
R-23-36
Meeting 23-06
March 23, 2023

AGENDA ITEM #2

To: Board of Directors
Open Space Authority

From: Andrea Mackenzie
General Manager

SUBJECT

Informational Item: Update on the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan and Related Projects in Coyote Valley

REVENUE/COST

There is no direct cost associated with this informational item. Budget items for activities in the first half of calendar year 2023 related to the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan were approved in the Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Budget and Annual Work Plan, with an approved amount of \$1.55 million. Initial estimates for planning and environmental review indicate a total multiyear project cost of up to \$5.5 million. Approximately \$1.3 million in outside funding has been secured to-date for the master plan, including contributions from Santa Clara County Parks and grants from the California Wildlife Conservation Board and California Department of Water Resources. Staff continue to seek additional funding sources to support planning work.

BACKGROUND

Over the past five years, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (Authority) and its partners, the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), and the City of San José have permanently protected over 1,500 acres of valley floor land in Coyote Valley. In 2021, work officially began on the Authority-led Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan (CVCAMP), a science-based and community-shaped planning process that will create a comprehensive vision for the restoration, use, and stewardship of these newly protected lands.

In 2022, the Authority onboarded a multi-disciplinary consultant team led by the firm SWCA Environmental Planning (SWCA) to work on the CVCAMP. The team has broken down the project into nine planning phases, including required environmental review, to be completed by 2027. Phase 1: Project Start-Up was completed in 2022 and the project team is currently working on Phase 2: Understanding Coyote Valley, which is focused on completing the technical studies of existing conditions needed before more detailed planning and design work can begin. Subsequent phases of work, beginning later this year, will focus on creating a comprehensive vision for the future of Coyote Valley's conserved lands. All phases of the project will include robust public engagement. SWCA, its engagement subconsultant, Civic Edge, and the firm Scansion (hired by the Authority in 2020 as an engagement advisor) are working collaboratively with Authority staff to create meaningful, thoughtful, and inclusive opportunities for the public to help plan the future of Coyote Valley's conserved lands.

In addition to the CVCAMP, a variety of other projects and studies in Coyote Valley are being planned or underway. These include the following projects that Authority staff are either leading or participating in as project team members:

- **North Laguna Seca “Steppingstone” Project:** An Authority-led investigation of near-term, strategic changes to water resource-related infrastructure at Laguna Seca that pilot improved operations in support of enhanced ecological function. This study is currently being scoped by the Authority’s Natural Resources Department.
- **Tulare Meadows Groundwater Well Sustainability Study:** A join-effort between the Authority, POST, and the City of San José studying the operations of City-owned groundwater wells on the Tulare Meadows property, as required by the property’s Conservation Easement. This study is currently being scoped by the Authority’s Natural Resources Department.
- **Monterey Road Wildlife Crossing Feasibility Study:** A POST-led study of wildlife crossing infrastructure improvements for Monterey Road, north of Bailey Avenue.
- **North Coyote Valley Road Ecology Study:** A POST-led study conducted with Pathways for Wildlife that explores and characterizes the interactions between wildlife and roadways in Coyote Valley.
- **Coyote Valley Climate Resilience Credits Program:** A POST-led study analyzing the potential to establish a program that captures the multiple benefits resulting from the conservation and restoration of natural lands and other essential nature-based solutions by selling credits that generate revenue to support additional acquisition and restoration activities.

Authority staff are also coordinating with the City of San José on the following projects:

- **Coyote Valley Corridor Study:** A City of San José-led study of existing and potential new uses for the properties located along the east side of Monterey Road in Coyote Valley, which are compatible with or in direct support of the region’s agriculture and open space resources.
- **Metcalf - San José B HVDC Project:** A California Independent System Operator (CAISO) project to construct a high-voltage direct current (HVDC) electric power transmission line to the Metcalf Energy Center in Coyote Valley.

DISCUSSION

In spring 2023, the pace of planning and public engagement work related to the CVCAMP and related projects (described above) will accelerate. In anticipation of this, Authority staff will share an update on the CVCAMP, its overall project timeline, and recent and upcoming project milestones. In addition, staff will share a high-level overview and update on related projects and studies taking place in Coyote Valley.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes only and does not require Board action.

Prepared by:

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