



UNDERSTANDING COYOTE VALLEY EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY REPORT



**COYOTE
VALLEY**

CONSERVATION AREAS
MASTER PLAN

June 2024



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EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY REPORT

June 2024

A background report for the:



Prepared for:



Prepared by:



In association with:

cbec eco-engineering
Civic Edge Consulting
Greene Economics
McBain Associates
WRA Environmental Consultants
W-Trans



View of Coyote Valley looking southeast from Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, credit: Stephen Joseph

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This Report was prepared by SWCA Environmental Consultants in collaboration with OSA and in association with the following subconsultants: cbec eco-engineering, Civic Edge Consulting, Greene Economics, McBain Associates, WRA Environmental Consultants, W-Trans.

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Coyote, credit: David Mauk

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View of Coyote Valley and a snow-capped Mt. Hamilton looking east from Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, credit: Nick Perry

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View of Coyote Valley looking east toward Loma Prieta from Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve, credit: Nick Perry




EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Coyote Valley is a remarkable natural and rural landscape located between the cities of San José and Morgan Hill in Santa Clara County, California. Located at the narrowest point between the Santa Cruz Mountains to the west and the Diablo Range to the east, the valley serves as a critical landscape linkage for the region's wildlife, connecting over 1.1 million acres of prime habitat in the mountain ranges. The valley itself is notable for its unique valley floor habitats, wildlife, scenic beauty, recreational areas, farmland, and water resources.

The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (OSA), Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), City of San José (City), and other partnering agencies are currently creating the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan (CVCAMP), a science-based and community-informed plan focused on the future restoration and use of over 1,500 acres of recently protected valley floor lands in North and Mid-Coyote Valley. In addition to site planning the use and restoration of these protected lands, CVCAMP is also studying the role they play within the context of the larger 17,200-acre Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area established by the State of California through State Assembly Bill (AB) 948 in 2019.

CVCAMP involves multiple assessments and planning/design phases, which will lead to the publication of a master plan document and subsequent environmental review over an approximately five-year time frame (see *Figure 1: Master Plan Process & Schedule*). This existing conditions report draws a conclusion to the initial two CVCAMP planning phases and presents a high-level summary of the existing knowledge base related to Coyote Valley's conserved lands from recent reports and studies, with a focus on those completed in 2023 to 2024 by the project team. This Report is organized by topic areas that correspond with the 10 goals defined for CVCAMP.

These topic areas are:

-  Wildlife Habitat & Ecological Connectivity
-  Water Resources
-  Public Health & Access
-  Community Engagement
-  Cultural Heritage & Historic Resources
-  Changing Climate
-  Local Agriculture
-  Local Economy
-  Transportation
-  Holistic Vision

The studies summarized in this Report provide data and findings that further illuminate Coyote Valley's great potential to serve as natural infrastructure for the benefit of wildlife and people. These studies confirm there is an array of existing natural and cultural resources in Coyote Valley, and that these resources can be restored to enhance the underlying natural processes of the valley while supporting local agriculture, public health, and the resilience of local communities. CVCAMP is the key to unlocking all of this potential, with a focus on charting the best path forward for enhancing and restoring the valley's ability to function as a landscape linkage for wildlife and as a resilient natural floodplain.

This Report sets the stage for future phases in the planning process by providing a baseline of information that will inform a future vision for Coyote Valley's protected lands and projects or activities that are consistent with the vision. The CVCAMP team is committed to seeking the public's input throughout the planning process. To that end, readers are invited to consider this Report's findings and share your thoughts on the future of Coyote Valley's protected lands. Please contact the CVCAMP team by email at cvcamp@openspaceauthority.org.



California poppy fields above Laguna Seca, credit: Nick Perry

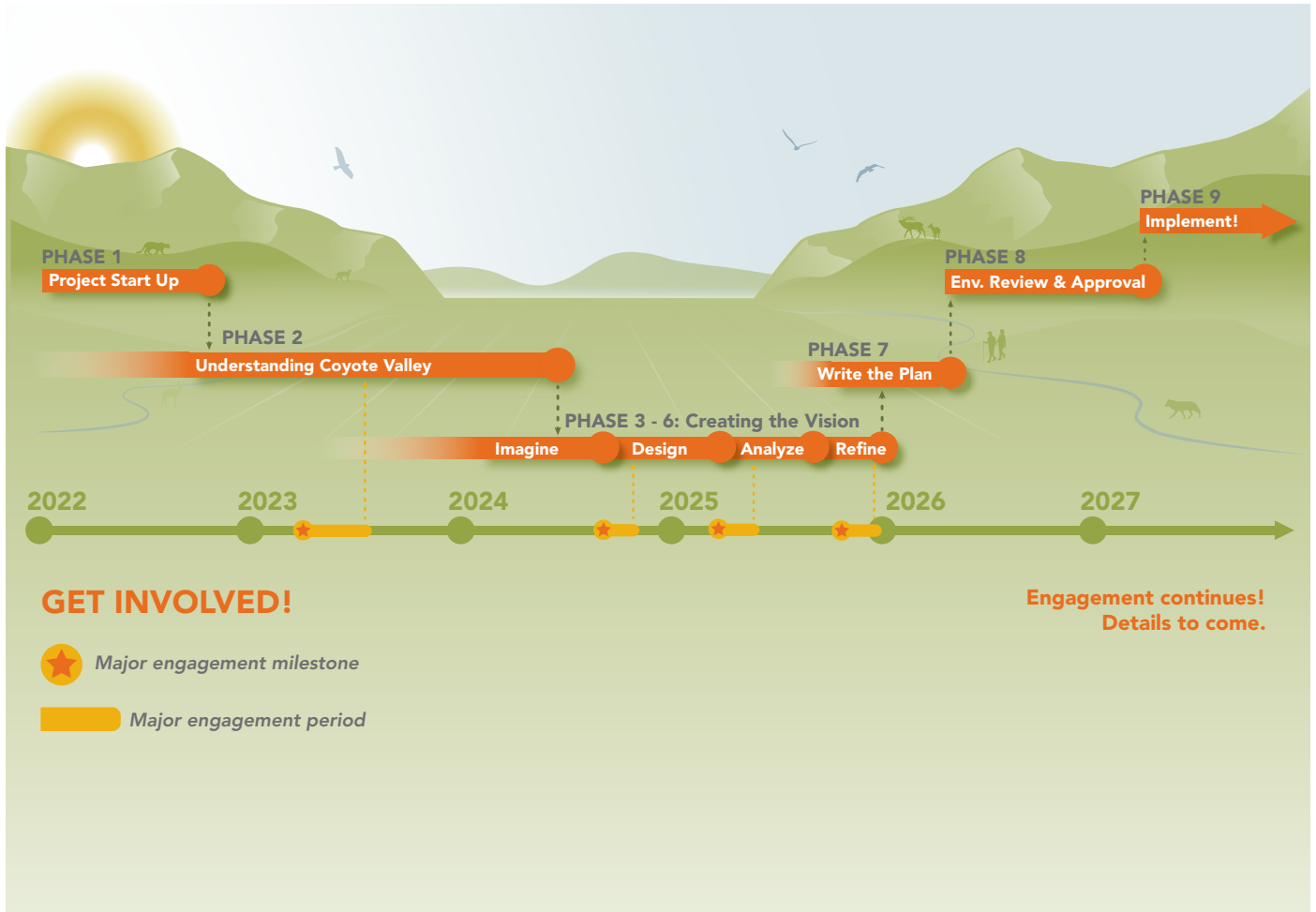


Figure 1: Master Plan Process & Schedule



View of Coyote Valley looking southeast from Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, credit: Stephen Joseph



Sunrise over Laguna Seca, credit: *Derek Neumann*

4 Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Coyote Valley is a rural and natural area located at the southern edge of San José in Santa Clara County, California. Approximately seven miles long and two miles wide, Coyote Valley is defined by the Diablo Range to the east, the Santa Cruz Mountains to the west, the Santa Teresa Hills to the north, and the city of Morgan Hill to the south. Coyote Valley is remarkable for the role it plays in connecting the ecosystems of the Santa Cruz Mountains with the rest of California, as well as its scenic beauty, rich biodiversity, prime farmland, and unique water resources. In a region where most valley floor lands are developed, Coyote Valley's largely undeveloped valley floor serves as important natural infrastructure—that is, natural features and systems that benefit both human and natural communities. Coyote Valley's location, within a short distance of nearly two million residents living in Santa Clara County and working in the job centers of Silicon Valley, means many people can benefit from and participate in the restoration of this vital landscape.

Coyote Valley is where the Santa Cruz Mountains and Diablo Range are closest together, making it a critical area for wildlife to move between over 1.1 million acres of habitat in the ranges according to their natural home range movements, migration, and dispersal patterns and in response to extreme weather events, including flooding, wildfires, drought, and extreme temperatures. It also contains the largest remaining undeveloped floodplain in San José, providing essential flood risk reduction, clean water supply, and water quality benefits. These two qualities—Coyote Valley's role as a landscape linkage for wildlife and the myriad benefits of its natural floodplain—are the two primary conservation values that have driven Coyote Valley's protection.

The Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan (CVCAMP) is a multi-phased planning project that will create a roadmap to conserve and restore a landscape of regional, state, and even national significance. CVCAMP is managed by the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (OSA) in close partnership with the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and City of San José. Since 2019, OSA, POST, and the City of San José have worked together to permanently protect over 1,500 acres of valley floor land. Although CVCAMP is expected to include analysis and recommendations that extend beyond these over 1,500 acres, detailed site planning will be limited to an area that encompasses these recently protected valley floor lands (see *Figure 2: Existing Conserved Lands*).

To help develop CVCAMP, OSA is working with a team of consultants with a wide variety of expertise led by the firm SWCA Environmental Consultants (Consultant Team). The planning process takes a holistic approach that considers the interactions among key resource areas associated with CVCAMP (described as “topic areas” in this Report). Holistic planning seeks to incorporate scientific and technical expertise with key stakeholder perspectives, which is particularly important for Coyote Valley given the many diverse communities who are connected to and care about this landscape. By considering multiple perspectives and anticipating interactions among topic areas, the holistic approach will promote long-term sustainability of the land. For example, the report discusses how public access may impact wildlife habitat and water resources, and vice versa.

Understanding Coyote Valley (hereafter referred to as the Report) is the existing conditions summary report for CVCAMP. The Report includes information and data collected and analyzed in the first two phases of the master planning process. This includes studies on rare and unique wildlife species; wildlife habitat and ecological connectivity; surface and groundwater resources; public access, including trails; cultural resources and cultural heritage sites; planning for climate change; agriculture and developing a successful working landscape; integrating land use in Coyote Valley (particularly agriculture) with the local economy; and aligning the public transportation network with Coyote Valley’s conservation values.

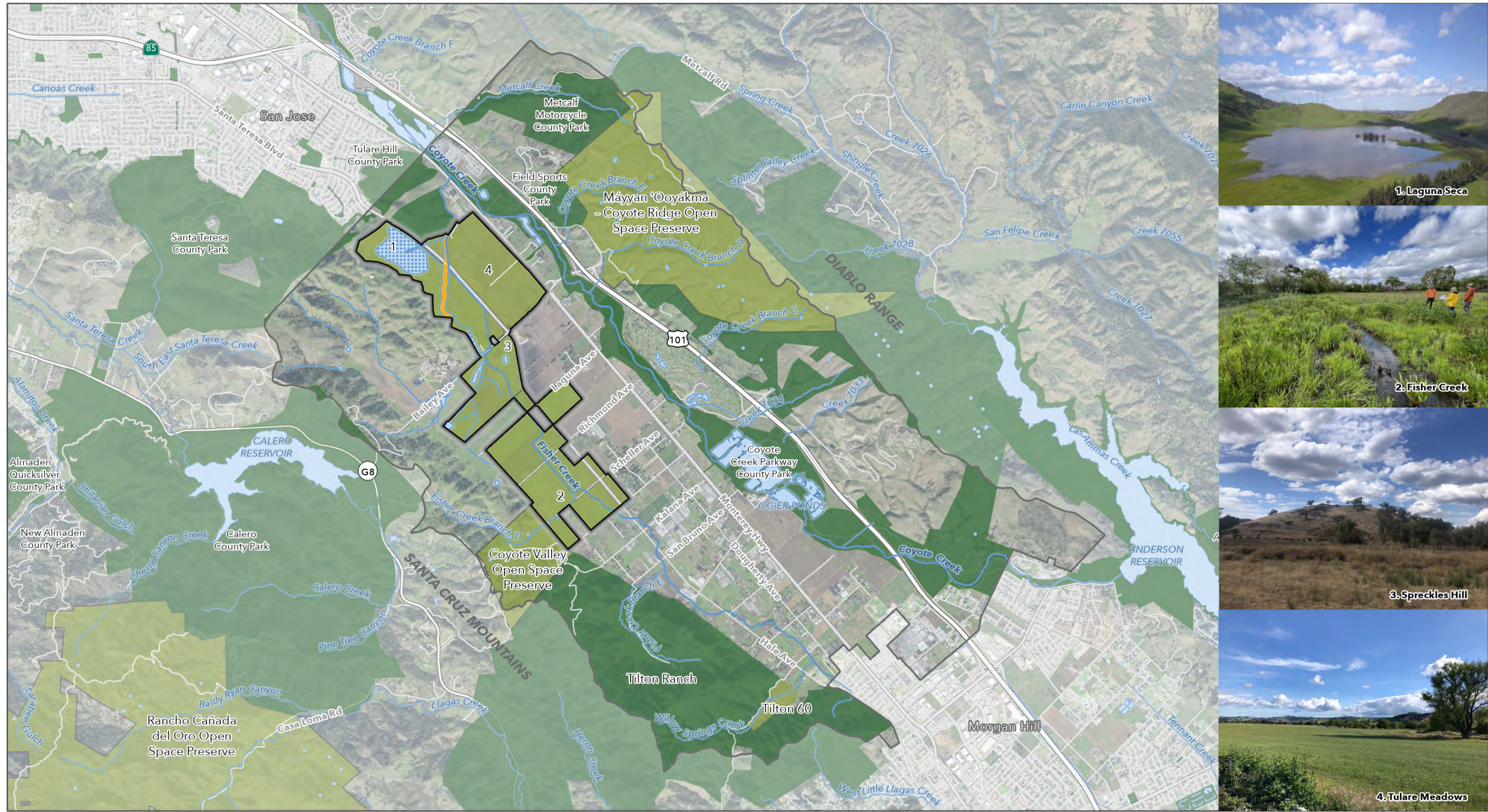
The intent of this Report is to provide a high-level summary for each topic area. It is not the intent of this Report to provide extensive detail about any particular study. For readers who would like more detailed information, a summary of each individual study is available in the Report appendix. These studies and assessments were completed with

extensive collaboration between the Consultant Team, OSA, POST, the City of San José, and other project partners, including Santa Clara County Parks and the Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water). The Report also incorporates the insights gained from initial community outreach activities.

This Report provides the project team, local stakeholders, and community members with a detailed understanding of the existing resources, systems, and functionality of the landscape of Coyote Valley. These findings will directly inform the visioning and conceptual design process in upcoming phases of the project, prior to the writing of the master plan document. The completion of this Report marks a major milestone in the CVCAMP process and sets the stage for creating a long-term vision for the restoration and enhancement of this vital landscape.



Coyote Valley from the Santa Cruz Mountain foothills, *credit: Ron Horii*



1. Laguna Seca



2. Fisher Creek



3. Spreckles Hill



4. Tulare Meadows

- Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area*
- CVCAMP Properties
- Open Space Authority Preserve Boundary
- Other Protected Lands
- Laguna Seca Dam
- Laguna Seca

*As defined by the State of California via AB948
CVCAMP property boundaries are approximate and do not include public roadways that bisect the properties.
Santa Clara County, CA NAD 1983 UTM Zone 10N37.1901°N 121.6946°W

Figure 2: Existing Conserved Lands

0 2,000 4,000 Feet

0 580 1,160 Meters

1:55,000

N

Credits: Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

Figure 2: Existing Conserved Lands



April 4, 1917 view of Laguna Seca wetland looking south as it is burned and drained for agricultural uses, *credit: Valley Water*

HISTORY AND PLANNING CONTEXT

For tens of thousands of years, the Native peoples of Coyote Valley were stewards of a bountiful landscape where a complex tapestry of freshwater wetlands, grassland, oak savannas, and riparian woodlands supported an exceptionally diverse ecosystem (see *Figure 3: Coyote Valley Historic Ecology*). Spanish colonization in the eighteenth century set in motion a series of dramatic changes to Coyote Valley. Missions were established to the north and south and the trail connecting them, El Camino Real, ran through Coyote Valley along what is now Monterey Road. Most Native peoples were forced to relocate to the missions, initiating a long period of upheaval that left Tribal populations decimated, scattered, and disenfranchised. Their descendants still live in the region today, and multiple local Tribal groups recognize Coyote Valley as part of their traditional territory and are helping shape its future.

After Mexico's independence from Spain, most of Coyote Valley became part of the 20,000-acre Rancho Laguna Seca, named after Laguna Seca ("Dry Lake"), the approximately 1,000-acre wetland that historically existed at the northern edge of Coyote Valley. During the Mexican period, the region's economy revolved around raising cattle, and large, free-range herds roamed throughout Coyote Valley. Following annexation

of California into the United States and the Gold Rush, the village of Coyote formed around a stagecoach stop on Monterey Road, with rail service coming in 1868. The entire Santa Clara Valley became a national center of fruit growing and gained the moniker, "Valley of Heart's Delight." As part of this agricultural expansion, Coyote Valley's Laguna Seca was drained in 1916 and the natural habitats of the valley floor were largely replaced with cultivated land.

After World War II, Santa Clara Valley was the site of a technological boom and became known as "Silicon Valley." Economic activity fueled the suburban sprawl that rapidly filled Santa Clara Valley to the north with homes, shopping centers, office parks, and freeways. For decades, Coyote Valley was threatened by a similar fate. However, land use regulations reserved the area for large-scale master planned developments that, due to both environmental advocacy and economic downturns, mostly never came to fruition. The creation of Santa Clara County Park's Coyote Creek Parkway in the 1960s protected much of the lands on either side of Coyote Creek on the eastern edge of the valley. Although land speculation resulted in the removal of most intensive agricultural uses like orchards, Coyote Valley largely retained its rural atmosphere.



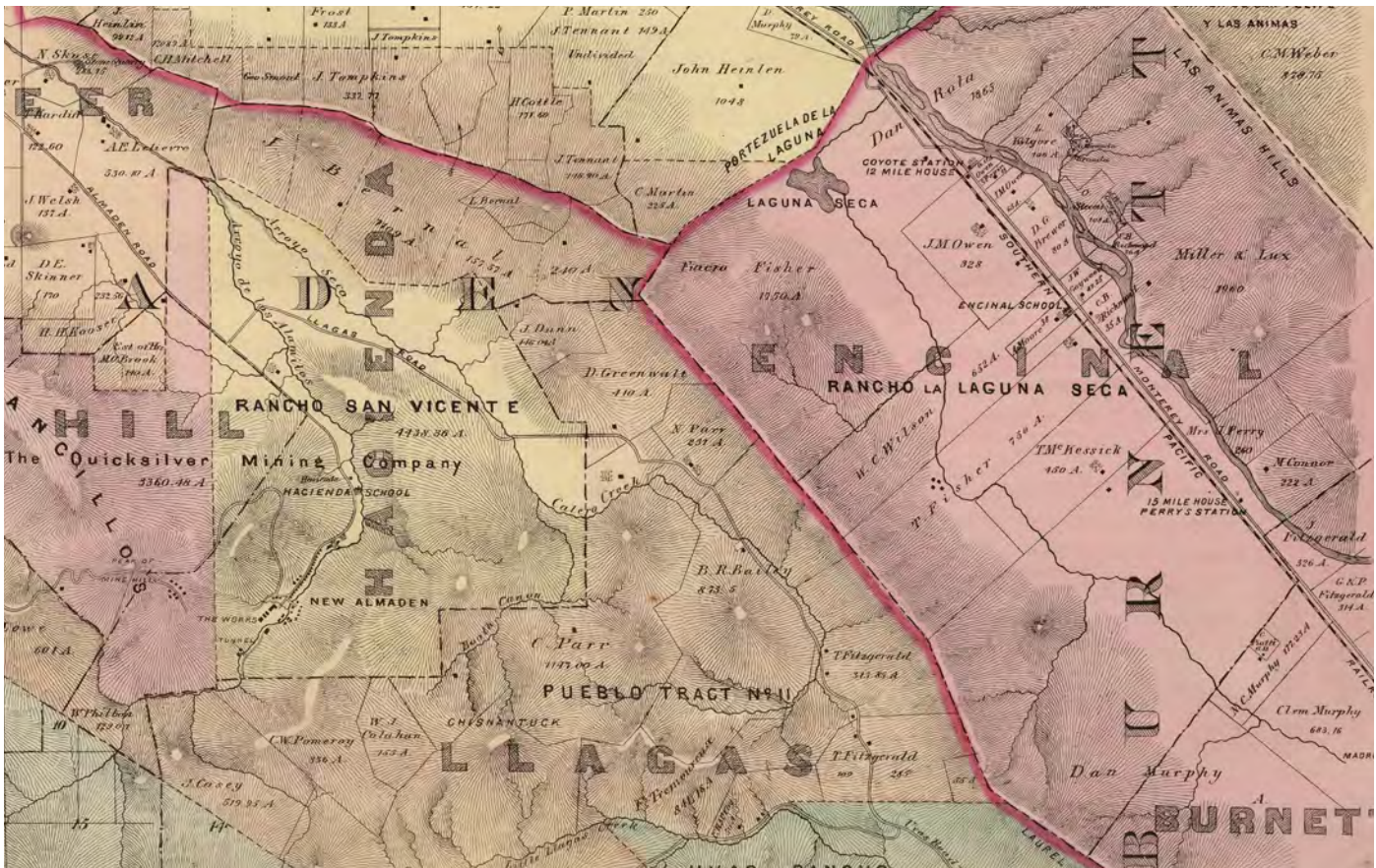
June 21, 1919 colorized photo of onion seed and sugar-beets planted in the drained Laguna Seca, credit: Valley Water

During the latter part of the twentieth century, a movement to protect Coyote Valley for its many conservation values began and continues to build momentum. In September 2019, the State of California passed State Assembly Bill (AB) 948, which officially designated Coyote Valley as a landscape of statewide significance and authorized OSA to establish and administer the Coyote Valley Conservation Program. In November 2019, a partnership among OSA, POST, and the City of San José resulted in the creation of the 953-acre North Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area on land previously slated for industrial development.

