

Memorandum

Date: June 22, 2009

To: Lisa Killough, Director
Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department

From: David Zippin, Ph.D., Project Manager, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan

Subject: **Rancho San Vicente Acquisition Proposal**

Santa Clara County is nearing completion of the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan. This effort, began in 2005, will provide 50-year state and federal endangered species permits. Permits will be issued to the County, three cities (San Jose, Gilroy, and Morgan Hill), the Santa Clara Valley Water District, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, and California State Parks. These permits are essential to the continued growth of the County and the continued operations of its infrastructure. The success of the plan depends on implementation of its conservation strategy. The largest component of this strategy is the creation of a 48,000-acre Habitat Plan Reserve System (Reserve System). This memo summarizes the importance of the proposed San Vicente Ranch acquisition for this strategy.

- Rancho San Vicente provides the only landscape linkage between two large blocks of open space in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Specifically, it links Almaden Quicksilver County Park (and extensive open space to the northwest) with Calero County Parks (and extensive open space to the south). Securing this linkage is a requirement of the Habitat Plan.
- The site supports extensive serpentine grassland (280 acres), serpentine chaparral (42 acres), blue oak woodland (100 acres), Valley oak woodland (44 acres), and riparian woodland (7 acres). Large stands of Valley oak woodland are rare in the Santa Cruz Mountains.
- The site supports habitat for at least 5 wildlife species covered by the Habitat Plan:
 - Bay checkerspot butterfly (260 acres),
 - California red-legged frog and California tiger salamander (upland habitat),
 - Western burrowing owl and golden eagle (foraging and overwintering habitat).
- The site supports known populations of at least 4 plants covered by the Habitat Plan:
 - Santa Clara Valley dudleya,
 - most beautiful jewelflower and smooth lessingia, and
 - Mt. Hamilton thistle. The site supports some of the only known populations of Mt. Hamilton thistle in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

If you have any questions about this memo, please contact me at 510-433-8962 ext. 8969.