



Santa Clara County

Open Space Authority

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Open Space Authority Protects Ranch Lands in South County

San Jose, CA June 8, 2007 – With the purchase Thursday, June 7, of the 128-acre Nielsen Ranch, Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (OSA) has concluded a major acquisition in the south foothills of the county. The property is adjacent to the 574-acre Doan Ranch, which OSA acquired in January 2007. Together the 702 acres cost \$7.1 million.

The ranches are located along Cañada Road approximately two miles from Highway 152 and within several miles of Henry Coe State Park. Their rolling hills create a familiar rural landscape of annual grasslands and chaparral interspersed with woodlands of bay laurel, California sycamore and valley oak. Portions of the ranches are visible from highways 101 and 152 as well as other areas of the valley floor.

The numerous vegetation types as well as San Ysidro Creek, which flows through both properties, provide habitat for a diverse array of plant and animal species. As active ranching operations, the lands also are part of Santa Clara Valley's cultural heritage.

"The acquisition of the Doan and Nielsen Ranch will further the Authority's efforts to protect ranchlands and important habitat for the movement of wildlife from the valley floor to the Diablo Range," said OSA general manager Patrick Congdon. "Cattle grazing has occurred on the property for many years now and will be a critical part of our management plan."

Currently the Authority is managing over 10,000 acres of open space in widely dispersed areas of the county. With each property, questions of habitat and resource protection, public access, and fire safety all must be addressed.

As with any new acquisition, OSA staff will study and map the 702 acres to form a complete understanding of its natural, historical and infrastructure resources. With this information in hand, public access consistent with preservation of the land's open space values can be determined. Ultimately, proposed facilities for parking and trail use will go through a formal planning process involving neighbors and the public.

Since its first purchase in 1999, the Open Space Authority has protected 13,035 acres in Santa Clara County at a combined cost of \$37.2 million. Obtaining ownership or securing easements has enabled the Authority to keep important habitats intact, preserve hillsides and viewsheds, protect streams and watersheds, and conserve valuable plant and animal communities.

The Authority has insufficient funding to make additional land acquisitions in the near future, due to the pending legal challenge to its 2001 assessment. That litigation is now before the California Supreme Court. The Superior Court and Court of Appeal have previously ruled in favor of the Authority.

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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, Santa Clara, San Jose, Morgan Hill, and southern Santa Clara County. The OSA has protected over 10,000 acres of land through purchase or easement and contributed to conservation easements covering an additional 2,180 acres.

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