

MEDIA ALERT

EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT: PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION



Park District Purchases Picturesque 76-Acre Property in Marsh Creek Watershed

Sept. 29, 2016 - The East Bay Regional Park District, in cooperation with the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy, has purchased a 76-acre former ranch on the eastern slopes of Mt. Diablo.

The parcel, known as the Hanson Hills property, will become part of the future Deer Valley Regional Park, extending the park's southern boundary to Marsh Creek Road. The Park District purchased the land from Save Mount Diablo for \$730,000, its appraised fair market value. East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy contributed \$547,500 toward the cost and funds from Measure WW covered the remainder.

"This beautiful property will be a tremendous asset for generations of East Bay residents," said Park District Board Member Diane Burgis, whose ward includes the Hanson Hills property. "It's also a critical part of the Marsh Creek watershed. We're thrilled to be able to protect this ecologically sensitive area forever."

The property encompasses canyons and ridges covered with blue-oak forests and native grasslands, as well as a seasonal stream that drains to Marsh Creek. The ridgetops provide panoramic views of Mt. Diablo, the Marsh Creek corridor and Morgan Territory Regional Preserve. It's also home to eagles, hawks, coyotes, mountain lions, deer, foxes and other species. The acquisition secures important land links that provide habitat for a number of special status species including the California red-legged frog and Alameda whipsnake.

The acquisition represents an important piece in long-term efforts to preserve land around Mount Diablo. Save Mount Diablo acquired the property from the Hanson Family in April, 2014. The Hanson children, now all in their 80s, remember fishing for steelhead with their grandfather in Marsh Creek, just across the road, and camping out on warm nights atop the tallest hill. It was important to the family that the land they love so dearly be protected forever.

Ted Clement, executive director of Save Mount Diablo, speaks to the importance of partnerships in conserving land in the region. Says Clement: "We are thrilled to help ensure the permanent protection of 76-acre Hanson Hills through our partnerships with the East Bay Regional Park District and the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy. With this transaction not only have we preserved essential wildlife habitat and ensured the protection of a strategic parcel that can later support outdoor public recreation and education, but we have also generated funds to protect more lands around Mount Diablo."

“This acquisition is another positive step for conservation in east Contra Costa County,” said Salvatore Evola, chair of the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy board. “It is valuable to have a local land trust, the East Bay Regional Park District and the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy working together to conserve valuable landscapes for species while also providing park and recreation opportunities for the growing population.”

The land will remain closed to the public (“land banked”) until the Deer Valley Regional Park Land Use Plan is completed.

Save Mount Diablo is a non-profit 501(c)(3) conservation organization, which has been preserving lands on and around Mount Diablo and educating the public to the mountain's natural values since 1971. Preserved lands have increased from 6,788 acres in one park to more than 110,000 acres in more than 40 parks and preserves. Save Mount Diablo continues to preserve, defend and restore the remainder of the mountain for people and wildlife to enjoy. Contact: Save Mount Diablo, telephone: (925) 947-3535, fax: (925) 947-0642, 1901 Olympic Blvd., Suite 320, Walnut Creek, CA 94596; www.SaveMountDiablo.org

The East Bay Regional Park District is a system of beautiful public parks and trails in Alameda and Contra Costa counties east of San Francisco Bay, established in 1934. The system comprises 120,700 acres in 65 parks including over 1,250 miles of trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding and nature learning.

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