

THE  
**ANDERSON  
VALLEY  
LAND  
TRUST**  
INCORPORATED



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# GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of The Anderson Valley Land Trust  
Spring - Summer 2000

## *Grappling with Grapes:* What is the future of viticulture in the Valley?

A key issue raised in our recent survey of community conservation priorities was the increase of vineyard development, and the potential negative impacts that could have. Most concern was over the loss of oaks and other habitats, increased pumping from the streams, and accelerated erosion. Agriculture and vineyards are an important part of our culture and landscape, and AVLT supports agriculture in the Valley. But *how* grapes are developed and maintained is also important. Like other land uses, agriculture can minimize *or* accelerate erosion, maintain and improve *or* destroy habitats, conserve *or* waste water resources, sustain *or* deplete the land. When agriculture not only produces crops and economic return, but also sustains the land and its diversity of habitats, it is perhaps the best example of how people can live in harmony with the land.

### *Open House at Pete & Flo Bates'* **Learn About Their Conservation Easement -- Tour their Holmes Ranch Property Saturday, May 13, 2 - 5 PM**

Come celebrate the gift of a conservation easement on this beautiful property -- and learn how creating a conservation easement on your place may benefit you and the whole of Anderson Valley for generations to come. Pete and Flo will provide details of their easement terms and answer questions. Maps will be available to illustrate how the easement works "on the ground." This is a great opportunity to see how one family has made a commitment to maintaining the rural, natural character of Anderson Valley.

#### *Directions:*

From Hwy 128 in Philo, turn right onto Holmes Ranch Rd. Drive 2 miles to the top of the ridge. Turn right onto Kramer Lane and drive 1/4 mile to the end and turn left. After 3/4 mile follow signs to 14930 Kramer Lane.

In this issue, we interviewed two of our local leading viticulturists to see how they work with these important questions, and we asked the Mendocino Winegrowers about best management practices that they recommend. We asked them how they deal with erosion, water usage, habitat protection, pesticides, and their relationship with the human community of the Valley. There are several key themes that run through their responses that we found significant. First, they promote and practice more organic approaches to viticulture. Second, water conservation is key. Third, they show how erosion can be stopped or minimized. Fourth, they demonstrate how keeping oaks and other habitat is possible and beneficial. Fifth, they demonstrate how responsible agricultural stewardship can be both economical, and maintain the majority of the land in native habitats. For each of our interviewees, only 10-20% of their lands are in cultivation, and they plan to keep it that way. We hope you will find this issue interesting and stimulating, with good directions for viticulture to follow in our future.

DEDICATED TO THE VOLUNTARY PRESERVATION  
OF THE LAND AND ITS ABUNDANT  
NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE BENEFIT  
OF GENERATIONS TO COME.

# AVLT 1999 Financial Statements

The following summary of unaudited financial statements for 1999 was prepared by AVLT Treasurer Connie Best and bookkeeper Mary Anne Wilcox.

## Statement of Financial Position December 31, 1999

<b>Assets</b>	
Cash	\$ 27,599
Stewardship Endowment	31,149
Govt. Grant Receivable	140
Timber Rights	<u>430,400</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>489,288</u></b>
<b>Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Total Liabilities	\$ <u>-0-</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
At Beginning of Year	478,148
Change in Net Assets	11,140
At End of Year	<u>489,288</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b><u>\$489,288</u></b>

## Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets December 31, 1999

<b>Support and Revenue</b>	
Donations	\$ 11,145
Stewardship Endowment	7,500
Govt. Grants	9,800
Interest and Dividends	1,846
Miscellaneous	<u>88</u>
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 30,379</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Dues and subscriptions	\$ 150
Insurance	2,249
Office expense	378
Postage	985
Printing & publications	2,316
Professional fees	
Navarro Restoration Plan	11,085
Other	1,379
Special events/meetings	25
Telephone	671
Travel	<u>-0-</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$ 19,239</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 11,140</b>

