



GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL AGENCY

MEETING DATE: March 19, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: 7. Memorandum of Understanding: Adanac Ranch (Stuart Bewley)

FROM: Elaine Hogan

RE: Memorandum of Understanding: Adanac Ranch (Stuart Bewley)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This item recommends the Board of Directors approve a non-binding memorandum of understanding between GRTA and R. Stuart Bewley, a private landowner in the Eel River Canyon with a 13,046-acre ranch and timber property known as Adanac Ranch, located adjacent to the GRTA right-of-way where trail is planned to be developed. It outlines activities of mutual interest that are beneficial for both parties to further explore such as trail alignment off GRTA right-of-way, access for trail construction and maintenance, promotion of conservation efforts, increased wildfire resilience, and the potential for development of trail-serving amenities such as a campground or seasonal staff housing. Subsequent agreements would come before the Board for approval.

BACKGROUND:

Adanac Ranch is a 13,046 +/- acre ranch and timber property under the management and control of R. Stuart Bewley. The Bewleys have operated the property for economic return and the sustainable management of its natural resources. In a significant step toward long-term conservation, the Bewleys have engaged with Pacific Forest Trust (PFT) on the sale of a conservation easement that would preserve the ranch and ensure its sustainable management in perpetuity.

As part of that conservation easement process, the Bewleys and PFT identified specific terms and opportunities that align with GRT development such as potential trail amenity sites, off right-of-way trail alignments, and mutual wildfire resilience work. This alignment of conservation goals and trail amenities made Adanac Ranch a natural partner for GRTA and led to the development of the MOU before the Board today.

The Great Redwood Trail Master Plan identifies complexities with trail development in the Eel River Canyon due to geomorphic conditions, sensitive cultural sites and limited road access for construction and emergency response. The Master Plan recommends GRTA work in collaboration with private landowners to explore alternative trail alignments, access agreements, and easements around sensitive areas, where appropriate. GRTA is committed to building these relationships proactively with respect for working ranches and timberlands.

The Master Plan recognizes that trail operations and management in a fire-prone, ecologically sensitive landscape is best addressed in collaboration with neighboring landowners. Wildfire risk reduction, habitat restoration, and long-term responsible stewardship are core goals of both parties that led to the drafting of

this MOU.

Under the MOU, GRTA commits to:

- Provide letters of support and testimonials for Adanac Ranch's conservation easement funding efforts with Pacific Forest Trust, explaining the benefits to GRT and the aligned goals of the conservation easement
- Attend, at reasonable times and with consideration for GRTA's limited staff resources, property fundraising tours and events to speak to trail planning needs and GRTA's involvement in the conservation effort
- Collaborate with Adanac Ranch and PFT on trail planning activities, including potential off right-of-way trail alignments, trailside amenities including a potential campground, and secondary maintenance and construction access
- Support Adanac Ranch in pursuing wildfire mitigation funding and the application of that funding on the property
- Provide 30 days advance notice for any requested property access and obtain landowner permission for each participant

Adanac Ranch commits to:

- Provide access to the property at reasonable times for GRTA, its representatives, and guests for trail promotion and planning purposes
- Make best efforts to be present during access events and collaborate in GRTA's promotions and trail planning
- Participate in trail planning activities alongside GRTA, including discussions of campground development, trail alignment, and maintenance access
- Collaborate on wildfire risk reduction strategies in areas adjacent to the GRT, and provide access to demonstrate positive outcomes of the partnership as part of GRTA's private landowner outreach program

FISCAL IMPACT:

The MOU creates no direct fiscal obligations for GRTA. Any future contractual agreements arising from this MOU that exceed the Executive Director's delegated authority will be brought to the Board for authorization prior to execution.

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the Executive Director to execute the Memorandum of Understanding between GRTA and R. Stuart Bewley, substantially in the form attached.

ATTACHMENTS:

A. ADANAC GRTA MOU 03.06.26

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL AGENCY

AND

ADANAC RANCH (R. Stuart Bewley)

The following Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provides terms for cooperation by the Parties for the conservation of significant natural resource lands and developing trail access for the public to significant natural resources on the property described below.

