Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch County Park is a spectacular 4,448-acre site located in Southern Santa Clara County, and encompasses a variety of rural landscapes from valley floor and hillside ranchland, to oak woodlands, to 360-degree ridgeline vistas, to the lakeside setting of Coyote Lake. The master plan was initiated after the acquisition of the Harvey Bear and Mendoza Ranches, which more than quintupled the size of the original Coyote Lake County Park. The park is now the second largest in the Santa Clara County Parks system.

The Master Plan process has been undertaken over a period of 2-1/2 years with the involvement of numerous participants: community residents, local, state and federal agency representatives responsible for park and lake management, and Parks Department staff. Several groups provided input throughout the process, including a 13-member citizens advisory Task Force, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the County Board of Supervisors.

Through this process, a master plan has emerged that strives to provide a diversity of recreational experiences for Santa Clara County residents while retaining the park’s spectacular ranchland character and enhancing natural and cultural resources. An Environmental Impact Report and Natural Resources Management Plan were prepared concurrently with the Master Plan to provide a comprehensive view of long-term (20-year) planning, management and operations.

MASTER PLAN PROGRAM ELEMENTS BY AREA

The Master Plan proposed uses are divided into four distinct areas of the park, based on each area’s unique character, environmental conditions, and ease of access. These four areas are:

- Lakeside
- Mendoza Ranch
- Slopes and Ridge
- West Flat

Following are descriptions and proposed uses for each area.
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*Lakeside Area*
This is the area of the park currently open to the public and adjacent to Coyote Lake. Existing lake-oriented recreational activities (boating, camping, fishing, and hiking) are proposed to continue, with enhancements:

- **Campground Improvements and Expansion**, including renovation to existing restrooms to include showers, and reduction in campground density with replacement of camp spaces on an adjacent site.
- **Day Use and Picnic Improvements**, including a new group picnic area, self-launch areas for kayaks and small non-motorized boats, and trail improvements.
- **Entrance Area Improvements**, including improvements to the park visitor center and maintenance facility.
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**Mendoza Ranch Area**
Located generally between the western ridgeline and Roop Road at the southeastern end of the park, the Mendoza Ranch area contains some of the most beautiful and pristine areas of the park, and some of the best stands of native grassland. With the exception of the area around the existing ranch house and barn, the Mendoza Ranch area is proposed to remain essentially undeveloped, accessible only by trails and from a single staging area. Proposed improvements include the following:

- **Trails and Day Use Improvements**, including multi-use and loop trails, staging area, regional trail connections, family picnic sites and hang gliding/paragliding launch and landing sites (accessible by trail only).
- **Youth Facilities**, including an environmental education center and associated youth campground.
- **Equestrian Camping**, by special use permit.
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Slopes and Ridge Area
The slopes and ridges run the entire length of the park from the northwest to the southeast, contain spectacular vistas in all directions, and comprise the most visible area of the park from the Santa Clara Valley. Given the steep topography and sensitive environmental conditions, recreational facilities are limited to trails and associated improvements.

- Trail and Day Use Improvements, including multiple trails and regional trail connections, emergency and service vehicle access, and a hang-gliding launch site for expert pilots only, accessible by trail.
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**West Flat Area**
The West Flat Area, with access from San Martin Avenue, has the greatest potential for more active recreational features given its relatively flat topography, history of cultivation, and proximity to population centers. The West Flat Area will serve both as a primary staging area with access to trails that connect to all park areas, as well as its own diverse recreational activity zone.

- **Golf Course**, an 18-hole environmental model golf course with clubhouse. In addition to its recreational value, the golf course rough areas and buffer zones are proposed restoration areas for native plant communities and habitats.
- **Equestrian/Agricultural Education Center**, centered on the existing barns and corrals, this center would serve as the primary equestrian staging area for the park, would be suitable for equestrian special events, and could be used for agricultural education by
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local groups such as 4H and FFA. The center also includes a proposed multi-use covered arena that could be used for special equestrian, agricultural, or other cultural events.

- **Events Pavilion**, a special events center with indoor and outdoor spaces for reservable group use.
- **Historic Area**, centered on the Martin Murphy homesite and ranch era orchard.
- **Day Use Facilities**, including a youth fishing pond, dog off-leash area, family and group picnic area, irrigated turf areas, and bicycle park.
- **Trails and Trail Access**, including multi-use trails, staging areas, and access to regional trails.
- **Operations Facilities**, including a satellite ranger office and maintenance facility.

**HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Protection of historic and cultural resources is proposed for all areas of the park, as well as implementation of the Natural Resources Management Plan that was prepared concurrently with the Master Plan.

