What comes to mind when you think of agriculture in San Luis Obispo County? Maybe its cattle grazing on rolling pasture, fields of greens, or a vineyard. I bet that some of you immediately imagined Los Osos Valley.

If you’re traveling from one of its nearby towns, you probably know the feeling when you get to Los Osos Valley - “...ahh...” The land really opens up. The valley stretches between San Luis Obispo and Los Osos. The iconic morros on one side and the Irish Hills on the other.

It features some of SLO County’s most productive soil. The long-standing farms and ranches in the region are diverse. Everything from leafy greens to avocados, sheep, and cattle are grown in this coastal vale. Come late afternoon, the “air conditioner” kicks on and an inversion layer brings a blanket of fog from the back bay to Terrace Hill.

This pocket of SLO is also primed for change. The valley is located between two thriving communities. It is often looked to for conversion from open farm fields and oak-studded canyons to houses on hilltops and subdivisions down below. It’s not hard to imagine this type of change happening quickly and quietly. The area has been the subject of both recent and former plans to expand the towns on either side.

What would this change mean for our local agriculture? The development of the farms and ranches that make up Los Osos Valley region would mean the end of many multi-generation farms and the permanent loss of highly productive agricultural soils. Along with it, the loss of much fresh, local produce
that we value as a staple to “the SLO life.”
What to do with the potential loss of such a unique, productive, and scenic agricultural hub? You work with those who want to protect it the most – the farmers and ranchers that work the land day in and day out, some for generations. Los Osos Valley has been part of The Land Conservancy’s conservation efforts for decades. Thanks to you, we’re on the verge of protecting more than 650 acres in the valley through two conservation easements this fall.

One farm features fields of organic ancient grains planted below oak-lined canyons. Set just off the road, the farm’s bright flowers and green spring hillsides will always be in view as you make your way toward Los Osos.

Another ranch includes the slopes of one of San Luis Obispo’s iconic morros. There, hillside terraces shaded by oak trees create diverse pockets of vibrant plants. Golden eagle and peregrine falcon nest on the rocky summit, and bear and mountain lion are often seen by wildlife cameras as they pass through the ranch. These sights, and so many more, will be part of over 1,600 acres of protected farms and ranches in Los Osos Valley later this fall.

Your support for land conservation in our county will mean the permanent protection of productive valley farms and the slopes of a classic coastal peak. So, the next time you find yourself in that “…ahh…” moment along Los Osos Valley, you’ll know that it’s still thriving because of you.

Welcome to The Terra Firma Society

Can you picture being a part of a legacy so bold and special that future generations cherish it?
In our ever-changing world, it is hard to imagine that something can truly last forever. However, when you include The Land Conservancy of SLO County in your estate plans, you make a permanent commitment to the landscapes of the Central Coast.

The gift of your legacy will be a critical part of continued protection and conservation of our special, wild places in SLO County.

At The Land Conservancy, we celebrate this group of special donors as our Terra Firma Society. These supporters have included LCSLO as a beneficiary in their estate plans including life insurance, investment accounts, donations of stock, and property.

Please contact Development Manager Lauren Meers at laurenm@lcslo.org or (805) 544-9096 ext. 14 to discuss joining this cherished group of supporters.

Have you already included The Land Conservancy in your estate plans? Please be sure to let us know so we can include you in upcoming Terra Firma information and events.
In case you missed it – we made a big announcement this summer. With your help, The Land Conservancy has secured all permits for the Pismo Preserve parking lot and visitor serving amenities and is working with R. Burke Corporation and Precision Building Group to build the project. Construction will begin as soon as remaining funding is secured.

Following the purchase of the Pismo Preserve in 2014, The Land Conservancy immediately set to work designing and securing the necessary permits to construct the amenities required to open the Preserve to the public. However, a significant re-design of the parking lot area was required after preliminary archaeological work revealed an extensive and previously unrecorded Northern Chumash cemetery on the Preserve property.

From the onset, The Land Conservancy worked closely with the Chumash to honor their ancient and ongoing spiritual relationship to the land. When the true magnitude of the project site’s significance was revealed, a collaborative re-design was undertaken to avoid disturbing the cemetery and to balance the need for cultural resource protection across the rest of the site with the regulatory environment and the needs of visitors to access and enjoy the Preserve.

Mona Olivas Tucker, Chair of yak tit'u tit'u yak tilhini Northern Chumash Tribe of San Luis Obispo County and Region, said “The creation of the Pismo Preserve gives us the opportunity to return to this important place and to participate in its protection. In doing so, it is our goal that this area will be respected by all.”

To ensure safe and enjoyable access to the Preserve, the final permitted project will consist of improvements to Mattie Road including a sidewalk; widening of the entrance; and the construction of several retaining walls, a picnic area, restroom facilities, bike racks, and a paved accessible trail along the lower terrace of the Preserve.

