

Californians nominated for Leopold Conservation Award

By [Tim Hearden](#)

SACRAMENTO — A Lodi couple that grows winegrapes, a Point Reyes dairy operation and a Watsonville organic produce farm are finalists for this year's California Leopold Conservation Award.

Each year, the award is given to a private landowner who voluntarily practices good stewardship and management of natural resources.

The award is cosponsored by the California Farm Bureau Federation, the Sand County Foundation and Sustainable Conservation and will be presented during the CFBF's annual meeting Dec. 9 in Monterey.

The finalists are:

- John and Gail Kautz, who operate Kautz Farms in Lodi and Ironstone Vineyard in Murphys.
- Bob Giacomini, who with his four daughters own and operate Robert Giacomini Dairy and Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co. in coastal Marin County.
- Steve Pedersen and Jeanne Byrne of Watsonville, who grow organic fruits, vegetables and flowers at High Ground Organics.

The finalists are just a few of the many farm and ranch operations in California that produce crops in ways that benefit people and the planet, said Ashley Boren, executive director of the San Francisco-based Sustainable Conservation.

“The diversity of this year's group of finalists is particularly exciting,” Boren told the Capital Press in an email. “They represent a wide variety of operations – from dairy farming and cheese making, to community-supported agriculture to viticulture. Both large and small operations are represented, ranging from a few dozen acres to a few thousand.

“All finalists are united, however, in their commitment to keep farming going strong in ways that are good for the environment and economy -- the key to true sustainability and a vibrant California,” she said.

The conservation award is given in eight states each year in honor of Aldo Leopold, a conservationist whose 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*, called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage.

The winner receives a crystal award depicting Leopold and a check for \$10,000, according to a news release.

Online

Leopold Conservation Award:

www.leopoldconservationaward.org

California Farm Bureau Federation:

www.cfbf.com

Sustainable Conservation:

www.suscon.org

Sand County Foundation:

www.sandcounty.net