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Iaqua Ranch. Submitted photo/Northcoast Regional Land Trust

## **Conservation deals protect two area ranches**

by Luis Molina, 8/31/2006

Citing skyrocketing land prices and a steady rise in population in the area, the Northcoast Regional Land Trust has stepped up its efforts to establish a network of reserves to help keep clean air and water, as well as fish and wildlife habitat, long into the future.

The nonprofit land trust agency, which was formed in 2001 to protect working farms, forests and grazing lands, announced this week that it had secured approximately 6,000 acres of ranch to be preserved in agricultural easements in perpetuity.

A 4,700-acre Iaqua Ranch near Kneeland and a 1,280-acre ranch in the Price Creek Valley near Ferndale will remain intact and undeveloped as a result of a recent agreement reached between their landowners and the state of California.

Working with a variety of partners over the past three years to finalize the easement deals, the NRLT coordinated the projects that will allow for the continuation of grazing, hunting and timber management activities that currently support the ranches and sustain their open spaces, according to a news release.

The state's Wildlife Conservation Board, the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection worked together to provide \$5.1 million toward the purchase of the easements.

In addition to Iaqua Ranch owner Francis Carrington, who donated an additional \$635,000 in easement value, grant funding support was also provided by Humboldt County and the Nature Conservancy, an international conservation organization that has worked in California since 1959, and which has provided expertise in real estate transactions and conservation easement development.

"It's a win-win situation," Carrington said. "A conservation easement works well for landowners who want to keep their property undeveloped and in one piece, because not only is there compensation for some of the development value that's given up, but the easement allows for continued grazing, timber harvesting and hunting. "

While the easement will be held by CDF in accordance with funding guidelines, NRLT will monitor the property in the future to ensure the protection of the conservation values.

Protecting the ranch from being subdivided and developed into a number of smaller residential properties is very important to Price Creek area landowner Arlin Grandy.

"This ranch has been in my family for three generations, and this agreement helps me keep the ranch in one piece for the grandkids," Grandy said. "The land is just made for ranching and wildlife, not more houses and roads. The stream is in good shape for the fish, and we wanted to make sure things were kept that way in the future."

"It has been a long time coming in getting to this point," said Eric Wilson, project manager for the NRLT.

Wilson said the nonprofit group has more easement projects in the works, although no funding has been secured yet.

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