We would like to thank our generous members for their continued support of the work of the Anderson Valley Land Trust. As we grow and respond to the desire of the community to better protect what we love about Anderson Valley, AVLT's budget is growing as well. This year, with the hiring of Margaret Baumgratz as our Program Manager, our budget is \$33,715. You can make a big difference in our ability to serve by joining the AVLT and making a tax-deductible donation. **Many thanks!**

## A Few Words with Pete & Flo Bates

Last December Pete and Flo Bates generously donated a conservation easement on their 80-acre property in Philo, up on top of the ridge where the Holmes and Nash Ranches come together. The conservation easement protects the vigorous regenerated redwood - Douglas-fir forest that covers much of the property, prohibiting more development while allowing for forest management that helps restore old growth characteristics. The fish habitat and water quality of Little Mill Creek, which passes through the property, is also protected as an important element of the Navarro River's salmon habitat. In fact, Mill Creek and its tributaries were made priorities for coho and steelhead habitat restoration within the Navarro Watershed Restoration Plan. This conservation easement represents a major commitment on the part of two private landowners to achieving the objectives of that Plan. For more details on the Bates conservation easement, please see the Fall-Winter issue of *Good Dirt* -- and come to the Bates' place on May 13th at 2 PM.



We asked Pete recently why they established the conservation easement. He told us that he and Flo had looked all over northern California for a peaceful rural spot in which to create a new home and they found it in Anderson Valley in 1988. The longer they lived on the place, he continued, the more they valued it. They saw the forest recovering from past logging. They realized, too, that it would be a shame to lose what was being gained -- especially as development pressures increased in the Valley. Pete told us that he had heard about AVLT from a realtor's newsletter, so he got in touch and the process began, culminating several years later in their gift of the conservation easement. Pete and Flo talked things over with their kids, who became just as enthusiastic about the idea as their parents were. All in all, they are happy to think that with the help of the conservation easement they will be able to leave the property better off than when they acquired it.

When asked how he found the process of working with AVLT to create the easement, Pete replied that it was not a difficult experience. In fact, they learned a lot about their place in the process. The land trust was very helpful -- and had creative suggestions on language to help the Bates accomplish their goals in forest restoration and in accommodating the rebuilding of their creekside cabin to another site outside of the riparian zone.

Their motivations, however, were not based on the tax deduction they received for the gift of the easement. While that savings helps facilitate the creation of the easement -- offsetting all the costs and providing some reward -- Pete emphasized those going into creating a conservation easement needs to be committed in their hearts and minds, not just their pocketbooks.

## Speaking with Ted Bennett of Navarro Vineyards

By Laurie Wayburn, AVL T President

### ***What brought you and Deborah to the valley?***

Deborah and I had been looking for a place to grow grapes for about two years. Anderson Valley had the rare mix of climate and soils that can produce great vintages (and lousy ones, too, if you aren't careful). Vines don't like soils that are too good, so the valley was perfect. It was gorgeous and remote. We fell in love with the valley. We bought 910 acres.

### ***What is your philosophy about land stewardship and grape cultivation?***

It has changed a lot, and will continue to. When I first got here, I had to have a Napa Valley vineyard. Totally clean, no oaks, no weeds. I even cut down a wonderful oak left by the former owner, because I was afraid of "oak root rot". But, I have asthma, and every time I sprayed, I had to have all this gear, to be sure I wouldn't breathe the stuff in. It made me think. Using all that pesticides is like chemotherapy. If you are really sick, it probable makes sense. But to do it all the time. . . . So, I began to change towards Integrated Pest Management. And, I realized that the so-called oak root fungus was really a "dead tree fungus". As long as the oak was alive, then there was no disease. So, I changed in several ways. I used to measure my insect management by how many bugs I killed. Now, I only spray when harmful insects get out of balance, like thrips. I try to create habitat for beneficial insects, like lacewings which eat thrips. I leave oaks in the vineyard, and don't disturb any soil inside the drip line of the trees, to ensure we don't harm the roots. The oaks provide important habitat for birds and beneficial insects, and break up a monoculture.

