Millerton Ranch – Its Past, Present and Future.

Join us on Thursday, September 22, for an afternoon learning about Millerton Ranch, carbon farming, and steelhead recovery.

Photo credit: Jeff Stump

Cost: $ 25.00

Location: Approximately 3 miles north of Point Reyes Station, entrance on Highway 1. Directions will be provided.

Schedule:
12:00 to 1:00 Sign in and lunch (bring your own lunch)
1:00 to 2:00 Presentations (description below)
2:00 to 5:00 Guided hike on the ranch (wear comfortable hiking shoes)

Registration: Visit http://tomalesbaywatershed.org State of Tomales Bay Conference Info or register directly at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/millerton-creek-ranch-restoration-tour-tickets-26853879677

Description of the program:
In 2014, the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) purchased Millerton Creek Ranch, an 864-acre ranch on Tomales Bay from a real estate developer. MALT is leasing the ranch to local

producers Mike Giammona (grass-fed beef) and Andrew Zlot (Double 8 Dairy water buffalo gelato), who will purchase it from MALT, subject to an agricultural conservation easement. The easement will forever protect the ranch from future development.

Millerton Ranch is both a productive agricultural asset and dramatic natural landscape. Its rolling upper pastures offer spectacular views of Tomales Bay and Point Reyes National Seashore beyond. Trees line the creek corridor that runs through the center of the ranch before draining into Tomales Bay. Abundant water sources, including numerous natural springs and two large reservoirs, make this ranch particularly valuable agricultural land.

Restoring a historic salmonid run in Millerton Gulch is a long term goal for the current operators and MALT. In addition, the ranch was selected in December, 2015 into the Carbon Farming Program in partnership with the Marin Carbon Project (MCP) to develop a comprehensive Carbon Farm Plan. Carbon can be beneficially stored long-term (decades to centuries or more) in soils and vegetation through biological carbon sequestration. Carbon Farming involves implementing practices on the farm that (1) decrease the production of greenhouse gases on the farm, and (2) increases the rate at which the farm supports photosynthetically-driven transfer of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to plant productivity and/or soil organic matter. Enhancing agroecosystem carbon, whether in plants or soils, results in beneficial changes in other system attributes, including soil/water holding capacity, and hydrological function, biodiversity, soil fertility, ecosystem resilience, and agricultural productivity. Millerton Ranch is enrolling in the MCP Carbon Farming Program, administered through the Marin Resource Conservation District. A Carbon Farm Plan is currently in the drafting stages. This work is expected to enable farmers and ranchers to help Marin County achieve carbon neutrality and, in turn, enhance the sustainability of agriculture.

Our trip to Millerton Ranch will include presentations by the following experts:

Jeff Stump, Director of Conservation, Marin Agricultural Land Trust.
Jeff directs all aspects of land protection, stewardship, and state and federal government relations for MALT. Jeff will provide background about the ranch, including a summary of its past, present and future.

Jim Jensen, Stewardship Program Manager, Marin Agricultural Land Trust.
Jim is responsible for assisting landowners in a variety of conservation programs and projects, including assisting with the MCP's Implementation Task Force. He assists in the monitoring of agricultural conservation easements, technical assistance, Geographic Information Systems mapping, and training the Stewardship Assistance Program.
Jim will provide a synopsis of what carbon farming is, the Carbon Farming Program process and objectives, and what the participation of Millerton Creek Ranch, in the MCP, Carbon Farming Program will mean going forward.

Bruce Orr, PhD, Principal/Senior Ecologist, Stillwater Sciences

Bruce has more than 25 years of experience in population and community ecology of aquatic, terrestrial, and wetland environments in the western United States. His specializes in natural resources inventory and management planning, ecological restoration, wetlands and freshwater ecology, riparian vegetation dynamics, flora and vegetation of the western United States, and aquatic entomology.

Stillwater specializes in science-based, technical approaches to environmental issues. By integrating geomorphic and biological research to understand critical ecosystem processes, they work to identify effective measures for restoring and managing rivers and their floodplains as functioning ecosystems within the context of current conditions and future climate change.

Bruce will discuss and outline a series of steps that can be taken to (1) evaluate the factors involved with returning a run of steelhead that frequented the creek until the 1960s; and (2) how such a plan might be implemented. How might the long-term goal of the ranchers and MALT of helping recover this threatened iconic species be approached?