Between 2020 and the present, an additional 568 acres along the course of Fisher Creek were protected, leading to the creation of the Mid-Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area. In 2021 the City of San José City Council voted to redesignate most of Coyote Valley as open space and agricultural land in its General Plan, further protecting the surrounding areas from development. This redesignation was done

as part of the General Plan’s four year review and involved extensive outreach and oversight by the Envision San José 2040 Task Force and City Council.

A conservation easement—a legal agreement that permanently limits land uses to protect its conservation values—was placed on the City of San José-owned portion of the North Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area when it was purchased. This easement defines the primary conservation values of the property as wildlife habitat, wildlife connectivity, and water resources and prohibits and/or regulates more intensive uses of the land. Similar conservation easements will be placed on other CVCAMP lands currently owned by POST to be transferred to the OSA. The ongoing conservation of these lands has unlocked opportunities to embark on CVCAMP and implement a vision to protect and restore Coyote Valley’s important natural and cultural resources, creating a landscape of regional, state, and national significance.



1876 map of Coyote Valley showing Rancho La Laguna Seca, credit David Rumsey Map Collection

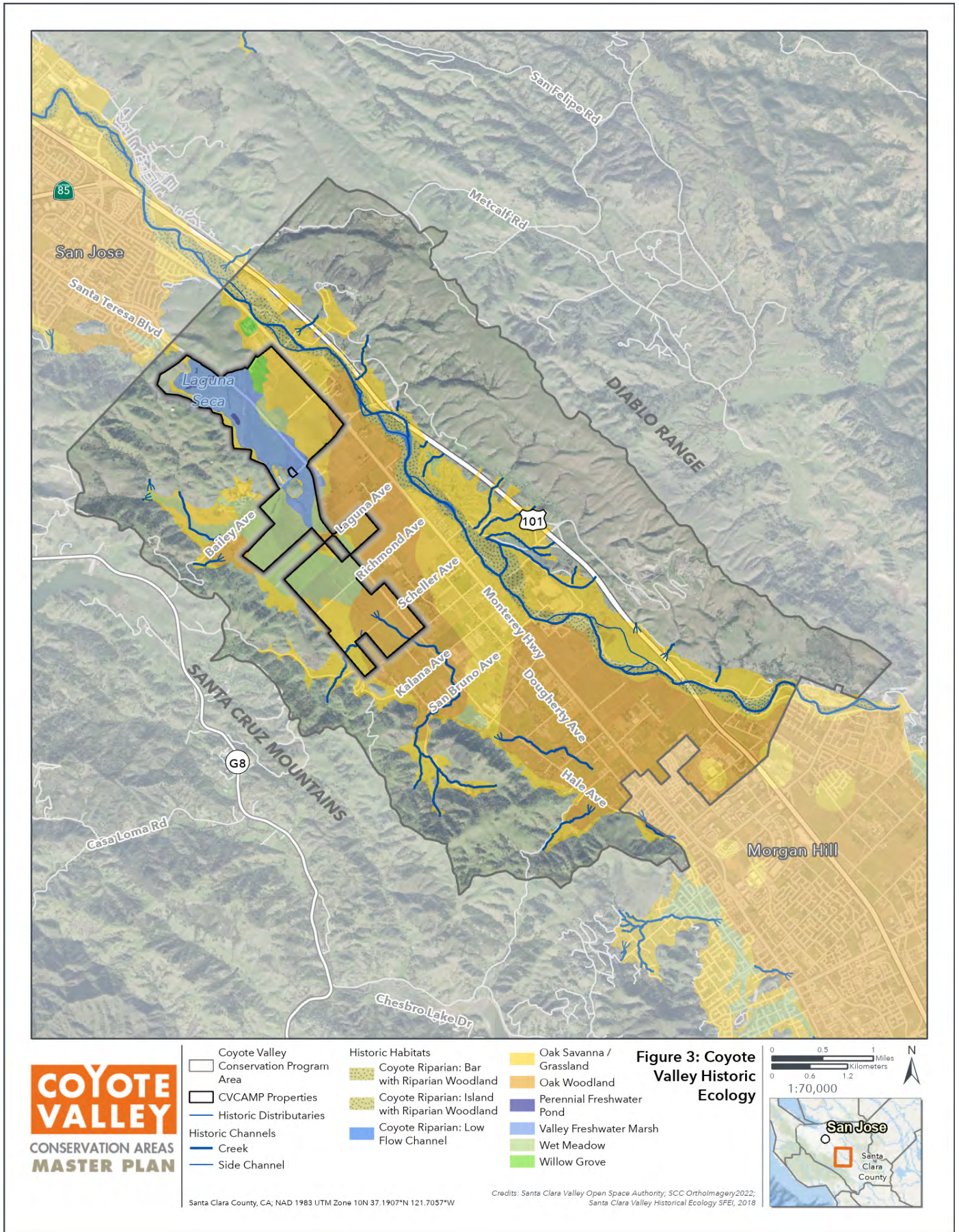




Figure 3: Coyote Valley Historic Ecology


GOALS AND TOPIC AREAS

This Report offers a high-level summary of existing conditions in Coyote Valley, organized by topic areas that correspond with the 10 CVCAMP goals defined by the project team. For each topic area, key findings are shared that synthesize review of past work with new information gathered during the second phase of CVCAMP. More detail for each study and assessment conducted during the second phase is included in Appendix A of this Report.

The goal language here will continue to be refined as planning progresses:


 **Enhance Wildlife Habitat and Ecological Connectivity:** Realize Coyote Valley's irreplaceable role as one of the region's last undeveloped valley floors and as a "last chance" landscape linkage between the Santa Cruz Mountains and Diablo Range by restoring diverse habitats, reestablishing safe movement corridors across the landscape for species threatened by habitat fragmentation, bridging barriers created by transportation infrastructure, and other actions to promote functional ecological connectivity.

 **Improve Watershed Health and Function:** Restore the historic Laguna Seca, connect Fisher Creek to its floodplain, and improve the land's ability to capture stormwater, recharge groundwater supplies, improve water quality, support rare groundwater-dependent habitats, and reduce the severity of downstream flooding.

 **Connect People to Nature in Healthy and Meaningful Ways:** Improve public health and quality of life by providing equitable access to nature via carefully sited local and regional trail connections, visitor-serving amenities, and preserved scenic vistas, and consider how the landscape can be designed to support nature-based educational and wellness-focused programming.


 **Foster Ongoing and Inclusive Community Engagement and Stewardship:** Employ a robust and inclusive community engagement strategy that invites people from all walks of life to enjoy Coyote Valley and participate in both the planning and ongoing stewardship of its unique landscapes, with a special focus on initiatives and programs that promote justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access (JEDIA).


 **Respect, Honor, Preserve, and Interpret Cultural Heritage and Historic Resources:** Work closely with Indigenous communities and other local experts to identify and appropriately preserve, interpret, and steward natural, cultural, Tribal, and historic resources within the conserved lands of Coyote Valley.

 **Adapt to Changing Climate Conditions:** Create an adaptable and science-based phased plan that strengthens Coyote Valley's resilience to changing climate conditions, leverages the landscape's ability to serve as natural infrastructure that can buffer communities from the effects of climate change, and helps the region meet California's "30x30" goals for protecting 30% of the state's land and water by 2030.

 **Promote and Demonstrate the Benefits of Sustainable Local Agriculture:** Support local agriculture in ways that align with ecological and water-management goals for Coyote Valley by strategically designating land for agricultural uses that are designed and managed to support local community needs and educate the public on the benefits of regenerative, sustainable, and wildlife-friendly agriculture.

 **Boost the Local Economy through Place-Based Initiatives:** Leverage the potential for Coyote Valley’s conserved lands to support the local economy in ways that are consistent with overarching conservation goals through programs, activities, and amenities that incentivize agricultural land conservation, promote green jobs and workforce development, and generate revenue through nature-based activities.

 **Promote Equitable and Sustainable Transportation:** Promote equitable and sustainable transportation modes to and from conserved lands in Coyote Valley via street design improvements, welcoming access/activity nodes, and programs or services that promote access via walking, biking, public transit, and other sustainable modes of transportation.

 **Consider a Holistic Vision for the Entire Coyote Valley:** Look beyond the boundaries of currently conserved lands in Coyote Valley to consider how they fit into the mosaic of privately and publicly held lands across the entire Coyote Valley and create a flexible plan that can be adapted as additional lands are conserved.



North Coyote Valley and Laguna Seca, credit: Derek Neumann

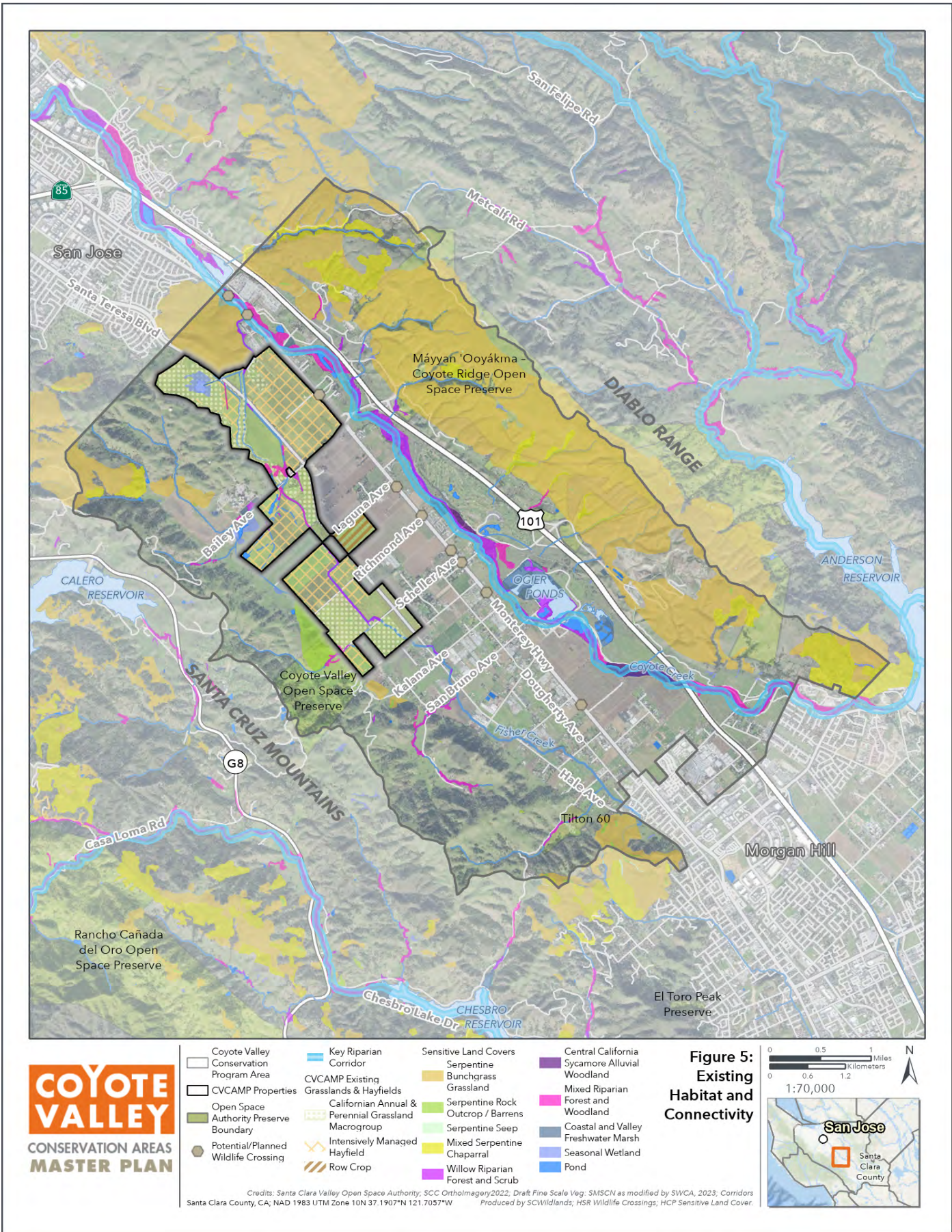


Figure 4: Existing Habitat & Connectivity



WILDLIFE HABITAT & ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY

Existing Conditions

Coyote Valley once supported a rich mosaic of wildlife habitats, including extensive wetlands, grasslands, oak savanna, and woodlands. While reestablishing some key elements of this mosaic will be a central focus of CVCAMP, it is important to recognize that patches of wildlife habitat are already present in Coyote Valley today. Existing valley floor habitats include limited riparian forest canopy along Fisher Creek, seasonally wet areas within portions of the historic footprint of Laguna Seca, extensive annual grasslands, and isolated patches of oak savanna, though much of this existing habitat has been heavily influenced and modified by human use of the landscape over time (see [Figure 4: Existing Habitat & Connectivity](#)).

Coyote Valley's existing habitat continues to support a wide array of flora and fauna, including a diverse assemblage of native mammals, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and plants that utilize remaining habitats for some or all of their life cycle. However, movement of these species across the landscape is often limited by changes in surface water and groundwater availability and/or human-made barriers to safe passage, including incompatible land uses and the existing network of roadways, rail, and fences. CVCAMP aims to restore wildlife habitat and reestablish corridors that allow wildlife to safely travel across the landscape. OSA and its partners will measure the success of CVCAMP implementation projects over time through adaptive management and monitoring plans that study and measure how effectively implementation actions are meeting goals for habitat restoration and key focal species.



A bobcat emerges from grasslands above Coyote Valley, credit: Teddy Miller

Recent Related Studies

CVCAMP builds upon an extensive body of prior studies related to wildlife habitat and ecological connectivity. These studies document existing conditions and recommend ways that wildlife and habitats can best be protected and restored. Due to the area's importance as a wildlife corridor, various organizations, including OSA, the City of San José, the University of California (UC), Santa Cruz, and De Anza College, have directly performed or funded studies that encompass the entirety of Coyote Valley. These studies primarily focus on Coyote Valley as a vital linkage for various types of wildlife, but specifically for large mammals like mountain lion. Several documents also identify restoration opportunities within Coyote Valley, primarily in riparian areas. In addition, the acquisition of several parcels throughout Coyote Valley by OSA, POST, and the City of San José has prompted habitat mapping, wildlife surveys (i.e., camera monitoring and camera trapping), biological field surveys, and identification of wildlife crossing locations and mortality on roads.

Among the studies previously conducted, a few foundational documents are highlighted and described here:

- **Coyote Valley Historical Ecology—A Curated Look at Key Material Describing the Valley's Historical Hydrology and Ecology:**¹ The Historical Ecology study provides the historical context for the mosaic of vegetation (plant) communities present in Coyote Valley prior to the modifications from human use, as well as context for the impact that many of these modifications had on vegetation communities through time, resulting in much reduced and fragmented communities.

¹ Grossinger, RM, RA Askevold, CJ Striplen, E Brewster, S Pearce, KN Larned, LJ McKee, and JN Collins, 2006. *Coyote Creek Watershed Historical Ecology Study: Historical Condition, Landscape Change, and Restoration Potential in the Eastern Santa Clara Valley, California*. Prepared for the Santa Clara Valley Water District. A Report of SFEI's Historical Ecology, Watersheds, and Wetlands Science Programs, SFEI Publication 426, San Francisco Estuary Institute, Oakland, CA.

- **Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage—A Vision for a Resilient, Multi-benefit Landscape:**²

The Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage report provides the foundation for the vision to protect and restore the valley. This report provides a description of the existing vegetation communities and wildlife currently present in the CVCAMP area, provides an assessment of challenges and opportunities to creating a wildlife corridor between the Santa Cruz and Diablo Mountain Ranges, and provides numerous recommendations for restoration of habitats and wildlife linkages in Coyote Valley.

- **North Coyote Valley Road Ecology Study and Recommendations to Reduce Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions on the Monterey Road Corridor in Coyote Valley, Santa Clara County:**^{3,4}

The North Coyote Valley Road Ecology Study and Monterey Road study both evaluate roads in the CVCAMP area as wildlife obstacles or barriers by looking at wildlife movement across the roads and wildlife-vehicle collisions. These studies identify Monterey Road as a significant barrier to wildlife movement, with U.S. Highway 101 (US 101), Santa Teresa Boulevard, and Bailey Avenue also acting as obstacles to wildlife movement. Both studies provide recommendations to enhance infrastructure and allow wildlife to move across the roads safely.

- **Coyote Valley Reptile and Amphibian Linkage Study Findings and Recommendations:**⁵ The Reptile and Amphibian Linkage Study evaluates the habitat connectivity for reptiles and

² Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (OSA) and Conservation Biology Institute. 2017. *Coyote Valley Landscape Linkage: A Vision for a Resilient, Multi-benefit Landscape*. Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, San José, CA. 74 p.

³ Diamond, T., and A. Sandoval. 2023. *North Coyote Valley Road Ecology Study, 2021-2022*.

⁴ Santa Clara County Wildlife Corridor Technical Working Group, Coyote Valley Subcommittee. 2019. *Recommendations to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions on the Monterey Road corridor in Coyote Valley, Santa Clara County*. Santa Clara County Wildlife Corridor Technical Working Group, San José, CA. 38 p.

⁵ H.T. Harvey & Associates. 2020. *Coyote Valley Reptile and Amphibian Linkage Study Findings and Recommendations*.

amphibians across Coyote Valley. The report identifies the northern part of Coyote Valley (north of Laguna Avenue) as the most feasible location for improving connectivity. The middle and southern portions of Coyote Valley contain barriers such as agricultural-industrial land use that make it difficult for these species to move between east and west sides of the valley.

Overall, these prior studies provide useful information on the historic and current wildlife and habitat conditions in Coyote Valley and provide recommendations that inform opportunities and constraints for restoration planning in Coyote Valley.

CVCAMP Studies

In June 2023, the Consultant Team conducted a field reconnaissance survey to confirm whether the existing fine-scale vegetation data for Santa Clara County currently being developed by the Santa Cruz Mountain Stewardship Network depicts accurate vegetation communities within the CVCAMP area. During this survey, there were limited instances where the mapped vegetation data differed from those observed in the field. In these instances, biologists determined and mapped the appropriate vegetation community in accordance with *A Manual of California Vegetation*.⁶ Habitats and land uses currently found in the CVCAMP area generally include agricultural farmland, rural residential, seasonal wetland, creek, riparian, California annual grassland, pond, and serpentine grassland (see *Figure 4: Existing Habitat & Connectivity*).

In 2022 and 2023, OSA worked with the firm H.T. Harvey & Associates to conduct initial wildlife surveys of key species in the CVCAMP area, focusing on burrowing owl, Swainson’s hawk, tricolored blackbird, roosting bats, and migratory waterbirds. While no burrowing owl or Swainson’s hawk were observed, the surveys confirmed the presence of suitable habitat within the CVCAMP area. The survey found that the CVCAMP area is

⁶ California Native Plant Society (CNPS). 2023. *A Manual of California Vegetation* Online.

currently being used by tricolored blackbirds for foraging, but suitable habitat does not currently exist for breeding. At Laguna Seca, 22 waterbird species were observed in winter of 2022-23 and 31 species were observed during the spring migration period in 2023. Suitable roosting bat habitat was found in multiple locations throughout the study area, and Townsend big-eared bats were observed roosting in an abandoned agricultural building on one of the CVCAMP properties.

In March, April, and June 2023, the Consultant Team also conducted herpetofauna (wetland and terrestrial amphibians and reptiles) surveys to assess habitat suitability for California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, Santa Cruz black salamander, foothill yellow-legged frog, western pond turtle, and coast horned lizard. The 2023 surveys followed-up on surveys conducted by H.T. Harvey & Associates during California’s 2020-22 drought and were specifically focused on assessing suitability of habitat and hydroperiod (duration of surface water presence) for herpetofauna in a non-drought year. A total of nine amphibian/reptile species were observed in the CVCAMP area, including the endangered California tiger salamander. In addition, some non-native, invasive species were observed that have potential to displace native amphibian/reptile species.



A red-tailed hawk soaring above Coyote Valley, credit: Beth Hamel

Another major focus of recent wildlife-related work are studies focused on improving ecological connectivity through Coyote Valley. POST is currently leading the Coyote Valley Wildlife Connectivity Planning Project, which aims to improve safe paths of travel for wildlife and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions along the triple barrier of Monterey Road, US 101, and the Union Pacific rail line (current Caltrain corridor, future High Speed Rail alignment). Key participants for this multi-jurisdictional project include the OSA, the City of San José, the relevant transportation agencies, and the public agencies that manage land adjacent to these transportation barriers. The anticipated outcome of the project is conceptual designs for up to four wildlife crossing structures, environmental clearance and permits, cost estimates, and an adaptive management and monitoring plan. The project will also identify elements like fencing that direct wildlife away from dangerous transportation corridors and towards safe crossing structures. The results from the project will be integrated into the CVCAMP planning process.

In September 2023, OSA, POST, and the Consultant Team also convened a workshop with local wildlife experts to create a list of focal species that CVCAMP’s habitat restoration plans should prioritize. The focal species list includes wildlife with diverse habitat requirements and ecological attributes. The unique needs of these focal species will inform restoration planning, linkage design, and other enhancements in the CVCAMP area. Numerous focal species were

discussed during the workshop as being important to gauging success of restoration projects and whether CVCAMP is achieving its wildlife goals and objectives. To cover a broad range of taxa (plants and animals) and associated habitat types the current list of focal species includes mammals, herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians), invertebrates, and birds (see *Table 1: Focal Species* and *Figure 5: Focal Species*).