The Parties

The Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA) is a local agency established by the Great Redwood Trail Agency Act, Government Code § 93000 et seq., to develop and manage the Great Redwood Trail (GRT). The GRTA replaced the North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) in 2022. In the development of the Great Redwood Trail, the GRTA seeks to work cooperatively with private landowners in the interest of developing positive experiences for trail-users and neighbors alike. In service of that goal, GRTA may enter into agreements with private landowners adjacent to property under the Agency's control, for maintenance and operational purposes, to develop trail alignments outside its right-of-way, the development of trail amenities, and the cooperative management of trailside natural and scenic resources.

Adanac Ranch (the Property) is a 13,046 +/- ranch and timber property held by several revocable trusts owned by the Bewley family and which are under the management and control of R. Stuart Bewley. The Bewleys operate the ranch for economic return and the sustainable use of the Property's natural resources. The Bewleys have engaged with Pacific Forest Trust (PFT) on the sale of a conservation easement to preserve the ranch and ensure its sustainable management for the future. In that conservation easement, the Bewleys and PFT have identified terms which may support the development of the GRT and amenities for it on the Adanac Ranch.

Terms of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding is a non-binding, non-contractual document prepared by the Parties outlining methods of mutual support for their shared and aligned goals. The manner of mutual support is herein described:

GRTA agrees that the protection of Adanac Ranch with a conservation easement is a benefit to the mission of the GRTA in preserving trailside natural resources and scenic views, and in encouraging sustainable, wildfire-resilient forest management requirements for the future. GRTA will provide testimonial support in the form of letters of support or similar testimonials to the Adanac Ranch and PFT for public and private funding opportunities related to the acquisition of a conservation easement explaining the benefits to GRT and the Parties' mutual development of the easement with the goals of the GRT in mind. GRTA also agrees that at reasonable times and with consideration to the limited staff resources they have available, attend property fundraising tours to provide

similar testimony of benefit, or to provide reassurance as to their involvement in providing expertise as to the trail planning needs within the conservation easement.

Adanac Ranch agrees to provide, at reasonable times and in reasonable places, access to the Property for the GRTA, its representatives, and guests of the GRTA for the purpose of promoting the GRT and/or trail planning. GRTA understands that, in benefitting from this access, that Adanac Ranch is a working farm and forest property and though small, risks of personal injury and damage to property are possible in accessing the Property. Prior to entering the property for this purpose, GRTA will obtain permission from Adanac Ranch for each participant invited by GRTA, including appropriate acceptance of financial responsibility for any losses or damage associated with the event(s). GRTA agrees to request access at least thirty (30) days prior to any expected use. If requested, the Bewleys will make best efforts to make themselves present for that access and collaborate in GRTA's promotions and/or trail planning.

GRTA and Adanac Ranch agree to mutually participate in: trail planning activities not limited to the development of trailside amenities including a potential campground; potential off right-of-way alignment of the trail where appropriate given the deterioration of the rail corridor within existing rights-of-ways; discussion and negotiation of secondary maintenance and construction access benefitting the GRTA and the GRT, and; other issues which may arise in the planning of trail and related amenities on Adanac Ranch. The parties agree to communicate and co-develop these terms with PFT to the extent that PFT agrees they may be impactful to the conservation easement.

GRTA and Adanac Ranch will develop strategies towards wildfire risk reduction in those areas adjacent to the GRT and look towards the mutual implementation of those strategies on the Property. GRTA will support Adanac Ranch in the pursuit of wildfire mitigation funding and application of that funding on the Property. Adanac Ranch will provide access to GRTA under the terms described above to demonstrate the positive outcomes of their partnership as part of a private landowner outreach program engaged by GRTA.

The terms of this MOU are understood to be continuous until the Parties have achieved the herein described activities and/or at such a time this MOU will be replaced by superseding contractual agreements. The terms of understanding under this MOU, individually or in gross, are cancellable by either party, at any time, for any cause, by simple written notice to the other party.

Acknowledged by:

R. Stuart Bewley, Manager/Owner, Adanac Ranch:

_____ Date: _____

Elaine Hogan, Executive Director, Great Redwood Trail Agency:

_____ Date: _____