LANDWATCH
MONTEREY COUNTY

November 3, 2026

Dr. Jennifer Norris, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Board
c/o California Department of Fish and Wildlife
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

Via email: WCB@wildlife.ca.gov

Re: Support for Agenda Item 28, Ferrini Ranch, Monterey County ($12,500,000) — November 19, 2026 Board Meeting

LandWatch Monterey County strongly supports the proposed $12,500,000 grant to Big Sur Land Trust, in cooperation with the Trust for Public Land, to acquire approximately 868 acres of Ferrini Ranch near Salinas. LandWatch has been closely involved in land use decisions affecting this property for more than a decade, and we know its natural values well. This acquisition would permanently protect one of the most important wildlife linkages in Monterey County, and we urge the Board to approve it.

A critical and irreplaceable wildlife linkage. Ferrini Ranch lies on the south side of State Route 68 between River Road and San Benancio Road, wrapping Toro County Park and connecting the Sierra de Salinas and the coast ranges to the north toward Fort Ord National Monument. Highway 68 and the development along it already form a near-continuous barrier that is steadily isolating the Monument's habitat. Department of Fish and Wildlife staff have described Ferrini Ranch as the last intact wildlife connection between Fort Ord and the coast ranges, and the Department added the short pinch-point segment of Highway 68 at Ferrini Ranch to its list of priority wildlife connectivity barriers in 2024. Big Sur Land Trust has studied wildlife movement in the Sierra de Salinas since the mid-2000s and already owns the adjacent Marks Ranch. Protecting Ferrini Ranch directly advances the Board's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan and the State's Pathways to 30x30 goals.

The opportunity is time-limited. Monterey County approved a 185-lot subdivision on Ferrini Ranch in 2014 and in 2022 extended those entitlements through 2029. An earlier effort to retire the development rights, a 2019 agreement for the Ag Land Trust of Monterey County to purchase a conservation easement with state funding, fell through in 2021 after an independent appraisal

valued the easement well below the negotiated price. The Trust for Public Land's bridge acquisition in December 2024 secured the property for now, but it did not retire the entitlements. Without permanent conservation funding, the land could return to the market with an approved subdivision map. Permanent protection is also a precondition for any future wildlife crossing of Highway 68 at this location, because a crossing works only if the land on both sides stays open. The Board's grant would secure the corridor while that is still possible.

Public benefit. The property is a defining feature of the Highway 68 corridor between Salinas and the Monterey Peninsula, adjacent to one of the County's most heavily used regional parks and minutes from Salinas neighborhoods. Big Sur Land Trust's plans for wildlife-oriented public use, continued grazing, and partnership with Indigenous communities would make this a landscape that serves wildlife and the public alike.

LandWatch has followed Ferrini Ranch for many years, and we are grateful for the opportunity to support its permanent protection. We respectfully urge the Board to approve Agenda Item 28.

Regards,



Michael DeLapa
Executive Director

cc: Jeannette Tuitele-Lewis, President and CEO, Big Sur Land Trust
Christy Fischer, Regional Conservation Director, Trust for Public Land