Key Findings and Take-Aways

- Large-Scale Habitat Restoration is Needed:** Over time, human activity has impacted wildlife habitats in Coyote Valley, compromising the natural systems that support healthy populations of native plants and animals. The pre-development mosaic of Coyote Valley was originally dominated by aquatic habitats such as freshwater marsh and wet meadows bordered by oak savanna, but the current mosaic is now dominated by agriculture and other upland habitats such as non-native annual grasslands. This dramatic shift in habitat composition and vegetation communities on the Coyote Valley floor has had a direct impact on the presence and abundance of native wildlife that would have historically lived in or passed through the valley between the adjacent mountain ranges. Working towards the restoration of the pre-development habitat mosaic would allow for increased connectivity between habitats. Additionally, these restoration efforts would increase biodiversity and protect both common and rare native species. In particular,

Table 1: Focal Species

Mammals	Mountain lion,* deer,* American badger,* California ground squirrel,* bobcat,* pallid bat
Herpetofauna	Western pond turtle,* California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, California newt
Invertebrates	Bay checkerspot butterfly, Crotch’s bumblebee, monarch butterfly
Birds	Tricolored blackbird, loggerhead shrike, white-tailed kite, Swainson’s hawk, western burrowing owl, American kestrel, yellow-billed magpie, waterfowl and shorebirds, yellow warbler

*Focal species also identified for the Coyote Valley Wildlife Connectivity Planning Project.

there is an opportunity to restore aquatic and riparian habitat in and around Laguna Seca and Fisher Creek.

Restoration efforts should consider wildlife habitat improvements at multiple scales, including design decisions associated with barriers to movement (a scale of hundreds of feet), specific areas or parcels within the CVCAMP area (a scale of acres), and a regional linkage scale (a scale defined by Coyote Valley topography and biological features). All restoration should consider and incorporate parallel efforts within the CVCAMP area (e.g., Coyote Valley Wildlife Connectivity Planning Project).

- **Rare Species are Present & Will Benefit from Habitat Restoration:** Numerous special-status wildlife species are present within the CVCAMP area. Targeted creation, restoration, or enhancement of native habitats (e.g., wetland, riparian, oak woodland, serpentine grassland) in the CVCAMP area will benefit these special-status species.

- **Invasive Species are Present & Require Control & Management:** Invasive species have the potential to displace or replace native species through competition, predation, transfer of disease and parasites, and habitat degradation. Coyote Valley contains numerous non-native plant and wildlife species that may require management and control to limit

adverse impacts to native species and natural systems. For example, the herpetofauna surveys confirmed that species such as the red swamp crayfish are prevalent in the CVCAMP area and will require control or eradication to limit impacts to native amphibians and reptiles. Other invasive species such as American bullfrogs were not detected but will require careful planning to avoid introduction into CVCAMP properties via Coyote Creek or other nearby waterbodies where they are known to be present. Potential techniques to control such species may include direct removal, pond water level management and gill netting for larger fish species that prey on native amphibians, and ongoing monitoring to ensure new invasive species are not introduced into Coyote Valley.

- **Roadways are Fragmenting Habitat and Killing Wildlife:** Many wildlife species that attempt to cross Coyote Valley unfortunately fall victim to vehicle collisions. These collisions are dangerous for drivers and usually deadly for wildlife. Studies identify that numerous obstacles/barriers to wildlife movement are present within the CVCAMP area, forcing them on to roadways where vehicles travel at high speeds. Numerous species moving through the Coyote Valley floor would benefit from restoration and increased permeability (e.g., roadway wildlife crossings, reduced or wildlife-friendly fencing, compatible land use) within the CVCAMP area. The POST-led Coyote Valley Wildlife Connectivity Planning Project is



Roads in Coyote Valley create deadly obstacles for wildlife; In June 2023 a juvenile mountain lion was killed attempting to cross Santa Teresa Boulevard, credit: Ben Newmeyer

focusing on improving conditions for wildlife along Monterey Road and US 101. In tandem, CVCAMP will study the roads that bisect CVCAMP lands, namely Santa Teresa Boulevard and Bailey Avenue. Potential solutions to be studied further include crossing structures, removal of excess travel lanes, and reducing vehicle speeds.

- **Detailed Surveys will be Needed for Key Planning Areas:** Due to limitations associated with available data at the valley-wide scale, formal vegetation surveys and wetland delineations within specific areas of the CVCAMP area will likely be necessary as restoration projects are developed. These detailed surveys will confirm the extent of existing habitats and protected aquatic environments on the Coyote Valley floor. However, such surveys are intensive and have, therefore, not been conducted for the entire valley to-date. Rather, they will be conducted for targeted areas of Coyote Valley where CVCAMP identifies the need for land use or management changes over time.
- **There is Great Potential for Recreating Vital Aquatic Habitat:** A wide variety of herpetofauna historically relied on Laguna Seca’s seasonal wetland and some suitable habitat is still present within the CVCAMP area. However, hydrologic modifications to facilitate agriculture and development have



Salamander larvae, credit: Don Ashton

dramatically reduced the extent and quality of aquatic habitat that is available for native herpetofauna on the Coyote Valley floor. Current studies have confirmed that remaining wetland habitat can potentially only support the limited, occasional presence of special-status aquatic species such as California red-legged frog and California tiger salamander, even in ideal wet year conditions. Establishing a greater abundance and stable populations of these species will therefore require restoring optimal hydroperiods in Laguna Seca (e.g., from January to August) and other seasonal waterbodies, enhancing riparian cover (native vegetation adjacent to water) along Fisher Creek and other drainages, and providing emergent structures (such as woody materials that emerge above the water line) and upland refugia (terrestrial habitat adjacent to water) to help support the key life cycle requirements and needs of these species.

- **Multi-Benefit Landscapes Must be Carefully Planned for Wildlife to Thrive:** Public access and transportation may conflict with wildlife and habitat goals (e.g., noise, vibrations, and light associated with these resources may deter wildlife from an area). Local agriculture may also conflict with wildlife by reducing land available for habitat or by employing practices that are not aligned with wildlife life history (e.g., mowing during breeding season). As a result, public access, transportation, and agricultural/land use practices need to be planned with wildlife in mind to ensure they do not create obstacles or barriers to wildlife movement. Additional research related to appropriate design guidelines, recommended corridor widths, buffer distances from disturbances, and land management considerations for wildlife will be conducted in upcoming phases of CVCAMP.
- **Comprehensive Monitoring and Adaptive Management will be Needed:** Given the numerous wildlife and plant species in the CVCAMP area and the many goals of the CVCAMP process, it will be important to create a framework for measuring success at a project and landscape level and adaptively managing for uncertainties (e.g., climate change).

FOCAL SPECIES

The focal species list includes wildlife with diverse habitat requirements and ecological attributes. The unique needs of these focal species will inform restoration planning, linkage design, and other enhancements in the CVCAMP area.



*Waterfowl and shorebirds were selected as a general focal species category. While each species uses these watery habitats differently, they co-habitat together to take advantage of wetlands.

Figure 5: Focal Species



January 2023 view looking south over Laguna Seca, with Santa Teresa Boulevard on the left. Visible in the background is the dam built in 2006 for then-planned development of the property. During winter rainstorms, the dam prevents water from naturally flowing into the main Laguna Seca pond, visible in the foreground, *credit: Derek Neumann*



WATER RESOURCES

Existing Conditions

The modern landscape of Coyote Valley contains important water resources that have been extensively modified by human development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These aquatic features include Fisher Creek and its tributaries, which flow in a northeasterly direction towards Coyote Creek on the east side of Coyote Valley. The Fisher Creek watershed was once a series of ephemeral channels and marsh that slowly flowed north through Mid-Coyote Valley into the historic Laguna Seca, a massive freshwater wetland complex that once extended from south of Bailey Avenue and Spreckels Hill to the northern edge of Coyote Valley. However, in 1916, a large drainage ditch, which is now Fisher Creek, was constructed to facilitate agriculture, draining most of the lands between Palm Avenue and Bailey Avenue and ultimately connecting with Coyote Creek (see [Figure 6: Existing Water Resources](#)).

Despite being bypassed by this human-made Fisher Creek alignment, portions of the Laguna Seca wetland complex are still present in the northernmost portion of Coyote Valley, though this footprint has been dramatically reduced over time and is now bisected by an existing dam structure that was built in 2006 to create a stormwater detention basin for a then-planned office park development. In addition, several other smaller aquatic features are present on the Coyote Valley floor, including small agricultural drainage ditches and a series of human-made seasonal ponds to the north and south of Bailey Avenue that were associated with prior development in the area (see [Figure 6: Existing Water Resources](#)).

Conserving and restoring these surface hydrologic resources in Coyote Valley, as well as the underlying groundwater tables that help to support them, are high-priority components of CVCAMP, as water in Coyote Valley plays an important role in ecosystem function, flood protection, and groundwater recharge for the benefit of the rest of Santa Clara County.⁷

⁷ ESA. 2021. *Coyote Valley Water Resource Investment Strategy, Restoration Design Concept Evaluation*. June.



North Laguna Seca from above, credit: Jordan Plotsky

Recent Related Studies

Valley Water and OSA have completed many studies characterizing the water resources in Coyote Valley and how they can best be protected and improved, and yet we continue to learn new things about how water flows through the valley. Among these studies, key foundational documents include the *Coyote Valley Water Resource Investment Strategy, Restoration Design Concept Evaluation*⁸ and the *Coyote Valley Historical Ecology: A Curated Look at Key Material Describing the Valley's Historical Hydrology and Ecology*.⁹ The Investment Strategy document provides background on the water resources, hydraulic modeling performed, existing water infrastructure, analysis of flood patterns, and evaluation of restoration opportunities in Coyote Valley. The Historical Ecology study provides a highly valuable framework for understanding the processes that have shaped Coyote Valley. The Historical Ecology study also includes a description of the previous natural communities present in the landscape, the formation and hydrology of Fisher Creek, and tools for process-based restoration, natural flood protection, and integrated water management. These studies provide useful information about opportunities and constraints for restoration and will help shape CVCAMP's water resource restoration scenarios and alternatives analysis.

CVCAMP Studies

Ongoing hydrologic and hydraulic analyses are assisting the project team in understanding the timing, duration, magnitude, frequency, variability, and rates of change of surface water and shallow groundwater flowing through the Coyote Valley landscape to help inform future management decisions. While most of this work is ongoing, some studies are now complete, including the Existing Conditions Hydrology Study and development of a calibrated surface water hydrology model, which simulates how different large storms affect the presence of water on the landscape using real directly measured data.

⁸ ESA. 2021. *Coyote Valley Water Resource Investment Strategy, Restoration Design Concept Evaluation*. June.

⁹ San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI). 2017. *Coyote Valley Historical Ecology: A Curated Look at Key Material Describing the Valley's Historical Hydrology and Ecology*. November.

The Existing Conditions Hydrology Study for CVCAMP collects current and historic hydrologic data and provides valuable insights into the interactions between surface water and groundwater in Coyote Valley, particularly focusing on the dynamics around Fisher Creek. The study indicates that groundwater levels in Coyote Valley exhibit significant seasonal fluctuations. During late fall and winter, groundwater levels rise, attributed partly to recharge from creek infiltration. This is especially noticeable following rainfall and streamflow events when groundwater table elevations remain relatively high. In periods of high groundwater levels, particularly in the winter, there are instances where groundwater contributes to surface water flow. This situation, where creeks gain flow from the surrounding groundwater, is more extensive and lasts longer during wet years compared to dry years.

The study notes a reduction in peak flow rates in Fisher Creek as it moves downstream from Laguna Avenue. This reduction is primarily due to water flooding in areas adjacent to Fisher Creek, including Laguna Seca. During wet seasons, floodwater draining from these flood storage areas reenters the creek and elevates baseflow. The presence of subsurface tile drains (underground pipes that drain water from the ground) and surface ditches, especially around Laguna Seca, accelerates the lowering of shallow groundwater levels during the transition from wet to dry seasons ultimately preventing wetlands from forming. Although beneficial for agriculture, the tile drains and surface ditches limit the amount of aquatic habitat available for special-status species. These relic infrastructures have a direct impact on groundwater levels and consequently on surface water flow rates (see [Figure 7: Existing Drainage Infrastructure](#)).

Groundwater levels vary across different parts of Coyote Valley. They are deepest along the northeast side of Coyote Valley along Monterey Road and become shallower moving southwest and closer to Fisher Creek. This gradient affects the interaction between surface water and groundwater, with surface water and associated

habitats more likely to be present or have the potential to be restored in areas with higher groundwater tables (see *Figure 8: Existing Groundwater Table*).

The surface water–groundwater interactions in Coyote Valley are complex and vary seasonally and spatially. These interactions are crucial for understanding the hydrology of the area, particularly in the context of flood management, habitat restoration, and overall ecological health of Coyote Valley. The study’s findings provide a foundation for effective water resource management and conservation planning in Coyote Valley.

In addition, comprehensive hydrologic and hydraulic models have been developed for Coyote Valley. These models simulate flows in the Fisher Creek watershed over a 20-year period to

characterize the watershed’s response to storms with a range of magnitude and intensity and will be utilized in subsequent phases of CVCAMP to help identify opportunities for natural flood peak attenuation and restoration of wetland habitat in Coyote Valley.

All of these current water resources studies inform a nuanced approach to managing water resources in Coyote Valley, balancing flood risk reduction, habitat enhancement, groundwater management, water quality improvement, and the needs of agriculture and urban areas. The studies have improved our understanding of groundwater–surface water dynamics in Fisher Creek and Laguna Seca. The rainfall-runoff model and surface water hydraulic model will be useful tools for quantifying historic habitat conditions and evaluating future management actions.



Ponds along the Coyote Creek corridor, credit: Nick Perry

In addition, CVCAMP's in-progress Ecohydrology Study is helping the project team better understand the relationship between the way water flows through the landscape (i.e., the "flow regime"), what habitats the flow regime supports, and how wildlife species might use those habitats over the course of their lifecycle. The Ecohydrology study illustrates how preferred approaches to habitat restoration and expectations for outcomes vary throughout the valley, largely as a function of the flow regime. Opportunities to enhance water resources in Coyote Valley identified in this study include: removing existing subsurface drains in Laguna Seca, restoring natural connectivity between Fisher Creek and Laguna Seca, spreading out and slowing down Fisher Creek flows and limiting agricultural groundwater pumping where feasible. The study also described restoration actions that may be best suited to particular reaches of Fisher Creek based upon groundwater levels, and evaluated the pros and cons of improved hydrologic connectivity for native species of herpetofauna and fish (in relation to the potential for the spread of other non-native species).

A Tulare Meadows groundwater study is also underway to assess the operations and impacts of City of San José-owned groundwater wells on the Tulare Meadows property, as required by the property's Conservation Easement.

Factors that either constrain or have an unknown influence on the conservation and restoration of hydrologic resources in Coyote Valley (e.g., Tulare Meadows municipal wells groundwater pumping or releases from Anderson Dam) will be further assessed during the forthcoming opportunity and constraints analysis for CVCAMP.

Key Findings and Take-Aways

- **Reconnecting Fisher Creek to its Historic Floodplain Creates Myriad Benefits:** Studies and modeling confirm the great potential to reduce downstream flood risk, enhance habitat, and improve water quality by reconnecting Fisher Creek to its historic floodplain throughout the CVCAMP area. Modifications to the existing Fisher Creek channel, the Laguna

Seca dam, and other drainage infrastructure would allow stormwater to naturally collect in desirable areas for habitat restoration and slow the flow of water to Coyote Creek during storms. Additional hydrological modeling in upcoming phases of CVCAMP will further our understanding of flow dynamics and floodplain behaviors under different restoration scenarios.

- **North Coyote Valley Offers Greatest Potential for Aquatic Habitat:** CVCAMP's in-progress ecohydrology study identifies the reach of Fisher Creek from just upstream of Spreckels Hill to Coyote Creek as being the most likely to support a diverse range of aquatic habitat conditions due to shallow groundwater. A mosaic of habitat types can be created in Laguna Seca by targeted excavation to the groundwater table, which is often just two to five feet below the ground surface. This high groundwater table could be augmented by directing stormwater flows into ponding areas in Laguna Seca and along the southern edge of Tulare Hill. The aquatic habitat potential of these areas would be further supported by the removal of existing tile drains and the addition of Beaver dam analogues (structures designed to mimic the form and function of a natural beaver dam, often abbreviated as BDAs) that slow water flow down and increase the extent and hydroperiod of wetland habitats.
- **Mid-Coyote Valley has Greater Potential for Upland Habitat:** Generally, groundwater is deeper upstream (south) of Laguna Avenue in Mid-Coyote Valley, which may limit the potential for aquatic or woody riparian habitat restoration in some areas. During dry years, there is a significant and rapid decline and lowering of the water table during the summer and fall, constraining the types of vegetation that can be sustained in this area. With the likelihood of increased drought, it may be prudent to focus restoration efforts on resilient upland habitat in Mid-Coyote Valley that is less reliant on the presence of surface water and shallow groundwater. That said, the potential to create smaller, ephemeral wetland habitat by slowing the flow of water from Fisher Creek's tributaries warrants further study.

- **Groundwater Recharge Potential Exists, with Some Limitations:** Studies indicate that all of the CVCAMP area can be suitable for some degree of groundwater recharge, but infiltration rates will determine how much ponded water becomes part of the shallow aquifer. Clayey soils and low infiltration rates in the Laguna Seca area would limit the rate of groundwater recharge as compared to locations higher in the watershed. Opportunities exist throughout the CVCAMP area to slow down the flow of water and increase ponding and infiltration into the groundwater table using large wood, BDAs, and targeted excavation.
- **Agricultural Water Needs Warrant Further Study:** Agriculture is an important aspect in the conservation of Coyote Valley and requires a reliable source of water to be economically

sustainable. The hydrological data, especially related to groundwater levels and surface water flow, will directly inform future analyses of agricultural water needs. CVCAMP can integrate this data to better ensure that agricultural uses on CVCAMP lands receive adequate water, possibly through methods like controlled flooding or groundwater recharge techniques that benefit both agriculture and the aquifer.

- **Recycled Water Sources Warrant Further Study:** Recycled water could be used for habitat creation, agricultural irrigation, or groundwater recharge, contributing to the overall conservation goals. Sources of recycled water will be evaluated and sought throughout the CVCAMP process.



