

The arrangement transfers upland portions of the property surrounding the town of Davenport to the federal Bureau of Land Management and includes several hundred acres of shoreline seaward of California 1 that already have been deeded to the state Department of Parks and Recreation, which operates adjacent Wilder Ranch State Park. About 700 acres will remain under ownership of the Trust For Public Land for use as farmland, including organic strawberry fields.

“What’s particularly unique is having such a vast expanse of remarkable resources,” said Sam Hodder, the Trust For Public Land’s California state director, “from recreational opportunities to critical habitat, sweeping ocean views, to iconic scenic character, all so close to where people live, work and play.”

Coastal Commissioner Steve Blank told the panel that as other nearby parcels between Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay are purchased for conservation by local land trusts over the next decade, they could form “the equivalent of the Adirondacks on this part of the coast, where public-private partnerships have taken large parcels out of potential development.”

“We all win here,” he said. “The people of California win.”