



Santa Clara County

Open Space Authority

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PRESS RELEASE

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Open Space Authority Expands Rancho Cañada del Oro

San Jose, CA March 19, 2008 – With the recent close of escrow on 865 acres adjacent to its largest preserve, the Open Space Authority is poised to safeguard rare serpentine grassland habitat and create trail connections for public use.

The property, a working cattle ranch located in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains west of Morgan Hill, abuts the southern border of Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve. The expanded preserve will extend protection for the Uvas and Llagas creeks watershed, an important source of the Pajaro River.

Ranch ponds and adjacent meadows offer the type of habitat favored by several protected species, including California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and Foothill yellow-legged frog. A variety of bird and animal species have been spotted on the property, including bobcats, coyotes, grey foxes, mountain lions, great blue herons, American kestrels and white-tailed kites.

The land also supports a diversity of plant species. Four state or federally listed plants occur on the property: smooth lessingia, most beautiful jewel-flower, Santa Clara Valley dudleya and Hall's bush mallow. The plantain and nectar plants required by the protected bay checkerspot butterfly thrive in the parcel's serpentine grasslands.

The purchase was negotiated by Peninsula Open Space Trust. Funding was provided by the California Coastal Conservancy, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation and the Open Space Authority. The purchase price was \$8,650,000.

One provision of the purchase agreement is that the land will be opened to recreational use within five years. The wooded hillsides, shady ravines and grassy slopes that provide panoramic views will offer memorable experiences for visitors. Transforming a newly acquired parcel into public open space is, however, a long, complex process.

The land will be studied and mapped so that a full understanding of its natural, cultural and potential recreational resources can be established. The Authority will develop plans for protecting and enhancing the land's natural communities and also determine how public access consistent with preservation of the land's open space values can be accomplished. Ultimately, proposed parking and trail facilities will go through a formal planning process involving neighbors and the public.

With the purchase of the Blair Ranch, OSA and the county parks department together now protect approximately 7,500 contiguous acres in this portion of western Santa Clara County. The large connected areas of open space provide significant habitat for the region's wildlife, including its largest mammals, and will expand recreational options for the county's growing human population in the years ahead.

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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 11,000 acres of land through purchase or easement and contributed to conservation easements covering an additional 2,500 acres.

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