Fisher Creek from Spreckels Hill, credit: Nick Perry

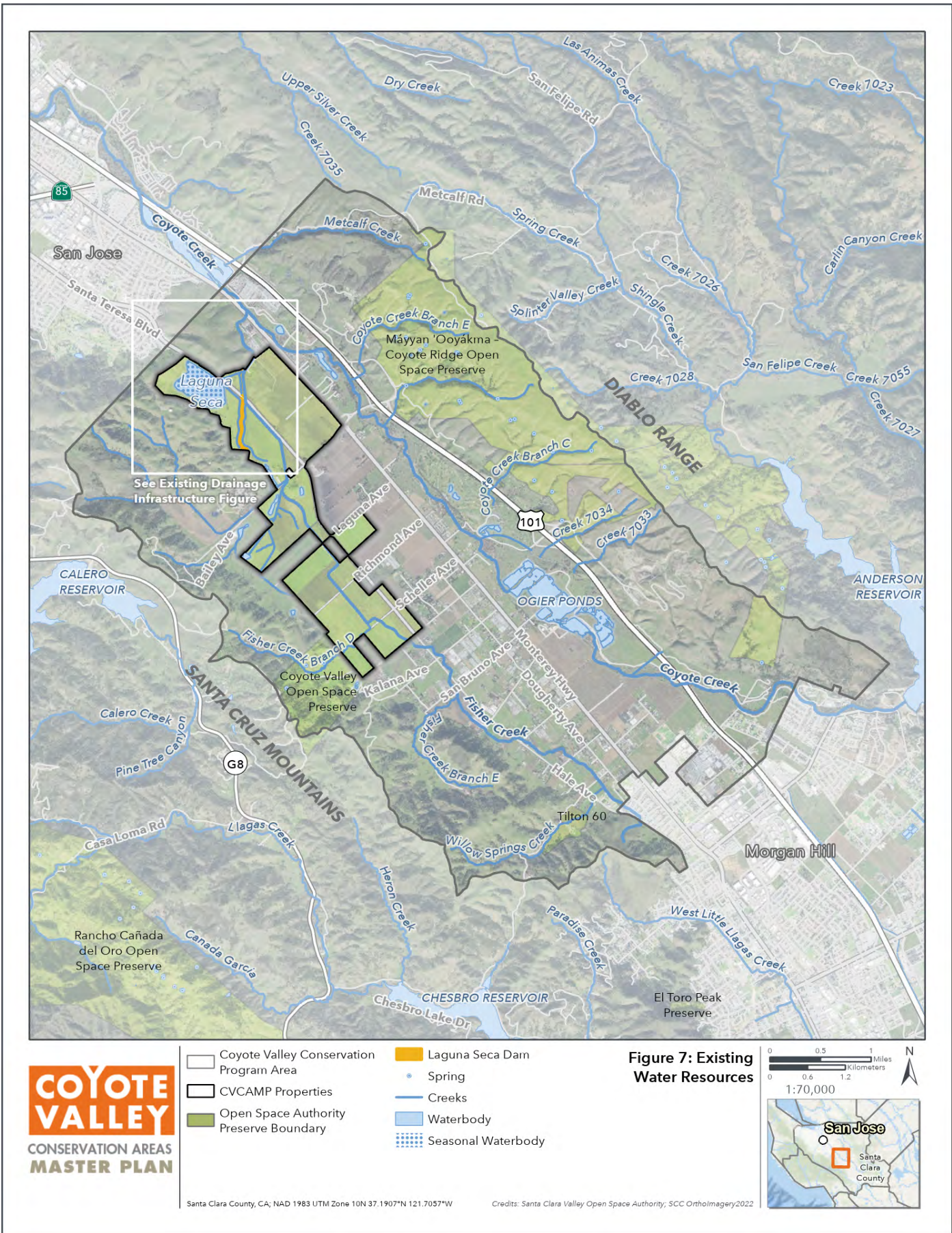


Figure 6: Existing Water Resources

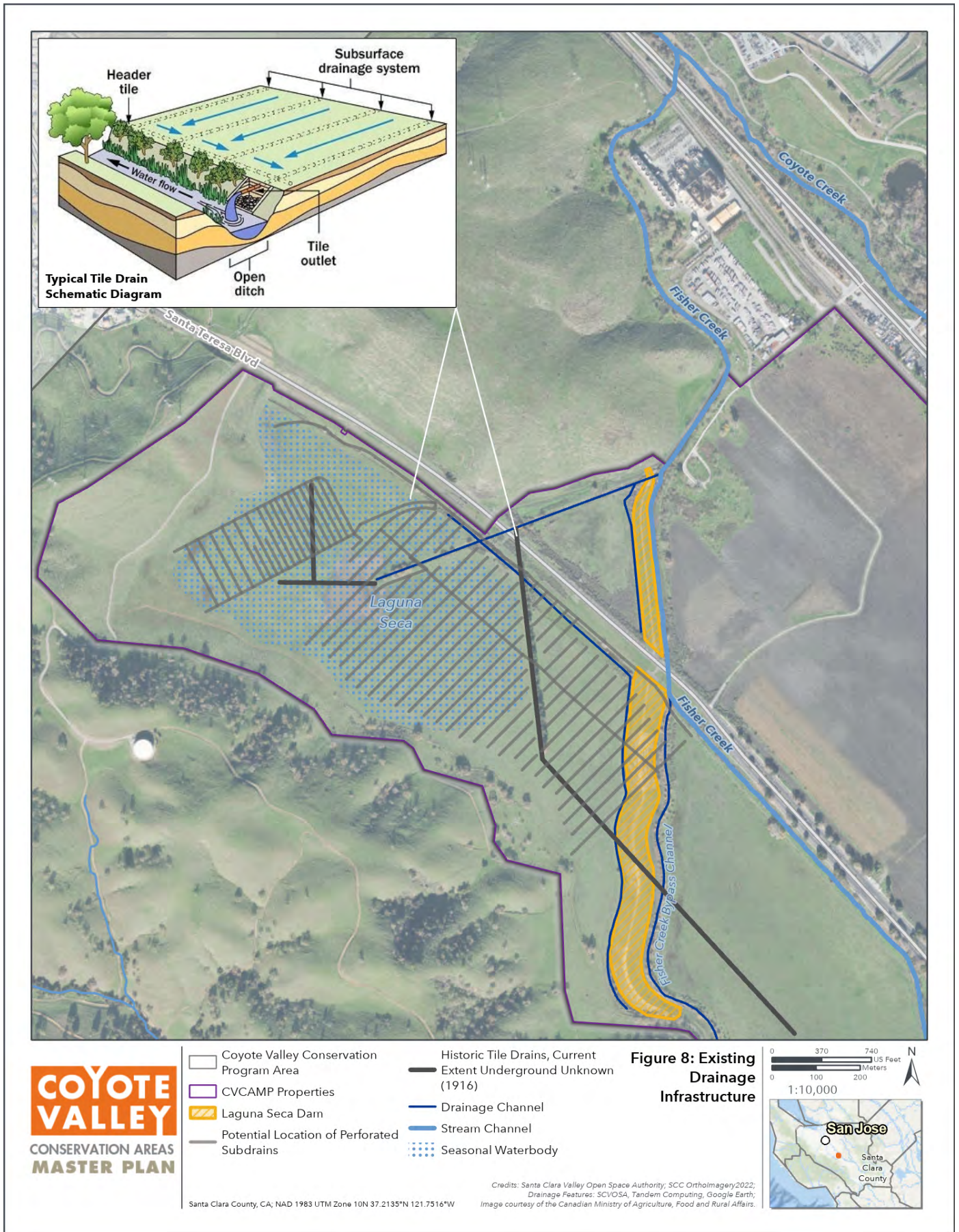


Figure 7: Existing Drainage Infrastructure

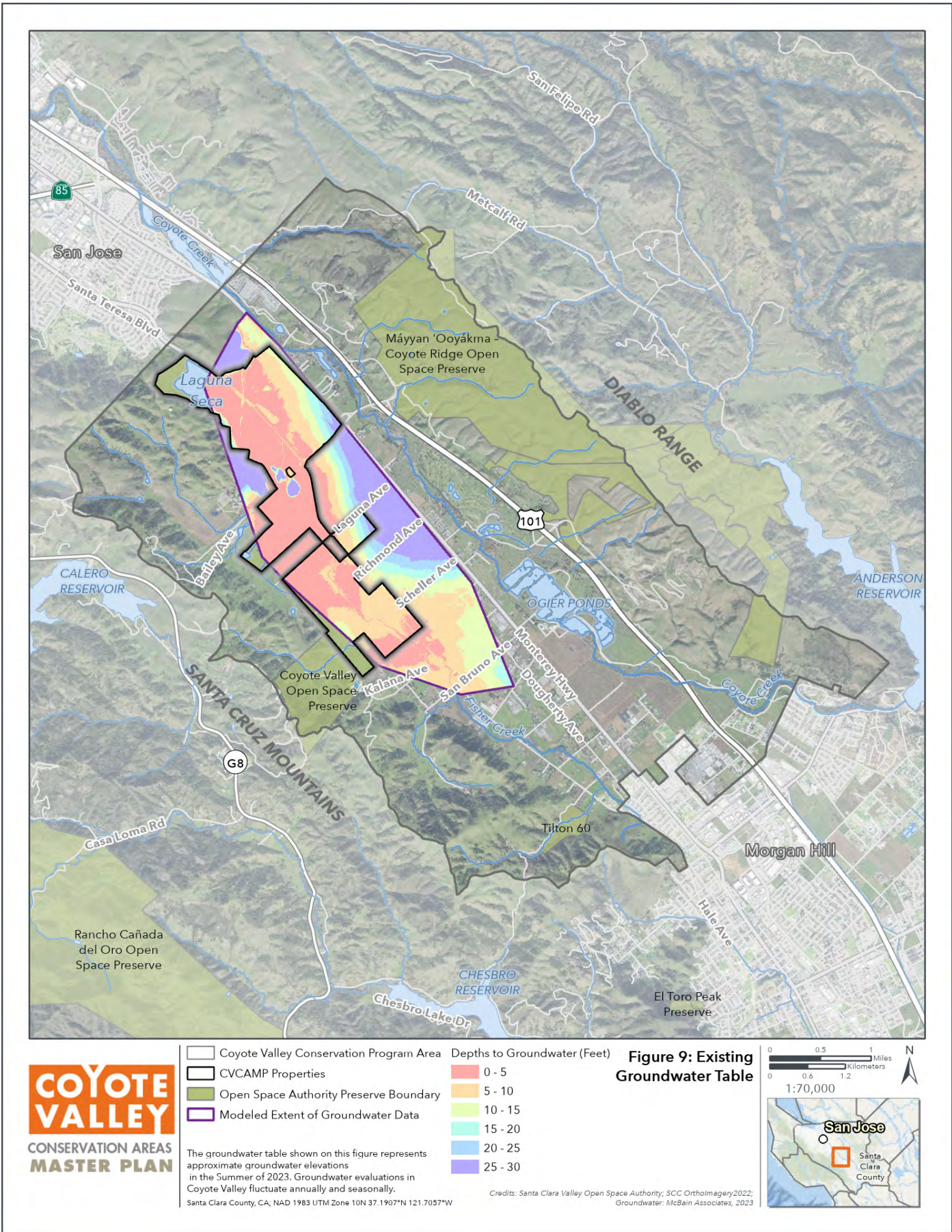
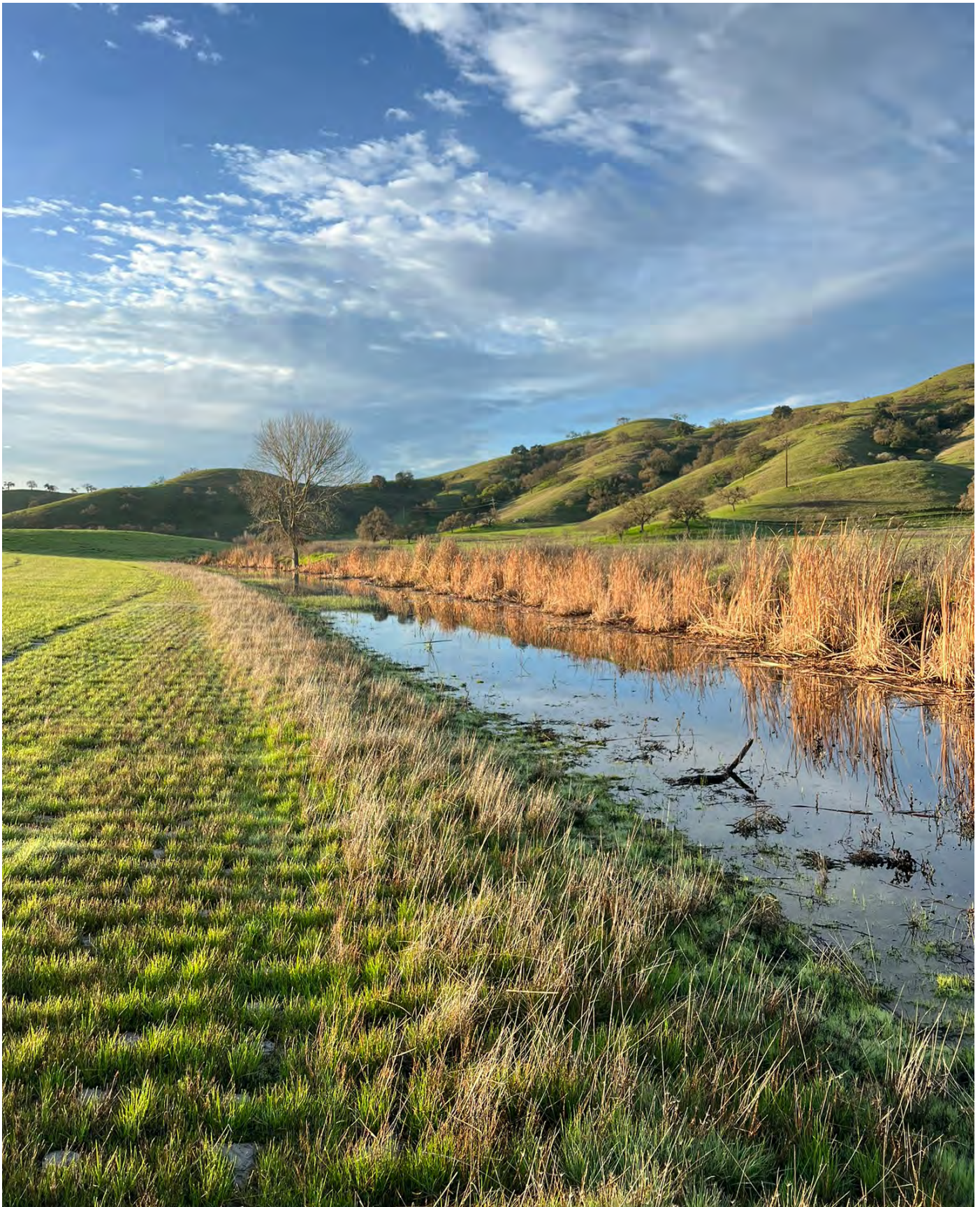


Figure 8: Existing Groundwater Table



Tule reeds grow within the drainage ditch that runs alongside the Laguna Seca dam, offering a glimpse of the area's historic wetlands, *credit: Nick Perry*



Hikers take in 360-degree views from the top of Spreckels Hill during the 2022 Coyote Valley Earth Day celebration, *credit: Nick Perry*



PUBLIC HEALTH & ACCESS

Existing Conditions

Just 10 miles from downtown San José, Coyote Valley offers thousands of nearby residents and workers a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of Silicon Valley. A wide array of existing public access opportunities and facilities already exist within the Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area defined by AB 948 (see [Figure 9: Existing Recreation Facilities](#)). The protection of CVCAMP lands offers the opportunity to further enhance Coyote Valley's role as a place where people can connect with nature and improve their physical and mental health.

The over 1,500 acres of valley floor lands that are the focus of CVCAMP are not currently open to the public on a daily basis. However, OSA and its partners regularly host a variety of public access programs and events on CVCAMP lands. These activities are designed to connect people to the landscape and have recently included educational programs, volunteer stewardship days, guided hikes, and special family events like Perseid meteor shower viewing nights and Earth Day celebrations. OSA intends to build on this program and continue to offer opportunities for people to connect with nature on CVCAMP properties. Future permanent public use and access (e.g., hiking trails, parking areas) will be determined through upcoming phases of CVCAMP and will be designed and managed to have limited impacts on the valley's natural habitats and wildlife.

Given the many constraints on the landscape and its importance to wildlife and water resources, it is important to plan future public use and access on CVCAMP properties with nearby existing recreational uses in mind so that new uses do not needlessly duplicate recreational facilities located nearby. Key existing recreational features and opportunities within this surrounding AB 948 Program Area are briefly described here:

Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve (CVOSP)

Location: Three miles north of Morgan Hill at the west end of Palm Avenue

Land Manager: Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

Notable Public Access Features: This preserve features a parking area and the four-mile Arrowhead Loop Trail, which leads to a ridgetop with views of Mount Hamilton, Mount Umunhum, and Coyote Valley. The immediately adjacent, privately owned Coyote Canyon Ranch horse boarding facility helps make the preserve a popular destination for equestrians.

CVCAMP Considerations: CVOSP is directly adjacent to the Mid-Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area. The preserve's existing parking lot and trails could potentially be used to access CVCAMP lands and connect them to the larger regional trail network in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The preserve includes a segment of the Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail, which could one day be extended to reach CVCAMP lands.

Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve

Location: Diablo Range foothills east of Coyote Valley, on Malech Road just east of US 101

Land Manager: Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

Key Public Access Features: This recently opened preserve includes a parking area, outdoor classrooms/interpretive areas, a short accessible trail, and five miles of hiking trails, including a portion of the Bay Area Ridge Trail. The preserve is located in a unique setting and provides an opportunity for visitors to interact with and learn about the rare ecosystem of serpentine soils and associated rare plants and animals.

CVCAMP Considerations: The preserve is a recent and relevant case study for public access in sensitive habitats. Public access to the preserve is highly managed by enforcing restrictions to certain days and a base level of orientation via a free online Butterfly Pass. The preserve could be connected to CVCAMP lands via completion of the Bay Area Ridge Trail segment along Bailey Avenue and Malech Road. Existing outdoor classrooms along the preserve's trails offer westward views over Coyote Valley and provide opportunities to interpret the landscape from a bird's eye view.

Tilton Ranch

Location: Immediately south of CVOSP

Land Manager: Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency & Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

Notable Public Access Features: This recently protected 1,800-acre property is not yet open to regular public access, but a portion is leased to the Coyote Valley Sporting Clays, a privately operated shooting range and event facility that is open to the public. Santa Clara County Parks owns a regional trail easement through the ranchlands which will one day connect the ranch with surrounding public lands. The adjacent 60-acre Tilton Ranch complex located off Willow Springs Road is owned by OSA and includes a historic ranch house and multiple barns. The future public use of both the ranch complex and ranchlands will be determined via a separate planning process in the years ahead.

CVCAMP Considerations: The planned trail network at Tilton Ranch could one day be connected to CVCAMP lands. The existing Tilton Ranch complex could one day serve as a gateway for public access with trailheads, parking and repurposed historic structures that house uses in support of the restoration, stewardship, and educational interpretation of Coyote Valley.



Hikers in the hills above Coyote Valley, credit: David Mauk

Santa Teresa County Park

Location: Hills northwest of Coyote Valley

Land Manager: Santa Clara County Parks

Notable Public Access Features: Santa Teresa County Park offers a variety of recreation activities, including picnicking, dog walking, mountain biking, hiking, school tours, archery, golf, multiple parking areas, and approximately 17 miles of trails.

CVCAMP Considerations: Santa Teresa County Park's trail network could one day be connected to CVCAMP lands via the Bay Area Ridge Trail. Trails leading to Coyote Peak within the park offer views of Coyote Valley to the south, creating potential for interpretation of the landscape. The park's robust facilities (including its extensive picnic grounds) provide public amenities in a landscape adjacent to Coyote Valley, potentially reducing demand for similar facilities on CVCAMP lands.

Coyote Creek Parkway

Location: Western edge of Coyote Valley between Monterey Road and US 101.

Land Manager: Santa Clara County Parks

Notable Public Access Features: The parkway is the longest publicly owned continuous riparian landscape, wildlife corridor, and linear park in Santa Clara County. Visitors can travel between the cities of Morgan Hill and San José along a 15-mile multiuse trail that parallels Coyote Creek. This trail also serves as a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail. Unique features within the parkway include the historic Coyote Ranch complex now used as event venue and the Santa Clara County

Model Aircraft Skypark, a 40-acre field and runway designed for flying model aircraft. A visitor center off Malaguerra Avenue in Morgan Hill offers the public opportunities to learn about the ecology and history of the area.

CVCAMP Considerations: The Coyote Creek Parkway serves as a north-south wildlife corridor and a gateway to the Diablo Range to the east, making it a key component in the landscape linkage CVCAMP aims to restore across Coyote Valley. Opportunities also exist to build trail connections between CVCAMP lands and the parkway's multiuse trail, namely along the planned Bay Area Ridge Trail route along Bailey Avenue. In addition, the Parkway's visitor center in Morgan Hill interprets the natural and cultural history of Coyote Valley, potentially reducing the need for a similar facility elsewhere in the region.

Metcalf Motorcycle County Park & Field Sports Park

Location: Diablo Range foothills northeast of Coyote Valley

Land Manager: Santa Clara County Parks

Notable Public Access Features: Metcalf Motorcycle County Park offers over 20 miles of dirt trails for Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs), as well as picnic areas. Field Sports Park is Santa Clara County's only publicly owned firing range. The park provides opportunities for rifle, pistol, trap and skeet shooting.

CVCAMP Considerations: These two County Parks add to the wide diversity of recreational opportunities within the Coyote Valley geography, with views of Coyote Valley to the southeast.

Calero County Park

Location: Santa Cruz Mountain Foothills west of Coyote Valley

Land Manager: Santa Clara County Parks

Notable Public Access Features: Calero County Park provides a wide array of recreational opportunities, including powerboating, sailing, fishing, water-skiing, jet-skiing, hiking, equestrian use, biking, and dogs on leash in specified areas.

CVCAMP Considerations: Calero County Park is located along the western edge of the Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area (AB 948). CVCAMP lands could one day be connected to Calero County Park via County Parks trail easements on adjacent IBM-owned lands and via planned trail connections from CVOSP and Santa Teresa County Park.

Recent Related Studies

Although there have been limited studies of visitor use in Coyote Valley to-date, studies have been conducted to analyze the feasibility of trail connections and recreation use in the area. These studies address how to complete trail connections while considering the management of human-wildlife interactions.^{10, 11} Generally, there are opportunities to expand the trail network in Coyote Valley, but there is a sensitivity in making sure the trail uses do not conflict with wildlife habitat and movement corridors. There are statewide and regional planning documents that inform public access planning and identify trends. Two notable studies that are especially relevant to CVCAMP are briefly summarized here:

- **North Coyote Valley Ridge Trail Route Feasibility Study Summary (2020):**¹² The Bay Area Ridge Trail is proposed to cross Coyote Valley, with one potential route extending from Santa Teresa County Park on the west along Bailey Avenue to Máyyan 'Ooyákma Coyote-Ridge Open Space Preserve in the east.

¹⁰ WRA Environmental Consultants. 2023. Public Access Supplemental Data Review. May

¹¹ 2M Associates. 2013. *Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve Use and Management Plan*. September

¹² Bay Area Ridge Trail. 2020a. *North Coyote Valley Ridge Trail Route Feasibility Study Summary*. November.

- **Santa Clara Countywide Trails Master Plan Update (In-Progress):**¹³ The Santa Clara Countywide Trails Master Plan Map Update shows multiple planned trail connections across Coyote Valley. In addition to the proposed Bay Area Ridge trail connection, the master plan update includes a trail through CVCAMP lands that would connect the existing CVOSP with Santa Teresa County Park.

Generally, recent studies and associated community engagement indicate there is continuing interest in trails (walking/hiking are often the most frequently participated activity by the public), and meeting the needs of diverse visitor base, as well as increasing interest in both the benefits of outdoor recreation and open space for public health and equitable park access. In fact, the Santa Clara County Park's Strategic Plan includes a goal to "Elevate the Role of Parks in Improving Human Health."¹⁴ At the state level, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Program (SCORP) includes an action plan to encourage recreation providers to develop partnerships with health organizations.¹⁵ This nexus between access to passive recreation opportunities and public health was particularly evident during the global COVID-19 pandemic, when the CVOSP was heavily used by visitors obtaining the health benefits associated with open space.

¹³ Santa Clara Countywide Trails Master Plan Updates can be accessed at: <https://parks.sccgov.org/about-parks/plans-projects/countywide-trails-master-plan>

¹⁴ County of Santa Clara Parks. 2018. *Santa Clara County Parks 2018 Strategic Plan*. Santa Clara County Department of Parks and Recreation. May.

¹⁵ California Department of Parks and Recreation. 2020. *California 2021-2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): A Five-Year Plan for Increasing Park Access, Community-Based Planning, and Health Partnerships Through Grants*.

CVCAMP Studies

To assess existing public access opportunities in Coyote Valley, on-site information was collected (including visitation and parking at CVOSP and Santa Teresa County Park) and existing data sources (e.g., traffic counters) were reviewed. On-site data on hiking and cycling was collected at trailheads and parking lots and visitation use was estimated from automated vehicle counts from OSA and Santa Clara County Parks. Surveys identified visitors' motivations for and perceived benefits from park use.

Using vehicle count data, the average number of vehicles per day at the CVOSP peaks at around 140 vehicles in the spring (March and April); the peak for Santa Teresa County Park is also in the spring. Observational data at the CVOSP parking lot indicate that peak visitation in the summer months occurs during the morning, with another smaller peak in the evening (likely due to midday heat). Observations of visitor activities at CVOSP indicate that the majority of the visitors were hiking (see [Table 2: Visitor Activities](#)).

Table 2: Visitor Activities at CVOSP

Hiking	79%
Biking	11%
Running	7%
Horse riding	3%

An on-site visitor survey also found that over 90% of the visitors arrived by car and over 85% arrived alone or in groups of two. About 75% were on-site between one and three hours, and nearly half of the respondents visit CVOSP at least one time per week. The most frequent reason to visit was proximity to home/work, and the most cited motivation was getting exercise. Visitors mostly live in Santa Clara County, and generally in South County (see [Figure 10: Visitor Use Data](#)).



