



Santa Clara County

Open Space Authority

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PRESS RELEASE

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OSA Hilltop Purchase is One Step Up on Morgan Hill Trail Vision; OSA Also Preserves Property Around the Coyote Valley

San Jose, CA September 29, 2010 – El Toro frames the western viewshed for the City of Morgan Hill and holds out the temptation of expansive vistas for hikers. Much of the peak, however, is private property with no access for the public.

Thursday, September 30, the Open Space Authority closed escrow on a 33-acre purchase that puts some of the prominent hillside in public hands. Though it is only one small piece in the puzzle, the acquisition moves the vision of an El Toro loop trail one step closer to reality.

“The Open Space Authority’s purchase of this property is strategic for the citizens of Morgan Hill,” said Alex Kennett, who represents the Morgan Hill area on the Authority’s Board of Directors. Kennett added, “It will eventually provide public access, but in the meantime provides protection of the property from development.”

The El Toro parcel was purchased for \$500,000. It adjoins City of Morgan Hill lands to the north and includes coast live oak and California bay woodlands as well as annual grasslands.

In addition, the Open Space Authority has also recently purchased 348 acres on the edge of the Coyote Valley that contribute to the greenbelt between Morgan Hill and San Jose, a key preservation goal the Authority has long pursued.

Heritage valley oaks and serpentine grasslands dot the property, which consists mostly of sagebrush, oak woodlands and grasslands. Seasonal streams, wetlands and riparian habitat add to the land's resource value.

The parcel is also prime habitat for some of the Bay Area's most sensitive plant and animal species. Bay checkerspot butterflies, Opler's longhorn moth, golden eagles, Santa Clara Valley dudleya, smooth lessingia, and most beautiful jewelflower have all been observed on the property.

The land, purchased for \$3,841,000, is located on the western edge of Coyote Valley and extends into the near foothills. Portions of the property have been used for cattle grazing and hay production in recent years. "This is a strategic purchase for the Authority," said Sequoia Hall, Chairperson of the Board of Directors. He added, "The purchase plays a critical role in preserving the wildlife corridor between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range."

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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.

OSA has protected over 15,000 acres of land.

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