### ***What are some of the best management practices that you recommend?***

Grow crops organically -- at least as organically as required by CCOF, but you can do much more. For example, I spray with Safer soaps, garlic, cinnamon oil, some really far out stuff. But it is not toxic, and it does the job. I also create year-round habitat for beneficial insects. I grow wildflowers in between the rows (every sixth row) to create cover, nectar, refuge for insects. The physical layout of the vineyard matters too. For example, I space the rows so that they are a little too close for "optimal" growth and I plant cover crops in-between to reduce the grapes vigour. That way, I get the insects I need. You can also prune to reduce the need to spray sulfur. For example, people will spray to kill the eutypa fungus or "dead arm". But, if you prune less in winter, so that the part that freezes is not what you need to grow in the spring, then the frost only gets that part of the vine, which then dies and allows the "dead arm" in. Then, you prune off that portion in the spring, and the healthy vine grows. Grape growers should really lead the organic movement.

For erosion, we use contour terraces, and we have consistently been improving the roads. We spend \$20-30,000 a year on the roads, rocking and culverting. We rock the culvert entrances and have down spouts at the exits. We also build terrace walls to support them. The cover crops also help keep the soil in place. We have little to no erosion from our ranch.

For water, I think we should have winter diversion ponds, and not take water from the streams the rest of the year. We only have to spray for frost protection, not irrigation. So, the winter ponds should be sufficient, because that is when you need the spray. Pumping from the streams should stop by May. We also use drip irrigation to conserve water. We had to convert all our irrigation over time, and finished the last vineyard last year."

### ***How do you approach developing a new vineyard?***

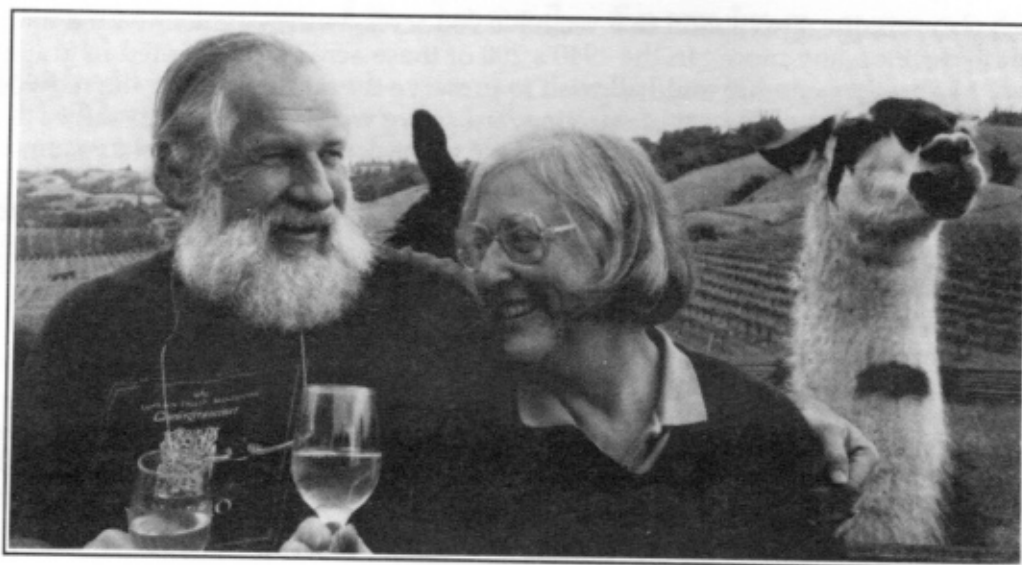
First, we don't plant where it doesn't make sense. So, for example, where I have trees, I don't cut them down and put in grapes. Those are forest soils. I plant where it is grassland. I also look for the right micro climate for the variety I want to plant. And, I look at topography, and don't try to plant where it is too steep.

