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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### ***Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority First Public Agency to Receive Land Trust Accreditation Demonstrates Strong Commitment to Public Trust and Conservation Excellence***

**August 10, 2017, San Jose CA:** The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority has achieved national recognition as the first public agency to receive Land Trust Accreditation and now stands with 389 accredited land trusts across the United States. This recognition culminates an extensive evaluation process by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission to ensure the Authority's land protection policies and programs meet rigorous quality standards. As a public agency, the Open Space Authority holds itself to a high standard and accreditation adds another level of commitment to excellence and professionalism.

"It is exciting to recognize the Open Space Authority with this distinction," said Tammara Van Ryn, Executive Director of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. "Accredited land trusts are united behind strong ethical standards ensuring the places people love will be conserved forever. Accreditation recognizes the Authority has demonstrated sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship."

"Accreditation is a mark of distinction that assures our work meets the best practices and standards for professional land conservation," said Matt Freeman, the Authority's Assistant General Manager. "Our staff takes pride in working collaboratively with landowners to protect our region's vital open spaces, and accreditation further signals to our landowner partners how seriously we take this work."

In preparation for accreditation, the Open Space Authority ensured its processes met or exceeded best Standards and Practices set forth by the Land Trust Alliance, which includes thorough evaluation of conservation values for each property acquisition and regular monitoring of protected lands to make certain that those values are conserved forever. The Authority works closely with willing landowners to purchase property outright, accept donations of land, or place a conservation easement on a property, which allows the landowner to retain ownership and enjoyment of the land while limiting development on it in perpetuity. The purchase of Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve in 2015 demonstrated the rigor of the Authority's acquisition process, which allowed it to leverage significant private and public funds towards the permanent protection of critical open space with important, sensitive natural resources.

By passing the 2014 funding measure, Measure Q, the public reinforced its acknowledgement of the Open Space Authority's commitment to excellent work and placed their trust in the Authority to spend its dollars effectively and efficiently. Receiving accreditation honors the voter's trust that the Authority will continue to operate with high standards and spend funds in the most judicious and transparent way possible.

"I appreciate and support the work of the Open Space Authority," said Janet Baird Burbach, grazing tenant and adjacent property owner to Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve. "They protect and preserve open spaces and agriculture, are good stewards of the land and resources entrusted to them, and future landowners can trust that the agency will work in partnership with them."



“As the first public agency in the nation to receive this recognition, the Open Space Authority is setting a precedent for conservation excellence that public agencies throughout the United States can follow,” said Mike Flaughner, Board Chair for the Open Space Authority.

A complete list of accredited land trusts and other entities, including more information about the process and benefits, can be found at [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org).

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*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 over 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.*

#### **About the Land Trust Accreditation Commission**

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission inspires excellence, promotes public trust and ensures permanence in the conservation of open lands by recognizing organizations that meet rigorous quality standards and strive for continuous improvement. The Commission, established in 2006 as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, is governed by a volunteer board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts. For more, visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org).

#### **About the Land Trust Alliance**

Founded in 1982, the Land Trust Alliance is a national land conservation organization that works to save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America. Based in Washington, D.C., and with several regional offices, the Alliance represents about 1,000 member land trusts nationwide. The Alliance’s leadership serves the entire land trust community—our work in the nation’s capital represents the policy priorities of land conservationists from every state; our education programs improve and empower land trusts from Maine to Alaska; and our comprehensive vision for the future of land conservation includes new partners, new programs and new priorities. Connect with us online at [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org).