Birdwatchers in Coyote Valley, credit: Jordan Plotsky

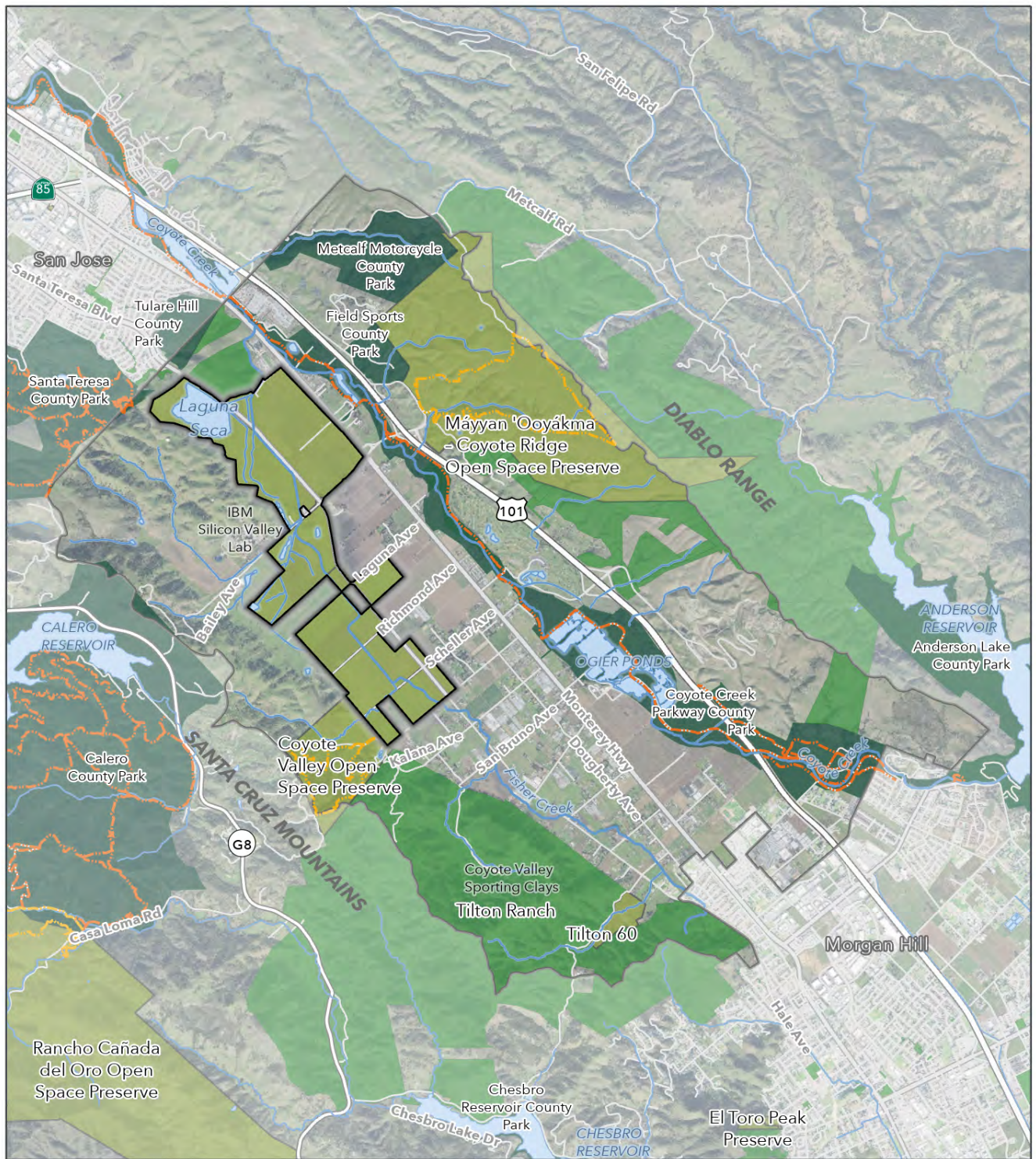
Key Findings and Take-Aways

- **Public Access in the Region is Plentiful but Disconnected:** There is a wide array of existing recreational opportunities in Coyote Valley, including hiking, biking, and horseback riding although there is limited trail connectivity between the various open space and conservation areas and between south San José and north Morgan Hill.
- **Existing Preserve Primarily Serves Nearby Residents:** Many of the existing visitors to the CVOSP live locally and use the open space frequently as a place for regional recreation. These visitors typically arrive at lunch or after work for a relatively short amount of time and exercise. They typically travel a fairly short distance to get to the preserves from south San José, Morgan Hill, and unincorporated Santa Clara County. Over half of the visitors to CVOSP see the benefits of Coyote Valley as habitat for native plants and animals, scenic views and landscapes, and nature-based recreation.
- **Consider the Needs and Experiences of Diverse Communities:** Demographic data collected through on-site and online surveys indicate diverse populations already visit Coyote Valley, but more work can be done to make all people feel welcome. On-going community outreach through CVCAMP will help determine how public amenities and programming can better meet the needs of Santa Clara Valley's diverse communities.

- **Low-Impact Passive Public Uses are Needed:** The Coyote Valley region already offers a wide range of outdoor recreation activities and amenities on both public and private lands; hiking, golfing, shooting sports, horseback riding, and model aircraft flying are just some of the diverse recreational activities found in the AB 948 Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area. In this regional context, CVCAMP lands stand out for their unique potential to offer low-impact public access that connects people to nature on the easily reached valley floor. Initial community engagement indicates support for this approach to public access; CVCAMP survey respondents selected "enhancing wildlife habitat and ecological connectivity" as their top goal for Coyote Valley, indicating the public's understanding and support for wildlife-friendly and compatible uses. When asked what kinds of features they'd like to see on CVCAMP lands, the most popular features selected by CVCAMP survey respondents were hiking trails, wildlife viewing areas, and places to stop and enjoy scenic views. Carefully planning the location and management of these and other public access amenities to minimize impacts on sensitive habitat, wildlife corridors, and agricultural uses will be a major focus of upcoming phases of CVCAMP.



Artists at work in Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, credit: Teri Rogoway



COYOTE VALLEY
CONSERVATION AREAS
MASTER PLAN

- Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area
- CVCAMP Properties
- Open Space Authority Preserve Boundary
- Santa Clara County Parks
- Other Protected Lands
- Santa Clara County Parks Trails
- SCVOSA Trails

Figure 10: Existing Recreation Facilities



Santa Clara County, CA; NAD 1983 UTM Zone 10N 37.1907°N 121.7057°W Credits: Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority; SCC Orthomagey, 2022; SCCPRD Park Boundaries, 2023.

Figure 9: Existing Recreation Facilities

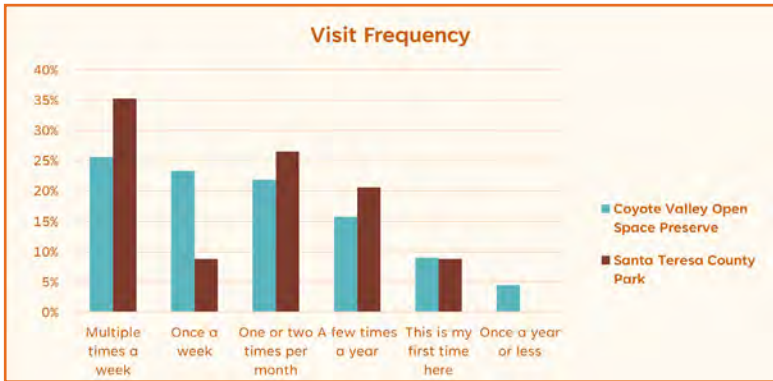
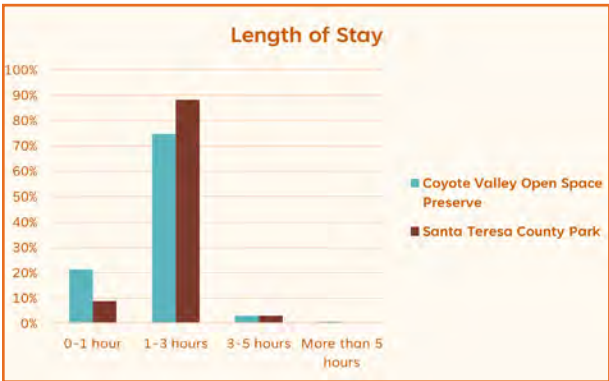
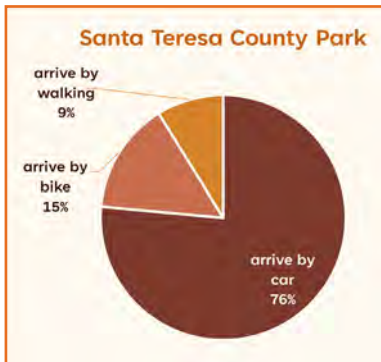
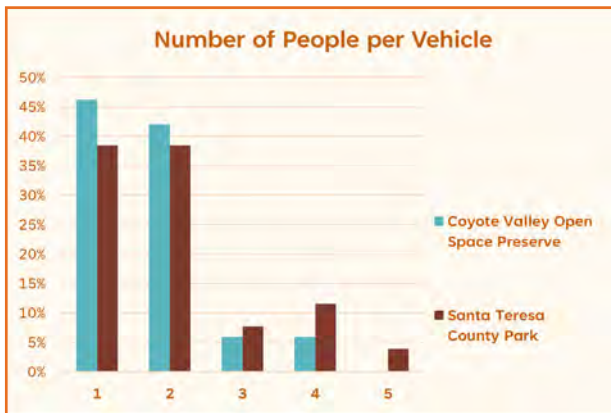
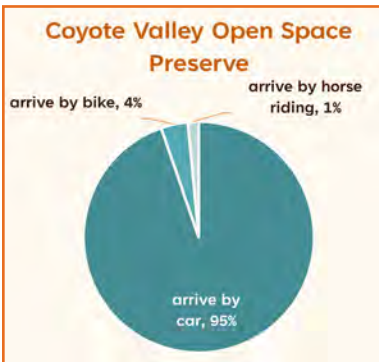
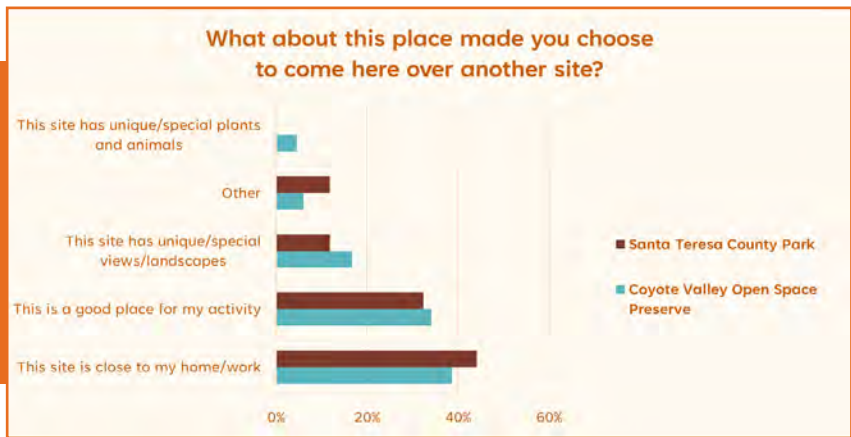


Figure 10: Visitor Use Data



Earth Day 2024 sunset hike, credit: Nick Perry



Photos from community engagement events in Coyote Valley. Top, Earth Day 2024 guided hike on Spreckels Hill. Middle left, A young visitor engages in the CVCAMP outreach booth’s interactive activity at Earth Day 2023. Middle right, CVCAMP outreach booth at the Spina Farms Pumpkin Patch in Coyote Valley. Bottom left, Visitors fill out CVCAMP community surveys at the Coyote Valley Earth Day 2023 celebration. Bottom right, Vietnamese-language small group workshop held at the Vietnamese American Services Center. *Credit: Nick Perry and Civic Edge*



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Existing Conditions

Community engagement is an essential aspect of CVCAMP, and a key part of community engagement is ensuring that OSA reaches the many diverse communities that stand to benefit from Coyote Valley's conserved lands. The community engagement process is also a critical opportunity to put justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access ("JEDIA") principles into action. The project team defined the following goals for engaging the community in the CVCAMP process:

- Raise Public Awareness about Coyote Valley and its Value and Potential
- Create a Shared Vision for the Future of Coyote Valley
- Grow a Community of Supporters
- Prioritize Communities Historically Underrepresented in the Planning Process
- Learn from Experience and Work to Strengthen Connections between the Open Space Authority and the Public

These goals were in part based on learnings from past studies of the community summarized here.

Recent Related Studies

Prior to formally launching the CVCAMP planning process, OSA worked with the firm Scansion to plan initial community engagement activities for its work in Coyote Valley. In 2020 OSA released an online questionnaire that asked the public questions about their knowledge, desired experiences, and perceptions of North Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area (at the time, the Mid-Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area was not yet a focus). The questionnaire was distributed primarily to audiences already familiar with OSA through its email list and website and was made available in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Most survey respondents (over 90%) were familiar with Coyote Valley and approximately 70% were familiar with the protection of land in North Coyote Valley. Interest in the survey was concentrated among people living closest to Coyote Valley. When asked to describe their memories of Coyote Valley, the most frequently mentioned topics were the beauty of the landscape, the valley's ecological balance/harmony, feeling a sense of wonder, feeling a sense of accomplishment (e.g., participating in meaningful activities in the valley), and feeling a sense of duty toward stewardship of the landscape. When asked about what activities they'd like to do in Coyote Valley, the top three activities mentioned were various forms of walking or hiking (70%); experiencing wildlife, including birdwatching (19%); and various forms of biking (14%).

In 2021 OSA began proactively engaging key community representatives and leaders before the start of the master planning process. The goal of this early outreach was to start building long-lasting relationships and incorporate community input into CVCAMP’s multi-year public engagement strategy. These efforts included conversations with community-based groups on how their members currently experience Coyote Valley, discussions and site visits with local Tribal leaders and a series of webinars regarding the importance of Coyote Valley that are currently hosted on the project website.¹⁶

¹⁶ Planning Coyote Valley can be accessed at: www.openspaceauthority.org/our-work/planning-coyote-valley.

Initial Community Engagement in CVCAMP

Public participation in CVCAMP builds upon learnings from OSA’s prior studies of community needs and is critical to meet the project’s engagement goals and the overall goal of ensuring that people from all backgrounds, experiences, and communities can connect to the benefits of the Coyote Valley Conservation Program Areas. OSA strives to include a focus on JEDIA in all aspects of its work. The community engagement process for the Master Plan is a critical opportunity to put JEDIA principles into action.

In pursuit of these goals, the project team engaged community members in CVCAMP using the following approaches (see *Table 3: CVCAMP Community Engagement To-Date*). Details of the community input received can be found in the Key Findings and Take-Aways section on the following pages.

Table 3: CVCAMP Community Engagement To-Date

Name of Activity	Date(s)	Number of People Engaged
Listening Sessions with Community Leaders	April 2022–January 2023	14
Workshops with Community-Based Organizations	April–May 2023	34
Spring 2023 Community Survey	April–May 2023	5,114
Earth Day Celebration	April 2023	325
Outreach at Community Events	April 2022–December 2023	3,250
Outreach through Community Group Presentations	April 2022–December 2023	212
Indirect Outreach through OSA Activities and Events in Coyote Valley	April 2022–December 2023	1,742

In addition to the summarized community-focused activities, OSA is also working to keep agency partners and technical experts engaged in CVCAMP. Core project partners POST and the City of San José are involved in most key team meetings and have helped shape project studies and reports. OSA convenes regular coordination meetings with staff from other partner agencies working in Coyote Valley, including the County of Santa Clara, Valley Water, and the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency. In 2023 OSA also created a Science Advisory Group for CVCAMP that brings together scientific experts, including representatives from State wildlife agencies and universities, to help review the project team’s work and shape the restoration vision for the landscape.

Key Findings and Take-Aways

The following themes and key takeaways summarize feedback from all forms of community engagement completed to date, including input from the spring 2023 community survey, taken by over 5,000 people. To better meet OSA’s JEDIA goals, small group workshops were held in partnership with local community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve diverse demographic groups. Key findings from these small group workshops are noted with **“JEDIA-FOCUS GROUP.”**



A guided tour through the Open Space Preserve, credit: David Mauk

• Familiarity with Coyote Valley

- Awareness of the importance of the Coyote Valley Conservation Program Areas and the goals of CVCAMP is frequently limited to those who have had previous involvement with OSA's work or other conservation efforts that have taken place within Coyote Valley.
- Most participants did not distinguish between the various parcels of land or between protected lands and other areas when talking about Coyote Valley.
- Most participants expressed a positive reaction to the CVCAMP project once they learned about it.
- Participants of all ages and backgrounds expressed excitement to learn more about Coyote Valley through in-person experiences.
- Many participants who grew up in the areas surrounding Coyote Valley and/or were involved in protecting Coyote Valley for conservation expressed a strong interest in contributing their time and expertise towards the planning process.

• Project Vision and Goals

- Many participants expressed the most interest in outreach efforts that focused on nature and protecting the environment, most notably "Enhanced Wildlife Habitat and Ecological Connectivity" and "Adapting to Changing Climate Conditions."
- Few participants selected "sustainably manage and restore water resources" as a top goal for the area, despite it being one of the top two goals for the project indicating a potential lack of familiarity with this topic area.
- **JEDIA FOCUS GROUP:** Participants in CVCAMP's older adults focused workshop specifically selected "Improving Public Health" and "Respect, Honor, Preserve, and Interpret Cultural Heritage & Historic Resources" as top goals.

- **JEDIA FOCUS GROUP:** Several participants in CVCAMP's Vietnamese-speaking workshop expressed feeling connected to "Leveraging Landscape Features to Boost the Local Economy" and wanted more information about what that could look like.

• Types of Public Uses/Activities

- Most participants responded positively to the activities and amenities that were proposed as ways to spend time in nature in Coyote Valley.
- The most popular choices for activities in Coyote Valley included trails for hiking, walking, and running; wildlife viewing areas; and places to stop/sit and enjoy scenic views. Trails for horseback riding and mountain biking were less frequently selected as desired use by those who participated in engagement activities.
- Many participants expressed interest in educational programming and docent-led group activities, especially wildflower hikes, stargazing tours, and hikes that focus on the history or cultural resources in the area.
- Many participants expressed interest in youth and family programs that provide opportunities to spend time with family, which is a key motivator for visiting Coyote Valley. Participants also identified the need to expose young children to nature and the benefits of preserving open spaces for future generations.
- Many participants in the online survey expressed interest in preserving access to existing shooting sports facilities in Coyote Valley on lands near (but not including) CVCAMP properties.
- **JEDIA FOCUS GROUP:** Several participants in CVCAMP's Spanish-speaking workshop mentioned wanting to bring their children and family members to the Coyote Valley Conservation Program Areas.

- **JEDIA FOCUS GROUP:** Several participants in both the Spanish-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking CVCAMP workshops spoke about the importance of exposing young children to nature, the benefits of preserving open spaces, and interest in access to educational and volunteer opportunities for their families.
- **JEDIA FOCUS GROUP:** Several older adult participants and Spanish-speaking participants expressed interest in guided hikes or group tours with experts who could share knowledge about the land, including flora and fauna.
- **Accessibility and Types of Amenities**
 - Many participants expressed concerns with the availability of restrooms, resting spaces such as tables and benches, and parking for visitors.
 - Concerns about excessive heat and lack of access to shade were mentioned as barriers to spending more time in Coyote Valley.
- Coyote Valley’s location and lack of public transportation connections were also cited as a reason community members choose other natural areas over Coyote Valley.
- Safety concerns mentioned included not wanting to hike/walk alone or lacking means to call for help in case of an emergency.
- Some participants cited a lack of free time as a barrier to spending more time in nature generally. This highlights the need to make visiting Coyote Valley easier if the goal is to encourage community members to spend their free time there.
- **JEDIA FOCUS GROUP:** Several youth participants identified their main barriers to accessing nature included not knowing how to discover new areas to visit and dependence on a car or a parent to give them a ride to access open spaces further from where they live.



OSA's Earth Day event in 2023 featured an interactive booth where guests could write or draw why Coyote Valley is important to them on colorful shapes representing the different benefits of Coyote Valley's open space, credit: Nick Perry



Earth Day 2023 showing members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area delivering a land acknowledgement, credit: Nick Perry



Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, credit: Nick Perry



CULTURAL HERITAGE & HISTORIC RESOURCES

Existing Conditions

Coyote Valley's remarkable landscape is shaped by more than 10,000 years of human habitation. According to the cultural tradition of local Tribes, Indigenous peoples have called Coyote Valley home since time immemorial. Their long presence in the valley and stewardship of its natural resources is evident in numerous archaeological and cultural sites. Due to the sensitivity and sacredness of these sites, specific locations and details are not shared in this Report, but OSA will share any knowledge about these sites gained through CVCAMP with local Tribal representatives.

Coyote Valley is located at the edge of two Tribal cultural and linguistic groups—the Thámien-speaking people to the north and the Mutsun speaking people to the south. Today, multiple Tribal groups consider all or portions of Coyote Valley part of their traditional territory, including the Tamien Nation, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area, and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. The OSA is committed to working closely with local Tribes to steward and protect cultural sites on the lands OSA manages in Coyote Valley.

During the era of Spanish colonization, expeditions traveled through Coyote Valley, likely following Indigenous trails. The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail marks the route of one of these expeditions and in Coyote Valley roughly parallels the route of today's Santa Teresa Boulevard. The trail connecting the Spanish colonial-era missions—Mission Santa Clara to the north with Mission San Juan Bautista to the south—eventually was formalized into what is now Monterey Road, a part of the larger historic El Camino Real mission trail.

After Mexico's independence from Spain, mission lands were secularized and divided into large land grants, known as ranchos. Most of Coyote Valley became part of Rancho Laguna Seca, named after the natural Laguna Seca wetland at the valley's northern edge. During the rancho-era, Coyote Valley was primarily used for grazing livestock. The rancho was sold to the Fisher family in 1845, who built homes, barns, and other buildings that now constitute the historic Coyote Ranch complex within the County of Santa Clara's Coyote Creek Parkway. The main creek on the west side of Coyote Valley gets its name from the Fisher family.