***How have things changed since you came?***

It is much more competitive now, and more expensive. Many of the new growers are big, international interests from out of the Valley. There are eight companies that dominate 85% of the grape/wine market. They are interested in the Valley, and starting to buy and develop here. Riparian water use has increased and that's not good. Some of these companies are putting in monocultures, too.

***Grape growing has a long history in the Valley.  
What would you like to see as the grape growers' legacy?***

I'd like our legacy to be that the land is better cared for. We have about 90 acres in grapes now, and that will increase to about 150. The rest of the land we want to reforest. We have an old-growth grove of about 20 acres I never want to have cut. I want to help resolve the viticultural problems, have more organic methods used. There are about 1 million tons of chemicals used in viticulture, and about 780,000 tons of that is sulfur. We could reduce that.



***What do you consider to be essential ingredients of a grape growers responsibility to the land, to the community?***

We feel that we have a major responsibility to the human community -- we are humanly invested here. Our labor staff is full time. You can't eat and live on part-time wages. Our crews help in all aspects of the operation, from the fields to the bottling. We pay a living wage, have health and dental benefits, and do profit sharing. We have the crews take classes to improve their skills. It pays off. They care about what they do, and help improve things. Our kids went to school here; we've worked to improve the schools. We shop locally as much as we can to keep dollars in the community.

***How can we keep the Valley's agricultural landscape & culture?***

It is important. I don't want to live in Santa Clara. I came here for what you see . . . the visuals speak for themselves. You have to participate to keep this valley as it is. I was reading in my daughter Sarah's economics class books about how globalization is the trend, and you can see the pressures of globalization here. People want more for less, but the valley won't really compete that way. We have a special quality niche which we need to brand. We need an Anderson Valley appellation. We need to create more value, in the community, in the environment, with our people. If we were to go organic, and market Anderson Valley wines as an appellation, we could be like New Zealand, where green growers are recognized for their quality. How the vineyard expansion turns out determines how the valley turns out. It is a challenge to the community to help maintain the valley's character.

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## A Conversation with Alan Green of Greenwood Ridge Vineyards

By Susan Addison, AVL T Secretary

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### ***Why did you choose AV as a place to grow grapes and have a home?***

In 1971 my family bought property on Greenwood Ridge. Our neighbor, Tony Husch had planted Reisling, Merlot, and Cabernet grapes and in 1973 he decided to sell the property. I was interested in grape growing and developing a winery so we purchased the property from him. Rather than become an art director at *Sunset*, I decided instead to commit myself to living in the Anderson Valley, growing grapes and making wine. This was one of life's fortuitous accidents, finding a fabulous property suitable for growing unique grapes.

### ***What is your philosophy about land stewardship and grape cultivation?***

We have a unique situation in that we have 900 acres, with 874 uncultivated and we do not plan to develop any more. In the 1940's 200 of these acres were planted in grapes, but not now. My brother, mother and I all wish to preserve the land including the redwood trees. Our topsoil is a valuable part of our vineyard so we work to preserve it rather than lose it down the river. By using cover crops that we till back into the soil, we have minimal erosion.

### ***What are some of the best management practices that you recommend?***

Cover crops for erosion control, as I mentioned. We feel there are almost no pests that are bad enough to require treatment. Sulfur is the only spray we usually use because it protects the grapes against mildew. We tried to control weeds by burning them but the frequency required and the resultant air pollution made it a poor solution, so now we use *Round-up*.

### ***How do you approach developing a new vineyard?***

In 1996 we planted 4 acres of Pinot Noir. We ripped the soil down three feet to break up the rocks and hardpan, but no methyl bromide was used. The final pass was made in the right direction to prevent erosion. We planted a green manure crop such as beans or grass that are nitrogen fixers. This was disked into the soil to put the nitrogen in and improve its texture. After three years we switched to a low growing cover crop. We chose a site that was not too steep, had good light exposure and was located near our present water supply.