**PARK TRAILS PLAN**

Integral to the master plan is the series of existing and proposed trails that provide access to a diversity of settings and park experiences, and that link the various areas of the park to each other and to regional trail corridors. Regional trail corridors within or adjacent to the park include the Bay Area Ridge Trail, Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, Benito-Clara Trail, and San Martin connecting trails. The park trails plan provides connections to these trails and provides trail segments where these trail alignments cross the park. A series of street-adjacent trails are also proposed leading to controlled park entrances where the park is
adjacent to public roadways. Within the park, existing ranch roads are proposed to be converted to multi-use trails where feasible. In some areas, due to topography and/or sensitive environmental conditions, ranch roads are proposed to be abandoned (and restored to adjacent native conditions), with trails proposed to be realigned to more suitable conditions. Of the 18.7 miles of existing ranch roads within the park, 10.4 miles will be retained for trail use, and 8.3 miles will be abandoned and realigned. There are a total of 30 miles of trails proposed for the park: 21 miles of multi-use trails (equestrian, bicycle and pedestrian use), 7.2 miles of pedestrian only trails, and 1.75 miles of bicycle/pedestrian trails. Where feasible, taking into account topography and other site conditions, some multi-use trails will also be accessible to horse-driven carts by permit.

**Financial Implications**

Capital costs for completion of all proposed park improvements is estimated at between $25.3 and $33.9 million. This range of costs is based on the conceptual nature of the plan. More detailed construction cost estimates will be developed with each design and construction phase. Projected annual permanent staff costs for operations are estimated to be about $1.24 million at plan buildout. This compares to a “baseline” of existing park permanent staff operating costs of about $644,000 annually. Future projected staff operations costs do not include the golf course or events pavilion which are assumed to be operated by contract. Projected annual park net revenues are estimated at $410,000 annually at buildout. This assumes that construction of the golf course and events pavilion are funded through revenue bonds, with a portion of the gross revenues used to pay the bond debt. This estimated revenue equals about 33 percent of the project park staff operations cost and is comparable to ratios at similar other County parks in Santa Clara County. (Operations estimates do not include materials and equipment.) 31-year cumulative cash flow for the golf course and events pavilion is estimated at $14.4 million, not including facility reinvestment due to depreciation.

**Phasing**

The Master Plan is intended to be implemented in phases over the next 20 years based on available funding, along with anticipated long-term recreational demand. The phasing plan provides a general direction for implementation, but flexibility will be needed to accommo-
date future unknown conditions, including available funding. While 3 phases are shown in the Master Plan, several sub-phases may be needed.

**Phase 1** projects focus on basic staging area and trail improvements that are needed to open the new areas of the park to the public, along with renovation of the existing Coyote Lake campground. Phase 1 projects should be completed within 3 years of Master Plan approval. (New areas of the park may be opened to the public prior to full completion of phase 1 projects.) Phase 1 construction costs are estimated at $1.2 million.

**Phase 2** projects focus on the recreational facilities in the West Flat Area, and may be completed within 3-10 years of Master Plan approval. Phase 2 construction costs are estimated at $23-30 million.

**Phase 3** focuses on projects that may have a longer timeline due to funding availability or where implementation should be based on future demand that is not yet demonstrated. Phase 3 projects include the Environmental Education Center and youth campground (implementation may be advanced if funding becomes available) and a new campground in the Lakeside Area. Phase 3 implementation may occur within 10-20 years of Master Plan approval. Phase 3 costs are estimated at $1,080,000-2,652,500.

The phasing plan should be reviewed annually as part of the Park’s annual budget review.

**Design Guidelines**

The Design Guidelines chapter of the Master Plan provides guidance so that the long term vision of maintaining and enhancing the park’s rural ranchland character is incorporated into each phase of implementation. Recommendations are included for park entrances, architecture, fencing and gates, roads, staging and parking areas, trails, the golf course, planting, and signage.

**Next Steps**

Following completion and approval of the Master Plan, Natural Resources Management Plan, and Environmental Impact Report, many steps remain for park planning, design and operations. First and foremost is completion of those aspects of Phase 1 work that are needed to
open the expanded park area to the public. Other steps include design development and “project-level” environmental review, along with finalizing financing and operations strategies for Phase 2 projects. Ongoing natural resource management and monitoring, along with periodic master plan reviews and updates, will assure that Coyote Lake–Harvey Bear Ranch Park achieves the goals of meeting long-term recreational needs of Santa Clara County residents, preserving the site’s historic ranchland character, and enhancing valued natural resources.
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