The actual timeline for completion is dependent on funding the remaining $3.5 million of $17 million total (includes the purchase of the land) needed to complete the project and open the Pismo Preserve to the public. The Land Conservancy expects to receive help from State and local agencies, including the City of Pismo Beach. We are also relying heavily on gifts from local businesses and individuals. If you are interested in helping bring this project to fruition please contact The Land Conservancy office directly.

Access to the Preserve is currently closed due to construction activity in the parking area. Once completed, walkers, hikers, bikers, and equestrians will be able to enjoy the Pismo Preserve from sunrise until an hour after sunset, seven days a week.

Since the purchase of the Preserve, thousands of people have enjoyed the property, exploring the 11-mile trail system through docent-led hikes and mountain bike rides. From June 2017 to July 2018 a series of “Discovery Days” allowed hikers and bikers to explore the trail system without a docent guide on scheduled open access days.
The five years of drought experienced from 2011-2017 and increasing temperatures across the state have sparked an increase in wildfires throughout California.

In the last year our state has experienced the two largest wildfires in our history. The Thomas Fire set the record in 2017, only to be surpassed this year by the Mendocino Complex Fire which burned over 450,000 acres in Northern California this summer.

So far in 2018, California has seen 43 fires reach 1,000 acres or more, and in total over 1.4 million acres have burned. (Statistics as of September 4, 2018).

Land trusts throughout the country work to ensure that our protected lands are maintained to reduce the likelihood of catastrophic events such as fires or mudslides and spread awareness about fire safe land management. Proper land management practices can sometimes be the difference between a contained incident and a catastrophic event.

On July 17th, 2018, The Land Conservancy received calls from concerned citizens who saw smoke coming from the Pismo Preserve. By the time our office called Cal Fire they were already on the scene deploying personnel and equipment to contain the fire. Because of the watchful eyes of our community, and Cal Fire’s incredible response time, the “Maddie Fire” was contained at 0.6 acres.

Every season, our stewardship staff complete vegetation management in strategic areas on Land Conservancy properties to reduce the risk of wildfire. Even more importantly, we seek funding for fire abatement projects and coordinate with local agencies and stakeholders to manage risks as efficiently as possible.

As the year progresses and the winter rains (hopefully) come, The Land Conservancy will continue to monitor the burned area for erosion and the spread of invasive weeds. This altered landscape also makes a unique classroom for children and students to observe post-fire ecology.

But we are fortunate. Not all open spaces, cities, or parks escape the destruction that a small spark can ultimately wreak upon a landscape. Years of intense drought, surging heat and strong winds have made firefighting an uphill battle in California.

Cal Fire Battalion Chief Paul Lee spoke with The Land Conservancy about wildfire on the central coast of California. “We have seen much longer, more intensive fire seasons, especially over the last 7-8 years - and a dramatic change in fuel conditions. It is important for people to provide defensible space. We look to the community to do their part so we can do ours. When the community provides defensive space, it allows Cal Fire to fight the fire instead of protecting structures.”

The Land Conservancy is proud to have also partnered with Cal Poly’s Forestry Department to develop a hazard assessment and mitigation plan for the Pismo Preserve. The plan outlines strategic areas for vegetation management and ideas for community engagement. We recently submitted a grant request to the California Fire Safe Council to help fund the implementation of the plan.

Wildfires are a harsh reality in the West, but home owners and property managers have options when it comes to preparing their property for wildfire. Take action in your neighborhood by joining SLO’s local Fire Safe Council (fscslo.org). Learn how you can be more fire safe throughout the year at PreventWildfireCA.org and CalFireSLO.org.
Clear yards, gutters, and rooftops of dead leaves and other dry debris. Remove dead bushes and trees from your property. These are prime fire fuel.

Keep your car well maintained. Fix damaged parts in a timely manner. NEVER DRAG CHAINS.

Fireworks are illegal to use, sell or possess in SLO County unless otherwise permitted. Instead of lighting your own, attend a professional fireworks display put on by local municipalities.

Do not smoke in parks, campgrounds or trails. Do not toss cigarette butts out your car window. Make sure butts are completely extinguished before throwing in the trash.

Camping and fires are prohibited at the Pismo Preserve. But wherever you camp, never leave your fire unattended. Firepits should be cool to the touch before you leave your campsite.

Keep an emergency kit with snacks, water, pet food, and extra clothes in your car in case you need to evacuate. Keep your gas tank more than half full for a quick exit.

Fireworks are illegal to use, sell or possess in SLO County unless otherwise permitted. Instead of lighting your own, attend a professional fireworks display put on by local municipalities.
Nestled among the oak woodlands west of Templeton, Vineyard Elementary School is an ideal partner for The Land Conservancy’s Learning Among the Oaks (LATO) program. Principal Laura Brooks is a Vineyard alumna who grew up on a farm near the school and is a passionate supporter of outdoor learning.