Coyote Valley developed as a farming district around 1850 and the hamlet of Coyote formed on Monterey Road, first as a stagecoach stop and later a train stop serving nearby farms. Growth of the area can be attributed to the Gold Rush, creation of the transcontinental railroad and local railroads, and the refrigerator railroad car used to transport agricultural produce. By the early 1900s, Coyote Valley and the larger Santa Clara Valley was known as the "Valley of Heart's Delight" for its pastoral beauty and garden-like atmosphere dominated by fruit and nut orchards. Although farming continues in Coyote Valley today, land speculation by developers and changing economic conditions has resulted in a reduction in the amount of cultivated land and the removal of many of the valley's orchards. On CVCAMP lands, the most prominent built features from the twentieth century are the infrastructure built to drain its historic wetlands for farming. This includes the drainage ditch now known as Fisher Creek, a channel that diverts water into Coyote Creek and away from the historic wetlands and the Laguna Seca on the western edge of the valley.



For decades, North Coyote Valley was slated to be developed with office parks; this vision is represented most prominently by the existing IBM campus on Bailey Road. On CVCAMP lands, evidence of this period includes infrastructure built in anticipation of large-scale development such as the Laguna Seca dam—a partially built earthen dam that was designed to turn the northernmost portion of the historic Laguna Seca into a flood control retention basin. Despite these changes, CVCAMP lands retain a natural and rural character that connects people to the multi-layered history of the region.

Recent Related Studies

Known cultural sites from both Indigenous and western groups are present within Coyote Valley. The first American-recorded Native American archaeological site in Coyote Valley was identified in 1932. Historical resources within this area exhibit both significant precontact Native American resources and significant historic resources. There are a total of 64 previously recorded resources within this area: 34 are historic sites and buildings and 29 are precontact Native American archaeological sites; one site is multicomponent, meaning it contains both precontact and historical materials. No formally recorded Tribal Cultural

Resources (TCRs) are located within the planning area, although fewer studies have occurred since 2014, when TCRs were recognized under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Additional TCRs may be identified in the AB 52 CEQA Tribal consultation process.

CVCAMP Studies

In September 2023, the project team received a California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) records search from the CHRIS Northwest Information Center (NWIC) at Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California. To better understand the local context, the search area geographic extents went beyond CVCAMP properties and encompassed the area roughly bounded on the north by the Santa Teresa Hills, the east by US 101, the south by San Bruno Avenue, and the west by the first ridgeline of the Santa Cruz Mountain foothills. The CHRIS search identified 133 previously conducted cultural resources studies within the records search area. Another 48 reports cover portions of the area, including overview reports, regional studies, and records searches. The Consultant Team combined data from the CHRIS search with data on geology and the historic ecology of Coyote Valley to create a cultural resources “sensitivity map” for Coyote



An existing structure in the township of Coyote, credit: Nick Perry

Valley. This sensitivity map can be used to help predict the likelihood of cultural resources on CVCAMP lands and will be used to help inform their future use and restoration.

Key Findings and Take-Aways

- **Coyote Valley is a Culturally Significant Landscape for Native Americans:** Through both early engagement with local Tribes and historical research, the OSA is working to better understand the importance of Coyote Valley to the area’s Native peoples. The area’s cultural significance is evident in the existing archaeological record; Coyote Valley is home to one of the oldest recorded archaeological sites in Santa Clara County. As confirmed by the results of the CHRIS records search, Coyote Valley has a high density of precontact sites. By mapping known sites, it is possible to see trends and use this information to protect sacred and sensitive areas within the planning footprint. As plans for restoration and use of these lands come into focus, areas identified as sensitive may warrant future study and archaeological surveying to ensure the components of these sites are better understood, protected, and stewarded in collaboration with local Tribes.

- **Incorporate Tribal Knowledge and Perspectives into the Planning Process:** The records search conducted by the Consultant Team only scratches the surface of Coyote Valley’s cultural and historic significance. To understand the valley’s Tribal cultural resources and heritage more fully, continued engagement with local Native American communities is key. Tribal member knowledge on topics like traditional plant usage and culturally significant features or areas can help shape plans for the protection, restoration, stewardship, and interpretation of these resources on CVCAMP lands.

- **Coyote Valley Connects People to Santa Clara Valley’s History:** All major eras of Santa Clara Valley’s history are evident in Coyote Valley. Areas that evoke the region’s natural history, Tribal history, Spanish and Mexican eras, “Valley of Heart’s Delight” agricultural era, and early Silicon Valley are all located within close proximity to one another on or near CVCAMP lands. This rich cultural landscape is ripe with opportunities to interpret the region’s complex history. CVCAMP offers the opportunity to incorporate interpretive features and programming that connects people to the history of Coyote Valley in engaging and meaningful ways.



Investigating potential resources in Coyote Valley, credit: Nick Perry



Rainstorm and rainbow over Palm Avenue in Coyote Valley, credit: Nick Perry



CHANGING CLIMATE

Existing Conditions

Coyote Valley and the greater San Francisco Bay Region are characterized by a Mediterranean-style climate, with warm dry summers and cool wet winters. Annual temperatures in nearby San Jose typically range from an average of 70.0 degrees Fahrenheit in July to 50.8 degrees Fahrenheit in December, and the average precipitation ranges from 0.00 inches in July and August to 2.27 inches in January (see *Figure 11: Existing Climate/Setting*).¹⁷

Coyote Valley also experiences occasional extreme weather events, including droughts, flooding, and wildfire; these events are increasingly influenced by climate change, urban development along waterways, and fuel loads in adjacent wildland areas. The frequency of such climate-driven events is anticipated to increase over time in the face of climate change, including a projected increase of as many as 13 additional extreme heat days by mid-century.¹⁸ The CVCAMP planning process will therefore strive to address the potential impacts of a changing climate on the anticipated land uses associated with CVCAMP, including wildlife habitat, aquatic resources, public access, agriculture, and transportation. Researchers will consider how each element of CVCAMP may be impacted by climate change and how to address these vulnerabilities or potentially increase the adaptability of systems and species to a changing climate.

¹⁷ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). 2023. National Centers for Environmental Information.

¹⁸ County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability. 2023. Climate Resilience Programs and Resources.

Recent Related Studies

While no prior studies have specifically focused on climate change in Coyote Valley to-date, the planning process will strive to align with larger scale resiliency planning efforts such as the *Silicon Valley 2.0 Climate Adaptation Guidebook*¹⁹ and other state and local resources, given that coordination across planning scales will be required to comprehensively address climate change in the region. Such adjacent and overlapping planning efforts include Climate Action Plans that have recently been developed by the City of San José, Valley Water, and the City of Morgan Hill. In addition, the CalEnviroScreen model provides a measurement of the impacts of environmental pollution on urban areas across the state of California, which may be utilized to help to identify local communities with higher risk and vulnerability and to identify and prioritize climate adaptation strategies.

CVCAMP Studies

To ensure a consistent approach to addressing climate change, the project team developed a preliminary Climate Resiliency Framework²⁰ for CVCAMP that strives to establish a uniform approach to determining how climate will influence water availability, habitat, agriculture, and other factors and address the uncertainty about these relationships. This research process included a literature review, including tools, guidance documents, and datasets, and interviews and workshops with key project stakeholders to assess how climate change can be addressed in a consistent fashion across the key topic areas of CVCAMP.

¹⁹ County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability. 2015. *Silicon Valley 2.0 Climate Adaptation Guidebook*. May 29.

²⁰ Greene Economics. 2023c. *Climate Resiliency Framework Memorandum*. November.



Key Findings and Take-Aways

- **Water Resources Modeling Will Inform Adaptation Planning:**

Considering the anticipated changes in precipitation associated with ongoing climate change, hydrology and hydraulic modeling will guide much of the climate-related research and planning for CVCAMP.

- **Integrate Scenario Planning into the Resiliency Framework:**

Scenario planning (a consideration for possible futures) that involves extremes may be utilized, but whether to use monthly or daily forecast data requires further discussion. Scenario planning would also help inform adaptive management strategies.

- **Use a Decision Scaling Approach to Incorporate Vulnerability & Risk:**

In lieu of traditional scenario planning, a decision scaling platform may be utilized for climate change analysis²¹ associated with CVCAMP. Decision scaling integrates vulnerability-based analysis of water systems with traditional risk-based assessment methods, allowing for the assessment of climate vulnerability across a wide range of potential future climate

conditions and estimation of the probability of specific outcomes. This approach was recently implemented on behalf of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) for the Pajaro Valley Flood-Managed Aquifer Recharge (Flood-MAR) Program to determine the sensitivity and vulnerability of the water system to a range of stress (weather or climate possibilities) and establish an adaptive management framework to address risk over time.

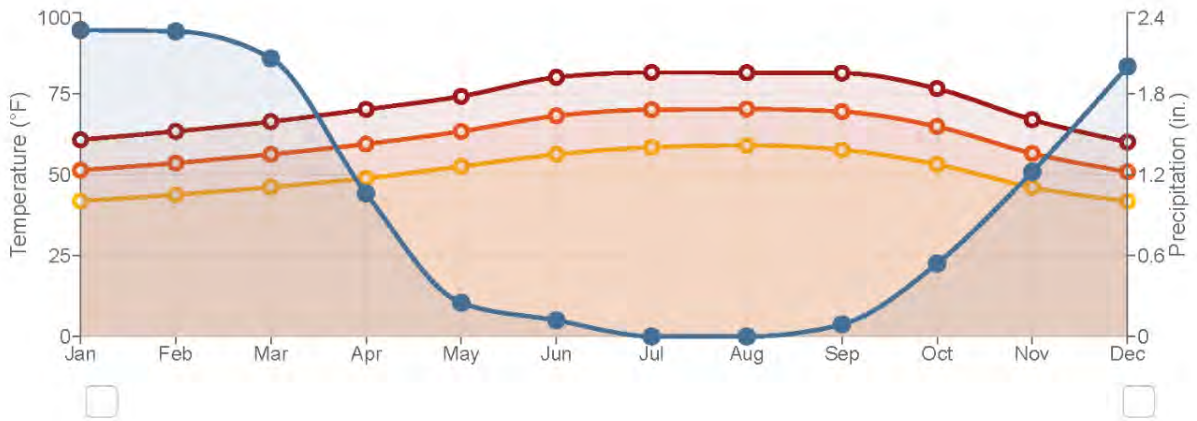
- **Utilize Climate-Smart Planning Techniques and Tools:**

Take climate projections into account when planning and designing restoration and access improvements in Coyote Valley. Consider using a “climate analog” approach to designing habitat improvements (i.e., selecting native plant species from other locations in California that currently have a similar climate to the projected future conditions in Coyote Valley) to ensure that critical vegetation–wildlife habitat associations can be maintained over time. This approach may also be utilized to select agricultural crops that will be suitable for changing climatic conditions in Coyote Valley as well.

²¹ California Department of Water Resources. 2018. *Climate Action Plan Phase 2: Climate Change Analysis Guidance*. September, 50 p.



Dry summer conditions in Coyote Valley, credit: Derek Neumann



Month	● MAX TEMP (°F)	● MIN TEMP (°F)	● AVG TEMP (°F)	● PRECIP (IN)
Jan	60.7	41.8	51.3	2.27
Feb	63.3	43.7	53.5	2.26
Mar	66.3	46.1	56.2	2.06
Apr	70.1	48.8	59.4	1.06
May	74.1	52.5	63.3	0.25
Jun	80.0	56.2	68.1	0.12
Jul	81.5	58.4	70.0	0.00
Aug	81.4	59.0	70.2	0.00
Sep	81.3	57.6	69.4	0.09
Oct	76.5	53.1	64.8	0.54
Nov	66.9	46.0	56.5	1.22
Dec	60.0	41.7	50.8	2.00



Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Climate Normals
San Jose Station USW00023293, 2006-2020

Figure 12: Existing Climate/Setting



Figure 11: Existing Climate/Setting

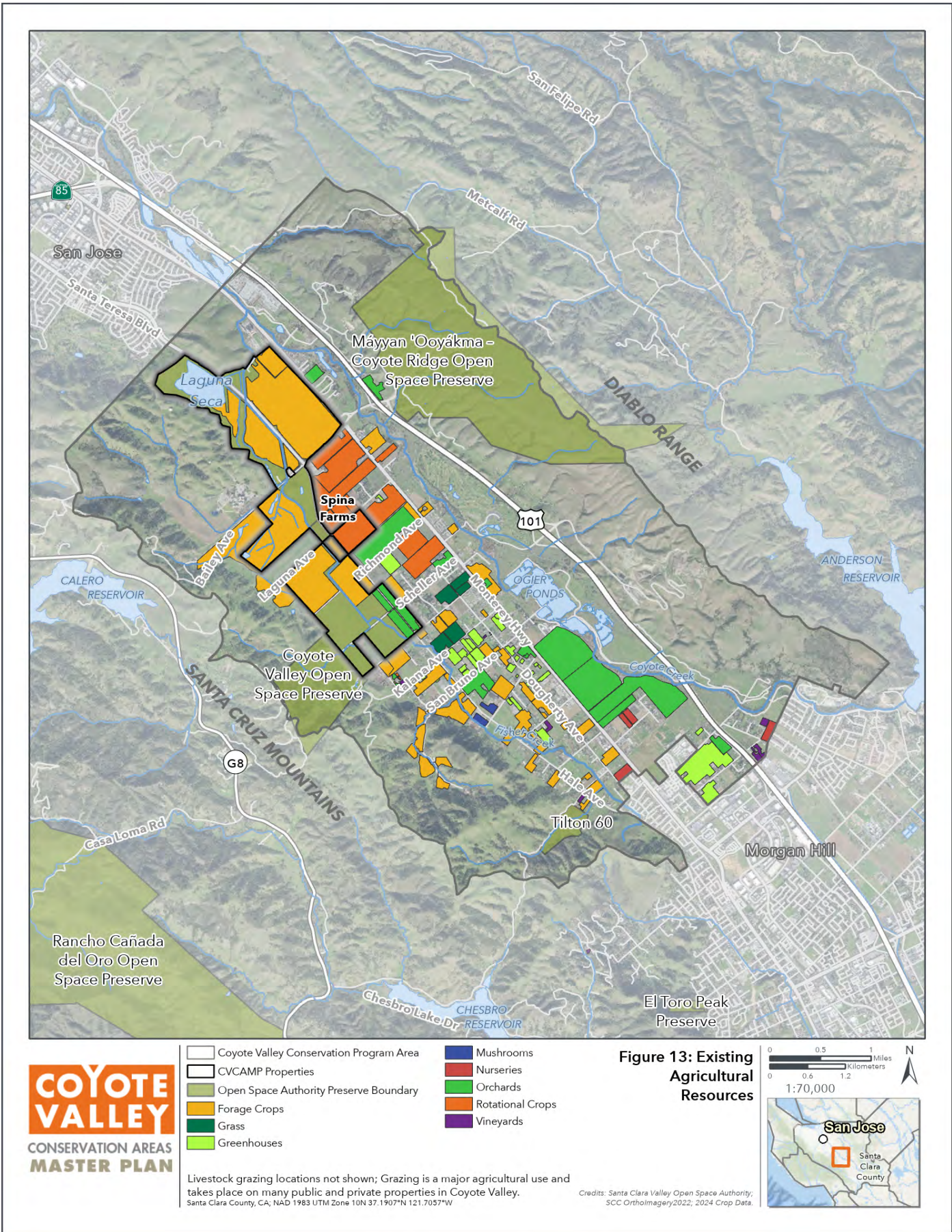


Figure 12: Existing Agricultural Resources



LOCAL AGRICULTURE

Existing Conditions

Against the odds, Coyote Valley’s farmlands persist as a lasting link to Santa Clara Valley’s rich agricultural legacy. For over a century, Santa Clara County’s identity and economy were defined by its thriving agricultural industry. Santa Clara Valley, including Coyote Valley, earned the nickname the “Valley of Heart’s Delight” for its mild climate and the pastoral beauty of vast fruit and nut orchards stretching across the valley floor. But California’s post-World War II suburban growth boom—locally super-charged by the emergence of the “Silicon Valley” high-tech industry—rapidly consumed almost all of northern Santa Clara Valley’s agricultural lands by the end of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, the agricultural “Valley of Heart’s Delight” lived on in southern Santa Clara Valley around the cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy.

Coyote Valley’s agricultural lands are located both geographically and figuratively at the edge of the county’s two historic identities: the high-tech Silicon Valley to the north and the agricultural “Valley of Heart’s Delight” to the south. From 1984 to 2021, the City of José General Plan designated most of Coyote Valley for long-term development. This prompted developers to purchase many of the valley’s agricultural properties in anticipation of future development. As development proposals were crafted and debated, many landowners used short-term leases with local farmers to maintain the land. Due to the short-term nature of these leases, most farmers only planted crops like hay that require little or no long-term agricultural investment or infrastructure.

Over time, this developer-driven land speculation, combined with uncertainty over the future of Coyote Valley, changing agricultural economic conditions, scarcity of affordable farmworker housing, and other challenges, resulted in a reduction in the acreage of land actively farmed in Coyote Valley. Despite these challenges, Coyote

Valley remains an important part of Santa Clara County’s \$358-million-dollar agricultural economy, and agriculture remains the dominant land use of the valley floor.²² Specific crops and acreage vary from year-to-year, but Coyote Valley’s existing agricultural lands are generally dedicated to field crops (hay, pasture, and rangelands), Asian market vegetables, fruit and nuts, mushrooms, and flowers and nursery crops.

²² County of Santa Clara. 2022. *From Farm to Work: How Agricultural Products Reach Your Plate*, Crop Report 2022.



Spina Farms Pumpkin Patch, credit: Nick Perry



After CVCAMP lands were purchased and protected, OSA and POST extended short-term leases with local farmers who previously leased the properties from developers. As a result, most of CVCAMP lands continue to be used for low-intensity agriculture like hay farming and cattle grazing. One exception is the approximately 57-acre walnut orchard flanking Santa Teresa Boulevard in Mid-Coyote Valley. In recent years, standing water from winter storms and the area's high groundwater table damaged many of the orchard's decade-old walnut trees. These conditions, combined with declines in the market value for walnuts, prompted the walnut grower to step away from the lease in 2023. Generally, the higher-groundwater table and seasonal flooding near Fisher Creek on the northwestern side of Coyote Valley makes orchards more difficult to grow. Instead, this part of Coyote Valley was historically farmed with row crops and other agricultural uses. With these conditions in mind, OSA is currently working on a near-term management plan for the orchard as CVCAMP plans the property's long-term future.

In late 2021, the OSA—in partnership with the State of California's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation program (SALC), Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), and Santa Clara

County Planning Department—protected 60 acres of prime farmland at Laguna Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard. In 2022 this property, known as "Laguna 60," was leased to Spina Farms, a popular pumpkin patch that first began operating in Coyote Valley in the 1940s. Spina Farms is one of several popular agricultural tourism (agritourism) destinations present in Coyote Valley; others include fresh produce stands, a U-Pick orchard, and wineries (see [Figure 12: Existing Agricultural Resources](#)).

With the long-term future of the CVCAMP lands as protected open space secured, new opportunities are emerging to enhance the myriad benefits agricultural uses can provide, like floodplain protection, job creation, carbon sequestration, sustainable and healthy local food, and connecting people to Santa Clara Valley's agricultural heritage. An important goal of the CVCAMP planning process is, therefore, to conserve or expand these remaining working lands where feasible, provide support to local farmers, help strengthen the area's agricultural economy, and seek opportunities to promote regenerative agricultural practices that are complimentary to existing and proposed wildlife habitat, water resources restoration, and passive public access land uses within Coyote Valley.



Row crops in Coyote Valley, credit: Derek Neumann

Recent Related Studies

Many local and regional agricultural studies and assessments have been conducted prior to CVCAMP that will help to develop a successful working landscape in Coyote Valley. These studies include:

- **Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan:**²³ The Agricultural Plan represents a comprehensive regional effort to conserve the remaining agricultural lands in the Santa Clara Valley and aims to reduce future greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and provide a sustainable agricultural future by limiting new development to existing urban areas and conserving existing agricultural lands. The Agricultural Plan is an innovative approach to agricultural preservation that will reduce future conversion of local farmland and the associated increase in GHG emissions while growing a vibrant local food economy that contributes to the region's quality of life.
- **Sustaining Agriculture and Conservation in Coyote Valley Feasibility Study:**²⁴ The Feasibility Study explores and confirms the feasibility of developing an ecologically and economically sustainable agriculture resource area within Coyote Valley, in an effort to revitalize agriculture as a significant local resource over a 25-year time period.

²³ Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (OSA). 2018. *Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan*. January 3.

²⁴ Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE). 2012. *Sustaining Agriculture and Conservation in Coyote Valley Feasibility Study & Recommendations*. November.

- **County of Santa Clara Food System Workplan:**²⁵ The Food System Workplan provides a framework for the County of Santa Clara's food, restaurants, agriculture, and health access initiative based on interviews with food system stakeholders, conversations with food system collaborative groups, and a review of existing research. Goals of the workplan are to create a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable food system.

CVCAMP Studies

To build off these foundational agricultural studies and ensure that CVCAMP is in alignment with larger-scale agricultural programs, the CVCAMP team has recently conducted interviews and convened an agricultural roundtable with regional and local organizations that are dedicated to conserving agricultural lands and supporting local farmers. This Agricultural Program Alignment²⁶ process is ongoing and will continue during the visioning and design phases of the master planning process. The City of San José and County of Santa Clara also have ongoing efforts to ensure that agricultural zoning aligns more closely within their jurisdictions.

In addition, the CVCAMP team has developed an Agricultural Project Feasibility Screening Tool²⁷ and has conducted a preliminary assessment of potential agricultural projects, practices, and products that were discussed during the program alignment interviews and roundtable. This preliminary screening process has evaluated each potential project for its technical and market feasibility and for compatibility with the key goals and topic areas of CVCAMP, such as wildlife habitat and connectivity, water resources restoration, and passive public access and use.

²⁵ County of Santa Clara. 2021. *County of Santa Clara Food System Workplan*. May.

²⁶ Greene Economics. 2023a. *Agricultural Program Alignment Memorandum*. November.

²⁷ Greene Economics. 2023b. *Agricultural Project Feasibility Screening Tool Report*. November.