### ***Have things changed since you came? How?***

Changes are more noticeable over time rather than day to day so I am not as aware of the changes as someone who only comes here at five year intervals. However, there were only 3 wineries when I arrived and now there are 13, with 1500 acres of vineyards all clustered along the highway. An aerial view of the Valley might make more of the changes obvious.

There used to be a dividing line between the locals and the newcomers from the city, but this is not so apparent now. Kids from the hippy families and the logging families have married and the focus now is on the overall community. This is a big improvement. I was in the softball league with loggers teams vs. hippies and we all got to know one another. I meet several of the present wine makers on the softball team.

### ***You have been one of the leading vintners over the years. What do you consider to be the grape growers' responsibility to the land and to the community?***

Grape growers recognize how lucky they are to live here and feel as protective of the Valley as anyone else. Most grape growers consider themselves environmentalists. The issue of water is of course a problem, and I am unhappy about the lack of fish in the river. We need better information about water use. Mature grapes use very little water in the summer. Their heaviest use is in the spring for frost protection and most of this water is collected in

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the winter from the rains. There are parts of our vineyard that have not been irrigated in 10 years. We are very careful about how much fertilizer we use. Chemicals are very expensive and are not used unless we must to replace what is naturally in the soil and depleted by the plants each year. Over-fertilization produces lots of leaves and little fruit.

***Is it important to keep the Valley's agricultural landscape and culture?***

The Valley has been agricultural since the first European settlers arrived and I think it should remain so. I hope increasing population pressures and other changes will not work against the continued production of wine in this unique grape growing region. People come here because of the quality of life, not because of opportunities to make lots of money or live a fancy life style.

## **Mendocino County Winegrowers plan for sustainability in local farming practices**

The Mendocino Winegrowers Alliance (MWA) includes all of the County's wineries as members along with about 75% of the growers at this time. A key mission element of MWA is to sustain the resources which provide local wine quality. The Grower Committee of the MWA Board of Directors is charged with developing measurable guidelines to achieve this goal. The following outlines the Grower committee's proposed recommendations for the MWA membership. This is a work in progress and the board is enthusiastic about adopting guidelines this year.

Successful, sustainable grape growing is comprised of several equally important aspects. A program that integrates the best management practices relating to pests, soil, water, and viticulture will result in the production of highest quality wine grapes. MWA is working on adopting what is known as the Positive Points System (PPS) developed by the Central Coast Vineyard Team and the University of California as a means to measure results of environmentally enhancing farming practices over time.

Modifications to address Mendocino County's unique water and oak resources will be included along with elements from the Fish Friendly Farming initiative of the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District. Mendocino

County grower members farm approximately 14,000 acres within Mendocino County, of which 3,000 (over 20%) are currently certified Organic. By way of contrast, Sonoma County has about 50% of our landmass, with three times our vineyard acreage, of which only 392 acres are Organic.

Vineyard pest management is dynamic. Growers must determine the safest and most effective practices for their particular vineyard. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) includes regular monitoring of vines for pests or damage, the use of pest management practices to prevent pest buildups or damage, and the responsible use of control techniques. Sustainable farming methods that minimize incidence and spread of insect pests, disease, and weeds are outlined in the PPS. The objective is to reduce (or eliminate) chemical inputs while maintaining good production and fruit quality.

Good stewardship of the land is essential to good farming as soil structure and nutrient content directly affect vine vigor. A healthy vine can often tolerate more pest damage and compete better with weeds than a less healthy one, thus requiring less chemical use. Conservation of naturally occurring beneficial soil characteristics is therefore key to sustainable farming. Erosion control, soil fertility monitoring, and the use of cover crops and compost contribute positively

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\_\_\_ I want to volunteer my time to work with the Anderson Valley Land Trust.

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**Thank you!**

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