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***Open Space Authority Regulates Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems (Drones) on its Public Lands
To Protect Wildlife and Foster Public Safety, Peace and Tranquility for Visitors***

San Jose, CA, November 16, 2015: In response to the growing use of drones in parks and preserves, the Open Space Authority Board of Directors has approved a policy to regulate the use of unmanned aerial systems (UAS or drones) on and above all Authority properties.

The Authority's UAS policy prohibits the launching, landing and operation of UAS on or above both Authority owned and managed lands. Unmanned aerial systems include model aircraft, drones, and quadcopters. The policy applies to all Authority properties and the airspace directly above them. It does not supersede or change the laws regarding FAA-regulated airspace.

As UAS are now less expensive, their use has become commonplace in public parklands. UAS have been detected flying in sensitive wildlife areas which can disturb, stress and harm wildlife. According to a recent study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Current Biology*, overhead drones cause a measurable stress response in wild animals. Unregulated use of UAS can disturb wildlife by interrupting feeding and sleeping patterns, disrupt nesting and mating animals, and cause direct injury and mortality. Drones can increase the risk of fire and intrude on human privacy and the quiet enjoyment of nature. The Open Space Authority's policy on UAS is designed to protect wildlife and habitat and allow visitors to enjoy nature in peace.

Field Operations Manager, Derek Neumann said, "The Authority's primary responsibility as a public agency is to protect visitors, wildlife, and natural habitat. This policy will help foster the safety of visitors and of the birds and animals that live in and travel through our preserves."

The UAS policy provides exceptions for search and rescue operations, fire protection, and law enforcement. Additionally, the policy includes a permit system to allow for the use of drones to support scientific studies, resource management and other mission-related uses.

"Implementation of this policy will include preserve signage plus instructive materials via printed and electronic media, to educate the public on the potential harmful impacts of drones to people and wildlife, as well as the responsible use of drones to further scientific research within our open space preserves." said Marc Landgraf, External Affairs Manager.

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 more than 18,000 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.