Key Findings and Take-Aways

- **Land Access and Tenure for Farmers is Key:**

One of the primary barriers to agriculture in Coyote Valley is access to affordable and productive land for farming. The permanent protection of CVCAMP lands creates new opportunities to work with farmers and provide land access. This could be in the form of affordable land leases, through the creation of an agricultural incubator where new farmers can lease small plots of land and share infrastructure, and through the “buy-protect-sell” model where farmers are sold protected lands with a conservation easement that permanently preserves their conservation values. These types of land access models will be studied further as CVCAMP planning progresses and it becomes clearer what portions of CVCAMP lands are best suited for long-term agricultural use versus other uses, like habitat restoration or public recreation.

- **Regulatory & Policy Support is Needed:**

Farmers need more regulatory and policy support to ensure access to the resources needed for farming, namely, affordable access to water and affordable nearby housing for both farmers and farm employees. As noted in the Water Resources section of this Report, careful management of Coyote Valley’s water resources could meet farmers’ needs. Housing

is a more difficult problem to solve; building new housing on CVCAMP lands creates conflicts with their primary conservation values as protected open space. The OSA will continue to work with its regional partners to support policies and projects that result in new farmworker housing at appropriate nearby locations.

- **Myriad Agricultural Uses & Programs**

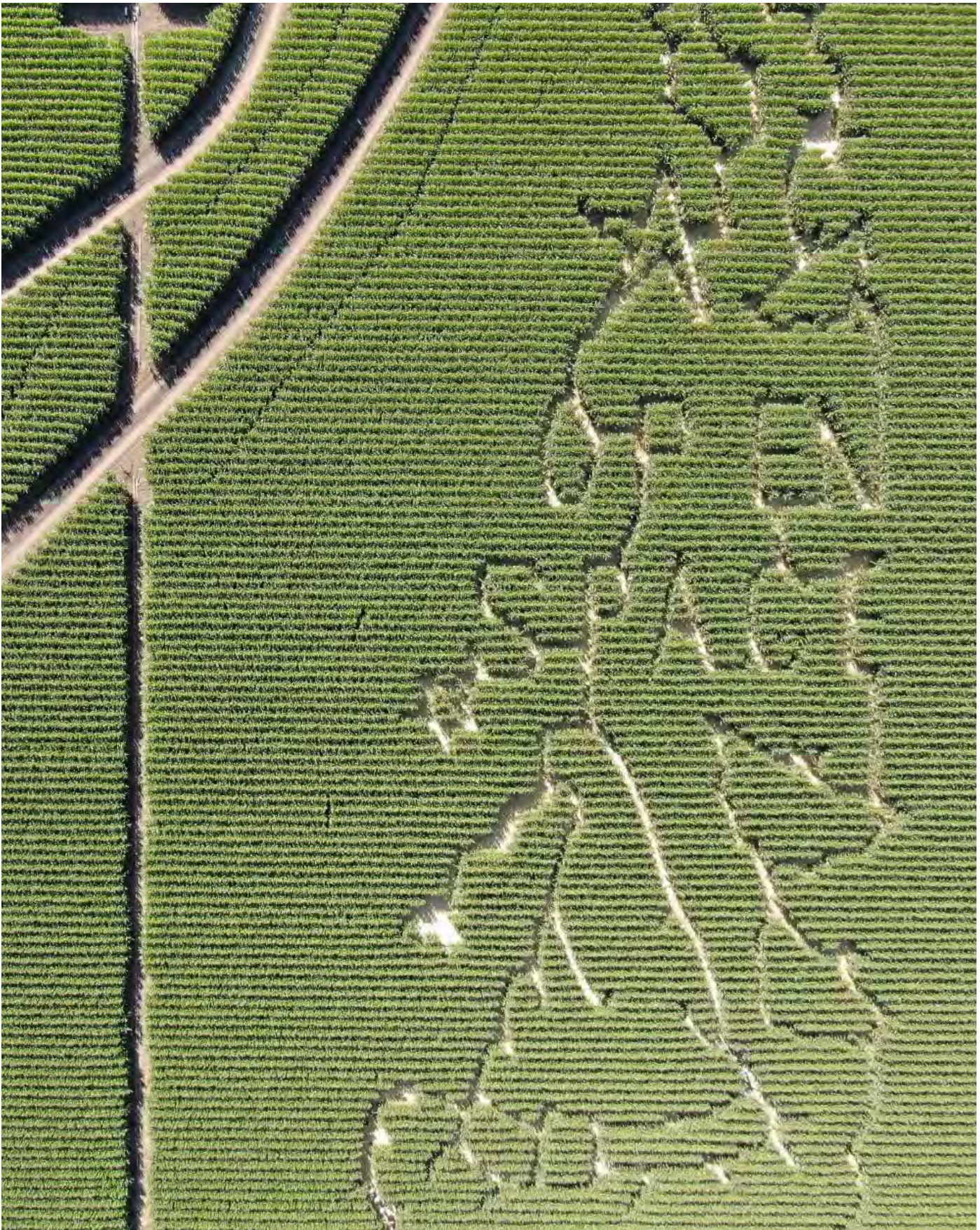
Compliment CVCAMP’s Vision: CVCAMP’s Agricultural Project Screening Tool has identified several potential agricultural projects/programs that may be viable on Coyote Valley’s protected lands. Although challenges like those mentioned exist, agricultural uses like demonstration farms, native plant nursery, regenerative/adaptive livestock grazing, and apricot or other stone fruit orchards show promise in Coyote Valley. In the near-term, a Coyote Valley marketing/branding campaign that helps distinguish local agricultural products in the marketplace could add to product value and strengthen the economic viability of farming in the region. Additional potential agricultural projects, practices, and products will continue to be evaluated during the master planning process, with a goal of creating a suite of agricultural land uses that are complementary to the overarching conservation and restoration goals for Coyote Valley.



Walnut orchard planting in Coyote Valley, credit: Derek Neumann



Mid-Coyote Valley agricultural lands, credit Derek Neumann



Spina Farms corn maze from above, spelling out the words Open Space, credit: Derek Neumann



LOCAL ECONOMY

Existing Conditions

Coyote Valley is home to numerous uses that leverage its natural setting and agricultural landscape in support of the local economy. Most prominent among these economically beneficial uses is the role the valley plays in the larger agricultural economy of Santa Clara Valley. According to the County of Santa Clara's most recent crop report, the gross value of Santa Clara County's agricultural production for 2022 was \$358,862,000, an increase of 5.6% from the 2021 value of \$339,965,000.²⁸ Some of the County's highest-value crops are grown within Coyote Valley, including nursery crops, mushrooms, Asian vegetables, wine grapes, cherries, livestock, and hay/grain. These agricultural uses provide sustainable local food sources, create jobs, and continue to the rich legacy of Santa Clara Valley as an agricultural region. As summarized in the previous section of this Report, CVCAMP offers opportunities to introduce new agricultural uses and programs that increase the overall economic value of agriculture in the region.

Agritourism and outdoor recreation also feature prominently on the landscape. Coyote Valley's wineries, U-pick orchards, public parks, and private recreational facilities (e.g., Coyote Valley Golf Club, Coyote Valley Sporting Clays) all support the larger southern Santa Clara Valley's burgeoning role as an outdoor recreation and agritourism destination. With land use protections now in place, new opportunities are emerging that can capitalize on increased certainty that Coyote Valley will continue to remain an open space and agricultural destination that supports these kinds of uses and jobs.

²⁸ County of Santa Clara. 2022. *From Farm to Work: How Agricultural Products Reach Your Plate, Crop Report 2022*.

Already, CVCAMP lands are helping to support the local economy. Since 2022, OSA has leased its 60-acre property at the corner of Laguna Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard—Laguna 60—to Spina Farms. Spina Farms operates a popular fruit stand in the summer and large pumpkin patch in the fall that employs dozens of people and attracts thousands of visitors from throughout the region. CVCAMP offers the opportunity to incorporate these uses into the long-term vision for the property and to consider additional agricultural uses on other CVCAMP properties that can support the larger agricultural economy of the area.

The restoration of CVCAMP lands is also creating opportunities to support the local economy by generating green jobs and supporting nature-based tourism. Habitat restoration can support nature-based tourism by enhancing the valley's scenic value, increasing opportunities for wildlife viewing and offering new destinations for visitors to explore. However, these public uses will need to be carefully planned and managed to ensure CVCAMP lands are not over-visited at the expense of the wildlife that relies on the valley's rare habitat for survival. Perhaps the biggest potential for Coyote Valley's natural lands to support the local economy is leveraging the land's ability to support the creation of new green jobs. It will take the work of many hands over many generations to ensure these lands achieve their full potential as a resilient landscape that provides habitat, bolsters biodiversity, and serves as a natural floodplain.



Recent Related Studies

In 2021 OSA worked with the Alpha Group to conduct the Coyote Valley Preliminary Economic Assessment.^{29, 30} The study provides a baseline economic assessment of the markets surrounding Coyote Valley and identified potential tracks for future economic development that could generate revenues that can be used for the long-term restoration and stewardship of CVCAMP's protected lands. Ideas studied included program fees, agricultural land lease programs, and placemaking/branding programs. The assessment also studied the potential for OSA to collaborate with other government partners and private businesses on programs and projects that increase the overall economic value of Coyote Valley in ways that are in keeping with its conservation vision. These potential activities/programs will be evaluated as part of ongoing economic, agriculture, and climate-related studies for CVCAMP.

The City of San José is currently conducting the Coyote Valley Corridor Study to analyze existing and potential new uses for privately owned properties located along the east side of Monterey Road in Coyote Valley, including the historic hamlet of Coyote. The primary objective of this study is to determine a suite of land uses that are compatible with or in direct support of the region's agriculture and open space resources. The study aims to ensure the ongoing economic viability of this area and includes economic and land use assessments of the area. OSA is providing input to the City of San José on the study to ensure a consistent vision for Coyote Valley that complements plans for CVCAMP lands to the west of the Monterey Road corridor.

CVCAMP Studies

Given the recent nature of the preliminary economic assessment of Coyote Valley, no new economic studies are currently being conducted

²⁹ Alpha Group. 2021. *Coyote Valley Preliminary Economic Assessment*. January 27.

³⁰ Alpha Group. 2020. *Alpha Group Summary Memo Deliverable #1*.

specifically for CVCAMP. Further investigation of market potential for various economic development initiatives on CVCAMP lands may be warranted once the vision for their restoration and use comes into focus in upcoming phases of the project.

Key Findings and Take-Aways

• Consider Market Potential of Plan

Components: While the primary opportunity to boost the local economy via CVCAMP will likely be focused on promoting and sustaining agricultural production and green jobs in Coyote Valley, other related opportunities may include agritourism destinations for visitors, marketing and branding of Coyote Valley produce and products, or low impact fee-generating activities (such as program fees from tours and classes)³¹ that can create revenue streams for stewarding and maintaining the landscape over time. Such options not only have the potential to support the local economy but also to directly contribute to placemaking in Coyote Valley, creating a unique identity that can be celebrated by both local communities and regional visitors. These and other opportunities will be explored in future phases of the planning process.

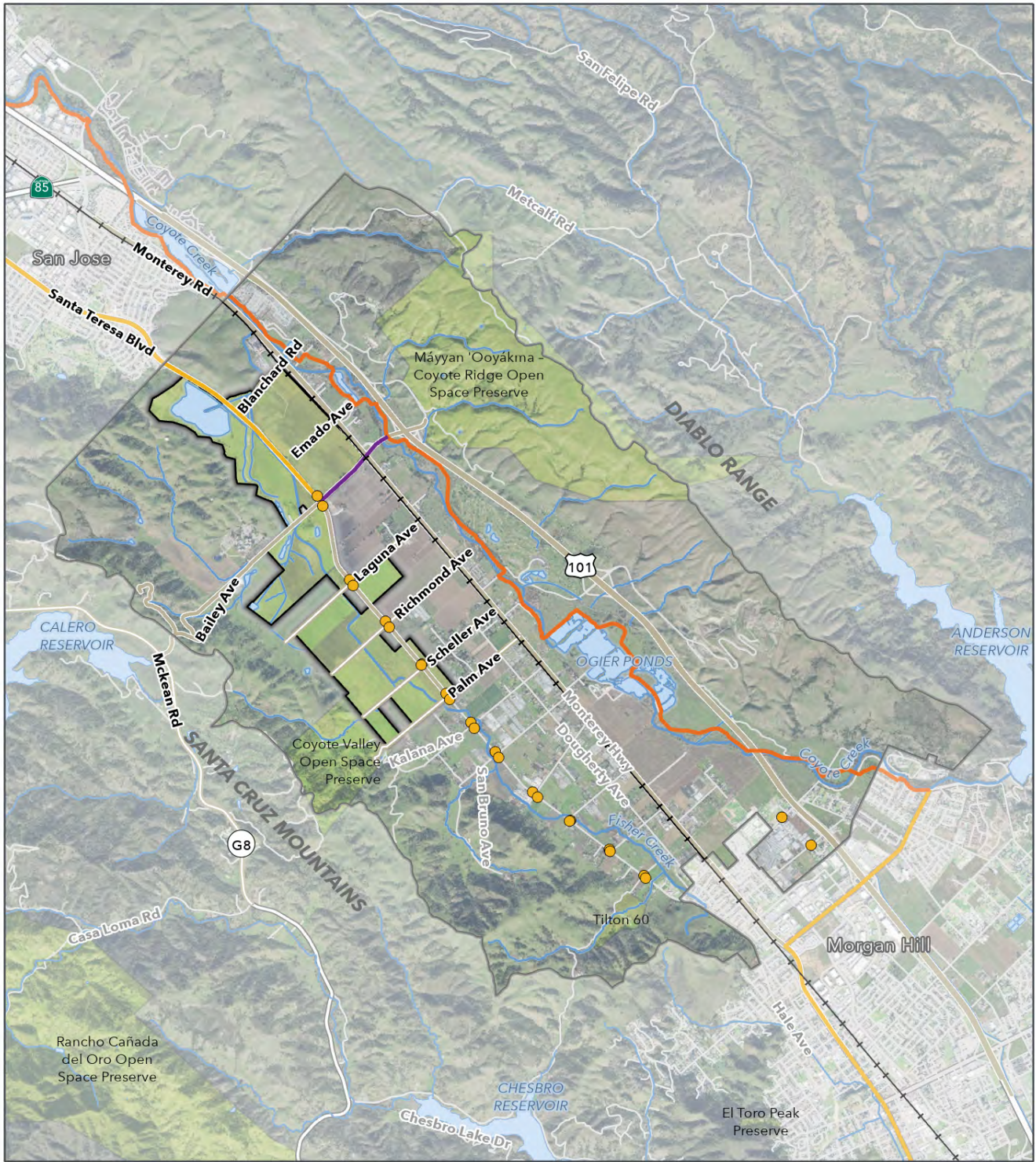
³¹ Alpha Group. 2021. *Coyote Valley Preliminary Economic Assessment*. January 27.



Coyote Valley orchard, credit: Derek Neumann



Habitat restoration along Fisher Creek in Coyote Valley; Coyote Valley's restoration creates opportunities for people to steward the landscape as volunteers and through new green jobs that support the local economy, *credit: David Mauk*



COYOTE VALLEY
CONSERVATION AREAS
MASTER PLAN

- Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area
- CVCAMP Properties
- Open Space Authority Preserve Boundary
- Bus Stop
- Caltrain Railway
- Multi-Use Bike Path
- Bike Lane
- Bicyclists Permitted
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road

Santa Clara County, CA; NAD 1983 UTM Zone 10N 37.1907°N 121.7057°W

Figure 14: Existing Transportation Network



Credits: Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority; SCC Orthomagey, 2022; Ridership by Stop, 2023; Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority; Caltrans, 2023; Caltrans District 4 State Highway System Bike Map.

Figure 13: Existing Transportation Network



TRANSPORTATION

Existing Conditions

Coyote Valley's location along major transportation corridors presents both great opportunities and challenges toward achieving CVCAMP's goals. On one hand, the existing transportation network allows quick and convenient access to Coyote Valley's open space amenities for those arriving via private vehicle or bus. On the other hand, the network of high-speed commute corridors creates conditions that are inhospitable to bicyclists and pedestrians, challenging for farmers to navigate, and oftentimes deadly for wildlife trying to cross the valley floor.

The primary roadways in Coyote Valley include the following:

- **Santa Teresa Boulevard:** Bisects the North Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area, extending north into San José and south to Morgan Hill, where it is known as Hale Avenue. It is classified in the City of San José's General Plan as a "City Connector" street. The County of Santa Clara designates Santa Teresa Boulevard/Hale Avenue through Coyote Valley as a scenic road, with special zoning regulations that protect its scenic qualities. A bus route provides public transit access with bus stops at most intersections in Coyote Valley.
- **Bailey Avenue:** Serves as the primary east–west transportation corridor in Coyote Valley connecting US 101 to Santa Teresa Boulevard and McKean Road. East of US 101, it becomes Malech Road and connects with Máyyan 'Ooyákma Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve.

- **U.S. Highway 101:** North–south highway that extends from Los Angeles to the Olympic Peninsula in the state of Washington. In the study area, it is a limited-access highway (i.e., with no direct access to adjacent properties from the highway) with four travel lanes in each direction, including a northbound and southbound carpool lane during peak periods.
- **Monterey Road:** North–south roadway extending from downtown San José through Gilroy, parallel to US 101. Prior to 1984, Monterey Road served as the route of US 101 in Coyote Valley.

Secondary roads in Coyote Valley include Blanchard Road, Emado Avenue, Laguna Avenue, Richmond Avenue, Scheller Avenue, McKean Road, and Palm Avenue (see *Figure 13: Existing Transportation Network*).

The existing transportation network is currently focused on accommodating vehicular transportation along the major north–south roadways through the planning area: US 101, Monterey Road, and Santa Teresa Boulevard. Use of the major north–south roadways is therefore typically concentrated during the morning and evening commutes between San José, Morgan Hill, and Gilroy, with limited local traffic at other times of the day. In North Coyote Valley, much of the transportation infrastructure was designed to accommodate substantial development formerly planned for the area. As a result, portions of Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard include discontinuous multi-lane sections. Both the City of San José and the County of Santa Clara have limited the intensity of development allowed within their respective portions of Coyote Valley. Future transportation infrastructure improvements should be consistent with these land uses changes.

Despite its rural character, relatively frequent transit service via VTA Route 68 is available along Santa Teresa Boulevard and Hale Avenue, with buses generally operating every 15 minutes between downtown San José (Diridon Station) and the Gilroy Transit Center. While few people currently access Coyote Valley by bus (via existing bus stops along Santa Teresa Boulevard at Bailey Avenue, Laguna Avenue, Richmond Avenue, and Palm Avenue), this service represents a potential alternative to vehicle transportation for future access to destinations in Coyote Valley.³² Caltrain's regional commuter rail service passes through Coyote Valley, but there are no stops in the planning area. The planned alignment of California High Speed Rail's San José to Merced segment runs along the existing Caltrain/Union Pacific freight rail corridor located adjacent and to the

west of Monterey Road, but the nearest proposed stations will be in San José to the north and Gilroy to the south.³³

Typical of rural areas, sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian facilities are limited along most roadways in the CVCAMP area. Existing bicycle facilities in Coyote Valley include a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Class I multi-use bike path along Coyote Creek (the Coyote Creek Trail), Caltrans Class II bike lanes along portions of Santa Teresa Boulevard and Bailey Avenue, and Caltrans Class IV separated bikeway along a portion of Santa Teresa Boulevard. These existing bicycle facilities are used by both long-distance bike commuters and recreational riders from the region.

³² W-Trans. 2023. *Transportation Existing Conditions Analysis for the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan.*

³³ California High Speed Rail Authority. 2023. *Station Communities.*



Train service adjacent to Monterey Road, credit: Nick Perry

Recent Related Studies

Several transportation studies in Coyote Valley and the larger Santa Clara County area have already been performed. CVCAMP's *Transportation Planning Strategy Summary Memo*³⁴ includes a summary of key transportation issues in the Coyote Valley area. The memo identifies a broad range of issues involving multimodal access and discusses balancing the level of access with other goals of the efforts in Coyote Valley, including ecological restoration and habitat preservation enhancement. The *VTA Bicycle Superhighway Implementation Plan*³⁵ shows an intent to provide a countywide network of uninterrupted bikeways separated from vehicle traffic. The VTA identified Monterey Road as a potential Bicycle Superhighway in the implementation plan; however, CVCAMP will also consider potential enhancements to alternative bike routes through Coyote Valley with less vehicular congestion than Monterey Road. Such potential routes include Santa Teresa Boulevard and the Coyote Creek Trail, which may offer an enhanced bicycle user experience by providing greater separation from vehicles and better access to scenic vistas within the planning area.

In the *Recommendations to Reduce Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions on the Monterey Road Corridor in Coyote Valley, Santa Clara County Study*,³⁶ the Monterey Road corridor was identified as the largest contributor to wildlife-vehicle collisions in the Coyote Valley area. Among the roads surveyed, 63% of roadkill was determined to be on Monterey Road, and among these incidents, 78% occurred between Metcalf Road and Bailey Avenue. Monterey Road has also since been confirmed to act as a significant obstacle to

wildlife movement in the *North Coyote Valley Road Ecology Study*,³⁷ and is the focus of the ongoing Coyote Valley Wildlife Connectivity Planning Project, a concurrent planning process that is being led by POST. Therefore, any potential enhancements to bicycle facilities along Monterey Road should be closely coordinated with the development of infrastructure and other recommendations to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions along the roadway.

The *Santa Clara Countywide Bike Plan*³⁸ intends to develop a countywide network of bicycle facilities that would connect a broad range of destinations. The potential Cross County Bicycle Corridors through the CVCAMP area were identified along the Coyote Creek Trail, Monterey Road, and Bailey Avenue. The *Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Master Plan* currently, being updated, envisions regional trails on and/or parallel to Santa Teresa Boulevard and Bailey Avenue in Coyote Valley. The Santa Clara County Roads Department is also developing an Active Transportation Plan, which will focus on improving walking, bicycling, and other forms of active transportation along roadways in the unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County, including Coyote Valley. Further, *Move San José*³⁹ and the City of San José Transit First Policy emphasize the importance of transit, particularly in connecting Coyote Valley with San José and Morgan Hill. Improvements most likely to be made in Coyote Valley include rider waiting areas, pedestrian access to and from bus stops, and wayfinding signage to help riders navigate through the area.

³⁴ Apex Strategies. 2021. *Transportation Planning Strategy Summary Memo and Recommended Next Steps*. March 10.

