



Santa Clara County

Open Space Authority

6830 Via del Oro, Suite 200 • San Jose, CA 95119 • Tel (408) 224-7476 • Fax (408) 224-7548 • info@OpenSpaceAuthority.org

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Patrick Congdon, General Manager

Lark Burkhart, Public Information Specialist

Office: 408-224-7476

Fire Opens the Way for New Native Grasses

San Jose, CA, Nov. 7, 2006 — A controlled burn on Monday, November 6, signaled the next stage in the Open Space Authority's (OSA) plan to restore a native plant community on its lands along Casa Loma Road.

Nonnative grasses went up in smoke in a meadow near the staging area at Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve, carefully managed by OSA General Manager Patrick Congdon, OSA field staff, and firefighters from Santa Clara County Fire Department and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. The fire reduced unwanted plant material and will help prepare the soil for the seeding of native grasses later in the season.

Firefighters set and contained small areas of fire as they moved across the meadow. Engines and water trucks stood by and the smoke was carefully monitored. "Overall things went pretty good," OSA General Manager Patrick Congdon said. "No complaints from neighbors, no injuries, no burned fence posts and we did burn what we wanted to."

The burn follows several years of invasive plant removal that virtually eliminated two significant plant pests: purple starthistle and yellow starthistle. Blue oak seedlings are being nurtured on the site

and with the introduction of native purple needle grass and blue wild rye, the meadow will be another step closer to its former state as an oak/walnut savanna.

Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve is open to the public every day from sunrise to sunset. A staging area at the end of Cass Loma Road offers paved parking, space for horse trailers, and a vault toilet. Trails for hikers and equestrians wind through oak woodlands to the top of ridges that offer a spectacular view of the Diablo Range.

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Photographs by Lark Burkhart

The Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (OSA) is an independent special district created in 1993 to help preserve, protect and manage urban and non-urban open space in the areas of Campbell, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, San Jose, Santa Clara, and southern Santa Clara County. OSA has preserved over 12,000 acres of land and manages over 375 acres of conservation easements.

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