

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Marc Landgraf, [mlandgraf@openspaceauthority.org](mailto:mlandgraf@openspaceauthority.org), 408-224-7476 or 916-838-0352 (Cell)

***Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority Publishes Landmark Vision for Coyote Valley***  
**Landscape Linkage Report Outlines Benefits for Wildlife, Water Resources and Climate Resilience**

**June 15, 2017, San Jose CA:** The *Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage* report articulates a vision to protect and restore areas within Coyote Valley that are critical to ensure ecological connectivity, health, and resilience to climate change. This landmark report, released by the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, outlines recommendations to create a landscape linkage for wildlife, connecting and protecting the biodiversity between the Santa Cruz and Diablo Mountain Ranges. The report also lays out a scientifically based design that integrates wildlife movement, habitat restoration, water resources, and agriculture to provide long-term ecological resilience to a changing climate.

“The area identified in this report is really a last chance landscape for wildlife movement, long-term biodiversity of the entire Bay region, and the sustainability of the communities we live in,” said Andrea Mackenzie, Open Space Authority General Manager. “It is truly visionary in that it represents a climate-smart 21st century urban-ecological infrastructure project that also could provide improvements to flood control, water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, recreation, agricultural sustainability, and carbon sequestration.”

The *Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage* report – developed by more than a dozen scientists, hydrologists, and planners - defines the essential elements for protecting and restoring a broad and resilient landscape linkage. The linkage design includes a network of restored habitats such as Laguna Seca, the County’s largest freshwater wetland, wildlife-friendly farms, and important floodplain locations that can reduce downstream flood impacts to the City of San Jose - while accommodating sustainable areas for appropriate growth and development.

Protection of this landscape is the key to maintaining long-term ecological connectivity between over 1.1 million acres of core habitat and natural areas in the Santa Cruz and Diablo Range Mountains that surround the Santa Clara Valley. \$3.5 billion in public and private investments have already been made to protect lands in this area, benefiting far-ranging wildlife species like badger and mountain lion, as well as many rare, threatened, and endangered plants and animals that rely upon these habitats.

“In the face of a changing climate, the ecological health of the region will require that native plants and animals maintain the ability to move about the landscape to adjust to the changing environmental conditions,” said Dr. James Strittholt, Executive Director of the Conservation Biology Institute.

Coyote Valley was once filled with oak woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands, but development has resulted in a loss and fragmentation of these habitats. As wildlife attempt to move through the Valley, obstacles such as roads, fencing, and fragmented lands have created perilous conditions, and their mortality rates are increasing. Despite these obstacles, recent scientific studies have documented animals living in and moving through Coyote Valley, depending on it as an essential passage between mountain ranges that provides for genetic diversity and overall ecological health.

“In today’s human-altered landscape, wildlife need more than parks and open space to maintain healthy populations and genetic diversity, they also need to be able to move safely between protected lands,” said Dr. Paul Beier, Professor of Conservation Biology and Wildlife Ecology at Northern Arizona University and an internationally recognized expert on wildlife corridors. “Places like Coyote Valley that provide corridor habitat are crucial to maintaining animal populations, not just for larger carnivores, but for all wildlife species.”

Water resources also play a pivotal role in the Coyote Valley, as storm waters spread into open spaces, reducing the risk of flooding in Coyote Creek downstream. The waters also replenish groundwater basins that supply more than half of the Santa Clara Valley’s drinking water. *The Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage* report also addresses the importance of open space as “green infrastructure” to support regional flood risk reduction efforts and long-term water supply reliability by protecting and restoring those areas that maximize nature’s benefits for people.

“The *Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage* brief will serve as an innovative guide for cities, counties, and the public to determine the best approach to on-the-ground conservation and focused investment,” said Ken Alex, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Brown. “With climate change upon us, the innovative mapping and convening tools used to develop the brief are critically important and urgently needed.”

“Coyote Valley is a precious resource we must work together to protect,” said John Laird, California’s Secretary for Natural Resources. “This linkage report offers a clear vision we can all get behind to preserve Coyote Valley for future generations of Californians.”

“I look forward to working with landowners and the environmental community to implement a vision that preserves the natural beauty of Coyote Valley for future generations,” said San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo.

To download a copy of the report or brochure, please visit our website at <http://www.openspaceauthority.org/preservation/wildlifelinkage.html>

###

***The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority*** conserves the natural environment, supports agriculture, and connects people to nature, by protecting open spaces, natural areas, and working farms and ranches for future generations. Since 1993, the Open Space Authority has protected nearly 20,000 acres of open space, preserving the region’s scenic beauty, protecting water resources and other natural capital, and providing outdoor recreation opportunities for Santa Clara County residents. Visit [openspaceauthority.org](http://openspaceauthority.org) or call 408-224-7476.