Vineyard is a prime location for LATO, already having an established nature trail which meanders through oak woodlands to a section of Paso Robles Creek adjacent to the school. The approximately five-acre site was acquired by the Templeton Unified School District decades ago. Over the years, it has been used for school nature hikes, but hasn’t reached its full potential as a vibrant center for place-based connections with the natural world.

Fourth grade teacher Dessa Drake shared, “Vineyard Elementary is so excited to join the Land Conservancy family. We have long admired the work that LATO does and the incredible opportunities it provides to students elsewhere in the county. We love our nature trail, but to have students take ownership of it as well as build their leadership skills and scientific knowledge - what an amazing way to enhance the unique gift we have here at Vineyard!”

With support from volunteers and donors, The Land Conservancy hopes to deliver guided educational hikes and lessons for all of Vineyard’s 3rd through 5th grade classes (nearly 500 students total), and add a wildlife camera project. Additionally, Vineyard has provided a beautiful classroom for development as a LATO nature center. Fall days will be busy and full of new learning adventures!
A GIFT TO LAST A LIFETIME

The Octagon Barn was built in 1906 and is on the National Registry of Historic Places. Now you have a chance to be a part of its history.

As we enter the final fundraising rally to complete the Octagon Barn Center by next year, we invite you to join us in laying the foundation for this special place in our community. Last October we announced an incredible dollar-for-dollar match challenge thanks to a group of donors who pledged $200,000 towards the final needs. Thank you to so many members who have contributed to the match challenge. We have matched $105,000 and have only $95,000 to go. Please consider helping complete this special project challenge with your own paver at the Barn!

With a paver at the Center, you have a unique opportunity to create a lasting tribute to honor a loved one, celebrate an anniversary, promote your local business, or gift a dedication to that special someone.

Your $1,000 tax-deductible donation will allow you to choose up to three lines of personalized text that will be engraved on a paver, which will in turn be installed outside the Octagon Barn near the future Bob Jones City-to-the-Sea trailhead.

For more information please contact Development Manager Lauren Meers at laurenm@lcslo.org or by calling (805) 544-9096 ext 14.

If you have already donated a total of $1,000 or more towards the Octagon Barn, we will be contacting you before the end of the year to design your paver! Thank you again for your incredible support of the Octagon Barn Center.

THANK YOU

• **Brooke Langle**, for her dedicated service as our recent Board President, and for her 8 year tenure as one of our incredible volunteer Trustees. She has directly supported our projects and staff in so many ways and we are deeply grateful.

• **Jeff Jorgensen**, for serving as a volunteer Board Trustee and dedicated Land Committee and Governance Committee member for the past 8 years. We are grateful for his vast legal expertise and the thoughtful guidance he has provided LCSLO.

Brooke and Jeff's contributions and professional expertise are invaluable to our organization. We are grateful they will continue to support and engage with LCSLO as they continue to serve on our volunteer committees.

• **San Luis Outdoor Painters for the Environment (SLOPE)** for hosting a benefit art show at Castoro Cellars through the month of July, raising thousands of dollars for local conservation. Visit slope-painters.com for more info about this awesome group of artists.

• Our volunteer **Octagon Barn Committee**, which has probably seem its most active year yet, and continues to push forward on this historic community gem.

• **Race SLO** who named The Land Conservancy as a beneficiary of the SLO Ultra trail races at El Chorro Regional Park for the third year in a row.

WELCOME

• Welcome back Stewardship and Outreach Intern Adam Norcott! You can meet Adam, who is an Experience Industry Management major at Cal Poly, at our farmers’ market booth or an upcoming special event.

WISH LIST

• General tools
• Drafting table
• New or gently used childrens’ seating/furniture (chairs, bean bag chairs, benches etc)
• Carpentry/handy skills needed to occasionally help with various small nature center construction projects (in Santa Margarita).
• New items, gift cards or experiences for 2019 Annual Reception silent auction and raffle.
MEMBERS ONLY: APPLE PICKING
Thursday | October 4 | 4:30-6:00 pm
Celebrate fall at the apple orchards off San Luis Bay Drive for a fun afternoon of apple picking! First bag of organic apples is free for members. A suggested $5 donation per additional bag. Space is limited, please RSVP to Jamie Creath at jamiec@lcslo.org or call (805) 544-9096 for more information.

“GATEWAY TO NATURE” BENEFIT CONCERT
Saturday | October 20 | 4-7:00 pm
At Santa Margarita Community Park, music, food and good times supporting Learning Among the Oaks nature trail and monarch habitat project. Jolon Station Band plays from the heart with a unique brand of rock and roll with a country feel. Free to attend, donations accepted at the door.