³⁵ Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA). 2021. *VTA Bicycle Superhighway Implementation Plan*. June.

³⁶ Santa Clara County Wildlife Corridor Working Group, Coyote Valley Subcommittee, 2019.

³⁷ Diamond, T., and A. Sandoval. 2023. *North Coyote Valley Road Ecology Study, 2021-2022*.

³⁸ Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA). 2018. *Santa Clara Countywide Bike Plan*. May.

³⁹ City of San José. 2022. *Move San José: Citywide Access and Mobility Plan*. City of San José Department of Transportation. April 12.

CVCAMP Studies

As a part of CVCAMP’s Transportation Existing Conditions Analysis, a preliminary assessment was completed to assess the current use, capacity, and potential to reduce the travel lanes on Bailey Avenue, Santa Teresa Boulevard, and Monterey Road to accommodate other land use or forms of transportation. If one travel lane in each direction were removed (e.g., replaced by a bike lane) on the multi-lane portions of Bailey Avenue (between Santa Teresa Boulevard and Monterey Road) and Santa Teresa Boulevard (north of Bailey Avenue, where northbound and southbound traffic are currently separated by a landscaped median), there would still be adequate capacity to accommodate existing traffic volumes along these roadways. The removal of a travel lane on Monterey Road would result in the roadway approaching capacity. The potential for nighttime or seasonal closures of trails and/or roadway segments within the planning area to facilitate safe passage by wildlife across Coyote Valley may also be evaluated in subsequent phases of the planning process.

Key Findings and Take-Aways

- **A Regional Coyote Valley Multiuse Trail Loop is Possible:** The Coyote Creek Trail already provides a regional north–south pedestrian and bicycle corridor for the eastern side of Coyote Valley. Improvements to additional corridors identified in the *Santa Clara County Trails Master Plan Update* and other plans would create a more interconnected network, with the potential to create a regional multiuse trail loop that serves both recreational and commute users. CVCAMP can advance these plans by investigating the potential for opportunities for multiuse trails in the project area, namely on or near Santa Teresa Boulevard and Bailey Avenue with connections to the Coyote Creek Trail and Parkway.
- **Comfortable & Safe Pedestrian Routes are Lacking:** With the exception of the Coyote Creek Trail, pedestrian facilities in Coyote Valley are limited and discontinuous. Sidewalks are only found on isolated segments of roadway and at bus stop boarding areas. Marked crosswalks are only present at a few locations. Given its rural nature, an extensive paved



Highway 101 through Coyote Valley, credit: Andrea Laue

sidewalk network is likely unnecessary in Coyote Valley, but dedicated footpaths along key streets could provide safer connections to and between destinations and serve as part of Coyote Valley’s larger regional trail network.

- **Bus Service Could Provide Sustainable Open Space Access:** There is already frequent bus service available along Santa Teresa Boulevard and Hale Avenue in Coyote Valley, but few passengers board or exit the bus at stops in the area. There is excellent potential to promote sustainable access via public transportation by improving existing bus stops (e.g., with shade structures) and creating new pathways that connect bus stops with future public access amenities, trailheads, and other destinations. To that end, OSA will continue to investigate potential partnerships on transit projects that enhance bus-access to open space and agricultural destinations in Coyote Valley.
- **Existing Roadways are Unsafe for both People & Wildlife:** Collision history data indicate that there are a high number of injury collisions relative to total collisions at the intersections of Bailey Avenue/McKean Road,

Bailey Avenue/Monterey Road, and Bailey Avenue/Santa Teresa Boulevard. A substantial number of wildlife–vehicle collisions have also been identified in the study area. Changes to roadway design, speed limit reductions, and safer crossings could enhance pedestrian, motorist, and wildlife safety and should be considered in future phases of CVCAMP.

- **North Coyote Valley Roadways are Wider than Traffic Volumes Require:** The segments of Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard in North Coyote Valley carry traffic volumes that are well below their capacity. If a travel lane on the multi-lane (four lane +) sections of these roadways were eliminated, volumes would remain below capacity even with increased future levels of traffic. However, Monterey Road would be approaching peak capacity if a travel lane were to be eliminated. Given these findings, upcoming phases of CVCAMP will study potential street design improvements to Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard that enhance these corridors for the safety and benefit of both people and wildlife.



Bus service along Santa Teresa Boulevard, credit: Nick Perry



View of natural and working lands in Mid-Coyote Valley looking east from the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, *credit: Stephen Joseph*



HOLISTIC VISION

Unlike the preceding sections of this Report, this section does not summarize recent or current studies. Instead, it offers an early look at opportunities and constraints that come into focus by stepping back and looking at Coyote Valley holistically—that is, viewing Coyote Valley as part of a larger system and weaving together the various elements summarized in previous

sections of this Report. Planning holistically allows us to consider how goals for the landscape are in alignment or in tension, and how these goals might be achieved on and beyond the over 1,500-acre CVCAMP focus area. The key takeaways summarized here will shape the more in-depth opportunities and constraints analysis that will take place in upcoming phases of CVCAMP.



Hikers take in the view of Coyote Valley and the CVCAMP properties from an overlook at the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, *credit: Ron Horii*

Key Take-Aways

• Wildlife Habitat & Water Resource Goals

Are in Close Alignment: The site assessments summarized in this Report confirm that by-and-large, the wildlife and habitat goals for Coyote Valley are dependent upon and complement the project's water resource goals. Strategically increasing surface and groundwater in the CVCAMP area will decrease downstream flooding, improve water quality, and create more dynamic and climate resilient habitats. However, some areas of tension do exist. For example, returning Fisher Creek to a more natural condition would result in the creation of more wetland areas and benefit aquatic species, but this would come at the expense of the plants and animals that currently rely on the habitat provided by the existing human-made channelized creek or drier upland habitats. Further, fully restoring the Fisher Creek floodplain in Mid-Coyote Valley would require protection of additional lands along the course of present-day Fisher Creek in Coyote Valley. Weighing these tradeoffs will be one of the focuses of upcoming phases of CVCAMP.

• Public Access Offers Many Benefits but Poses Complex Trade-Offs:

Community engagement in early phases of CVCAMP confirms that people are excited to visit Coyote Valley's protected lands. On the surface, opening the newly protected over 1,500 acres to the public may seem straight-forward. The properties are easily accessible, mostly flat, and just a short drive, bus ride, or bike ride away for thousands of people. But the fantastic opportunity to connect people to nature in Coyote Valley must be balanced with the challenges that public access poses toward achieving CVCAMP's other goals, namely its wildlife habitat goals. Increasingly, science is showing that the presence of people on the landscape negatively affects the behaviors of wildlife. For example, a frequently used trail in a sensitive area could hamper efforts to strengthen Coyote Valley's role as a wildlife corridor between the mountain ranges. Therefore, public access must be

carefully planned, designed, and managed. A key aspect of this is thinking holistically and considering what role the over 1,500 acres should play in the larger recreational landscape of the region. New trails and public access features can build upon and/or strategically connect to existing trails and disturbed areas (e.g., roadways) to minimize their impact on wildlife. Further, public access can be managed in creative ways, including educational and volunteer programs that invite people to be active participants in the restoration and stewardship of Coyote Valley. These opportunities will be fully investigated as the restoration and use vision for CVCAMP lands is created.

• Agricultural Uses Will Need to be Carefully Integrated:

Agricultural land uses on CVCAMP lands will directly interact with wildlife habitat, water resources, and public access. There are many opportunities to find compatibility between agriculture and these other uses, such as employing regenerative and wildlife-friendly farming practices, using grazing to manage non-native grasses and weeds, and incorporating agritourism into public access plans. However, these opportunities are spatially limited—especially on CVCAMP lands on the northwestern side of the valley like Laguna Seca, where groundwater pumping and draining surface water for agriculture would directly conflict with restoration of wetland habitat. Restoring wetlands and creating a viable wildlife corridor vegetated with native plants and trees also constrains the area available for agriculture. Looking holistically at the entire Coyote Valley, the lands south of Bailey Avenue and east of Santa Teresa Boulevard seem best suited for more intensive agricultural uses. CVCAMP already includes some properties in this area, including the Laguna 60 property leased to Spina Farms. Additional lands could be purchased and protected in this area to help further secure the future of agriculture in Coyote Valley.

• **Existing Roadways are a Constraint and Asset:** The deadly impact on wildlife created by the high-speed transportation corridors that bisect CVCAMP lands are well documented and are the focus of recent and ongoing studies aimed at improving wildlife crossing infrastructure. But Coyote Valley’s roadways also create a unique opportunity for more sustainable public access to open space. Unlike most other open space preserves in the region located in hilly areas far from public transit, Coyote Valley’s preserves and parks could become easily accessible via the existing frequent transit service provided along Santa Teresa Boulevard by VTA Route 68. The excess widths of Santa Teresa Boulevard and Bailey Avenue also offer the potential to repurpose portions of the right-of-way for safe, fully separated bicycle and pedestrian paths that become part of the region’s larger trail network. Coyote Valley’s transportation infrastructure and roadways are not owned or managed by OSA, and any of these improvements will require a holistic planning approach and close coordination between VTA, the City of San José, and the County of Santa Clara.

Figure 14: Existing Conditions Integration illustrates how the various existing conditions studies and assessments overlap across multiple topic areas, with the majority of this overlap focused on the topic areas with spatial components: wildlife habitat, water resources, public use and access, agriculture, and transportation.











Based on existing conditions and early consideration of opportunities and constraints, a holistic vision for Coyote Valley is coming into focus. This vision includes a restored Laguna Seca and Fisher Creek floodplain on the western side of the valley, a landscape linkage for wildlife across the northern valley, compatible agricultural uses carefully incorporated into the landscape, and public access that builds upon existing recreational and transportation infrastructure to minimize impacts on wildlife while greatly enhancing the public experience of these lands. Upcoming phases of CVCAMP will build upon the findings summarized by these reports and bring this vision further into focus.



View of natural and working lands in Coyote Valley looking west from the Diablo Range, credit: Stephen Joseph



View of North Coyote Valley looking northeast from Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve, credit: Nick Perry

	Topic Areas									
	Wildlife Habitat & Ecological Connectivity	Water Resources	Public Health & Access	Community Engagement	Cultural Heritage & Historic Resources	Changing Climate	Local Agriculture	Local Economy	Transportation	Holistic Vision
CVCAMP Studies & Assessments										
Vegetation Mapping										
Herpetofauna Summary Report										
Existing Conditions Hydrology Analysis Report										
Hydrologic Model Development										
Existing Conditions Hydraulic Model Development										
Ecohydrology Study										
Public Access Use Report										
Archeological Assessment										
Climate Resiliency Framework										
Agricultural Project Feasibility Screening Tool										
Agricultural Program Alignment										
Transportation Existing Conditions Analysis										
Existing Conditions Summary Report										

Note: Dark orange squares identify the primary topic area of a given study or report. Light orange squares identify secondary topic areas that will be influenced by a given study or report.

Figure 14: Existing Conditions Integration



View looking west over Coyote Valley, showing its geographic setting at the narrowest point between Diablo Range and Santa Cruz Mountains, *credit: Derek Nuemann*

CONCLUSION

Summary

This Report represents a key benchmark in the CVCAMP planning process. The studies and assessments now completed for Coyote Valley directly address key knowledge gaps and have resulted in a robust and detailed baseline of information regarding the existing conditions in the planning area. This baseline will provide context and critical information to inform future phases of the planning process and the future of Coyote Valley itself.

While the detailed findings and take-aways of these studies and assessments for each topic area have been summarized in this Existing Conditions Summary Report, the following key realizations and conclusions regarding the existing state of the Coyote Valley landscape will continue to be critical for the master plan to address:

- **Natural Systems (Wildlife Habitat & Ecological Connectivity, Water Resources, and Changing Climate):** The primary conservation values of both Wildlife Habitat & Ecological Connectivity and Water Resources cannot be successfully achieved through preservation of the existing landscape alone. Direct intervention through restoration projects proposed under the master plan will be required to address the fundamental limitations of the existing landscape in terms of providing high-quality live-in and pass-through habitat for wildlife and natural hydrologic processes to support target habitats and species. These direct interventions must be carefully planned in the context of climate change so that these restored habitats and natural processes can continue to function optimally over time.
- **Human Use (Public Health & Access, Community Engagement, Cultural Heritage & Historic Resources, Local Agriculture, Local Economy, and Transportation):** Community Engagement efforts associated with the master plan have shown that Coyote Valley is already beloved by many regional and local residents who live in or participate in recreational activities in the valley. These communities routinely make use of existing transportation corridors in Coyote Valley to access their homes, local jobs in agriculture and commerce, and existing private and public recreational amenities. However, opportunities abound to enhance this human use for the good of local communities, such as providing new access or curated education opportunities in areas that are less environmentally sensitive, celebrating the rich cultural and historic resources of Coyote Valley, and providing land access and tenure to local farmers to ensure that working agricultural lands remain present on the valley floor.
- **Holistic Vision:** Given these existing conditions, the following fundamental question remains: *How can these existing natural systems and human use of Coyote Valley be rebalanced to create a landscape where both wildlife and people can thrive for generations to come?* The answer lies in the creation of a sustainable landscape mosaic with core habitats and corridors that are set aside for nature alone, interwoven with compatible human uses and presence in the landscape. The spatial configuration of this landscape mosaic will be the ultimate outcome of the master plan.

Next Steps

To begin envisioning this mosaic, future phases of the CVCAMP process will use and directly apply the data and information that is summarized in this Existing Conditions Summary Report. This concise description of current conditions will serve as a baseline to develop a detailed opportunities and constraints analysis, preliminary restoration and use scenarios, conceptual designs for proposed restoration and improvement projects, environmental documentation and ultimately the final CVCAMP document itself. Throughout this process, OSA will continue to engage with local communities and residents to seek input and feedback on these key milestones for the master plan.

Closing

While all existing landscapes are inherently complex, the current state of Coyote Valley is uniquely intricate due to the interweaving of natural systems with human-made infrastructure and development. Embracing this complexity, CVCAMP will strive to honor, protect, and conserve existing environmental resources and cultural practices while seeking ways to enhance and restore the underlying functionality of the Coyote Valley ecosystem. In this light, CVCAMP represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to preserve a critical landscape and create a place for nature and people to coexist and thrive.



View of Coyote Valley looking south from Tulare Hill, credit: Nick Perry

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Coyote Valley from above, credit: Matt Dolkas

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California poppy fields above Laguna Seca, credit: Nick Perry



APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF REPORT FINDINGS



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Vegetation Mapping, SWCA Environmental Consultants

Purpose of Report/Study

The purpose of the vegetation mapping effort is to identify and map the natural communities present in the Coyote Valley survey area.

Research or Management Question

- Are there any significant discrepancies between existing fine-scale (i.e. detailed) vegetation mapping data for Coyote Valley and observed vegetation communities?

Methods

SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) biologists used existing draft fine-scale vegetation mapping data, produced by the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network for Coyote Valley. The existing data was collected using 2020 orthophotography, 2020 LiDAR derived Canopy Height Model, and other LiDAR derived landscape metrics. Although the data was at a fine-scale, it covered such a large area (Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties) that the data needed to be confirmed (“ground truthed”) to determine whether the mapped vegetation communities were accurate. In instances where the mapped vegetation was not accurate, the biologists determined and mapped the appropriate vegetation community in accordance with *A Manual of California Vegetation*.

Findings

Vegetation communities within the CVCAMP survey area were mostly consistent with what was shown in the fine-scale vegetation mapping data for the area. Areas where the current existing vegetation communities were not consistent with the fine-scale vegetation mapping data appeared to be due to minor errors in the fine-scale mapping data or related to the simplified classifications used for the fine-scale mapping

effort. Additionally, given that SWCA biologist used *A Manual of California Vegetation* community classifications, some discrepancies may have been due to the different classification systems used to assess vegetation communities in the survey area. The fine-scale vegetation mapping data provided a lower level of resolution than the ground-based assessment conducted by the SWCA biologists. The higher resolution provided by the ground-based assessment was a contributing factor in the differences between what was observed in the field versus what was provided by the fine-scale vegetation mapping. Sensitive natural communities are present and were observed within the survey area, including but not limited to,

- Hind’s black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*) and Hybrids Forest & Woodland special Stands and Semi-Natural Alliance,
- Fremont cottonwood forest and woodland (*Populus fremontii* – *Fraxinus velutina* – *Salix gooddingii*) Alliance, and
- Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) Riparian Forest & Woodland Alliance.

As a result, it will be necessary to conduct formal vegetation surveys to confirm the extent of sensitive habitats present (if any) within specific areas of the CVCAMP lands as restoration projects are developed.

Conclusion

This survey provided useful information on baseline habitat and vegetation community conditions in Coyote Valley that will support future phases of the project and help to inform planning and permitting efforts.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Herpetofauna Summary Report, McBain Associates

Purpose of Report/Study

The purpose of Herpetofauna Surveys was to identify and map habitat for special-status (designated or candidate rare, threatened, or endangered species) herpetofauna that have the potential to occur in the area. In this report, herpetofauna referred to the reptiles and amphibians of the Coyote Valley region. The study considered various special-status herpetofauna, including California red-legged frog (CRLF; *Rana draytonii*), California tiger salamander (CTS; *Ambystoma californiense*), foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylei*), Santa Cruz black salamander (*Aneides niger*), western pond turtle (WPT; *Emys marmorata*), and coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*). The herpetofauna habitat surveys primarily identified suitable habitat for CRLF and CTS, which are most likely to occur in the types of aquatic habitats found in the portion of the Fisher Creek watershed of Coyote Valley surveyed during winter and spring.

Research or Management Question

- Which special-status herpetofauna species occur in the area?
- Where is the suitable habitat for these herpetofauna special-status species located?

Methods

In spring 2023, herpetofauna surveys were conducted to assess habitat suitability for six focal special-status species initially selected based on the conservation status and range of the species. Habitat mapping surveys were the primary assessment method and focused primarily

on waterbodies and waterways to identify aquatic habitats suitable for breeding by CRLF and CTS. Mapping efforts were concentrated in areas that matched the requirements for each species at various life stages. Habitat was also mapped for the WPT and focused on waterbodies that provide the suite of aquatic and terrestrial features required for completion of life history functions to support resident turtles. Suitable habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog, Santa Cruz black salamander and coast horned lizard was not mapped because sufficient area to support populations of these animals was not encountered.

Findings

Surveyors identified potentially suitable habitat for three special-status herpetofauna with a focus on breeding habitat for CRLF and CTS and aquatic habitats preferred by WPT for foraging, mating, and refuge. A total of nine species of herpetofauna were detected on OSA-managed lands in Coyote Valley, including one of the focal species (CTS). Three invasive species of particular concern in Coyote Valley were also observed during the studies: red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*), and red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*). Only one red-eared slider was observed in a pond south of Bailey Road. American bullfrog was not observed in the CVCAMP area but was detected nearby and have been observed in the CVCAMP area in the past. Red swamp crayfish were observed throughout the CVCAMP area and appear to be well-established.

CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Herpetofauna Summary Report, McBain Associates *(cont)*

Conclusion

The survey supports the following recommendations for the project area:

- Consider restoration opportunities to extend the hydroperiod of existing ponds for CTS: In years when pond drying does not provide adequate time for development to transformation of CTS larvae, restoration efforts to increase shallow groundwater recharge and increase residence time of water in Fisher Creek upstream of ponds could help extend the hydroperiod.
- Reduce predators and/or predator habitat in existing ponds:
 - Controlling populations of larger fishes in existing ponds (through drying in the fall in some years, or through gill netting in the fall to remove larger fishes) would improve chances of survival for any CRLF and CTS larvae in these ponds.
 - Removal of the red-eared slider individual(s) where observed could help prevent further invasive turtle colonization, improving native turtle habitat.
 - Monitor for invasive species, including bullfrogs, to determine if control of this species is necessary. Consider strategically seasonally draining any manmade permanent ponds that may support large populations of bullfrogs to remove all life stages.
 - Conduct red swamp crayfish removal in key locations. Trapping in these areas could be used to collect and remove crayfish to control expansion of the invasive population in the portion of the Fisher Creek watershed managed by OSA.
- Expand native vegetation for improved herpetofauna habitat: Riparian vegetation along these waterways is likely to provide moist refuge for amphibians during summer months and drier years.
- Include emergent structures (features that rise above the water-level) throughout restoration area: Including large wood elements in the restoration design may help improve native species habitat.
- Increase Laguna Seca hydroperiod: Implementing physical restoration and water management to restore the natural hydrology of Fisher Creek and Laguna Seca and extend the hydroperiod of Laguna Seca (i.e., the length of time water is present on the landscape) may improve amphibian productivity in this wetland complex.

CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Existing Conditions Hydrology Analysis Report, cbec

Purpose of Report/Study

The Existing Conditions Hydrology Analysis Report presented a compilation and discussion of surface water and groundwater levels and Fisher Creek flow data for monitoring locations within the project vicinity. The memorandum also presented and discussed surface water/groundwater interaction and groundwater budgets for the Coyote Valley Groundwater Basin.

Research or Management Question

- What are the current and historic hydrologic conditions within the CVCAMP?

Methods

Current and historic hydrologic conditions within the CVCAMP vicinity were characterized from the collection and synthesis of recent and on-going surface water and groundwater monitoring data collected as part of the CVCAMP project and the Valley Water hydrology and meteorology monitoring programs. Data collected and analyzed as part of this study includes current, historic, and recent period data on Fisher Creek and three pairs of stream flow gauges installed on tributaries to Fisher Creek. Data was also reviewed from selected Valley Water monitoring wells and historic continuous rainfall data for various Valley Water gauges located in and around Coyote Valley.

Findings

- Valley Water Fisher Creek Flow Monitoring: The estimated peak flow rates at Laguna Avenue were routinely higher than those reported at the downstream Monterey Road gauge during the initial monitoring period. This means that the floodplain is absorbing some stormwater runoff between these two gauges.
- CVCAMP Fisher Creek Flow Monitoring: Water level hydrographs indicate little to no runoff during the early season rainfall events until mid-December, when soils became saturated, promoting runoff and concentration of flow in Fisher Creek. This is typical for watersheds in this region, which is characterized by long dry periods in the summer months, during which time soils dries out and groundwater is pumped.
- CVCAMP Fisher Creek Tributary Flow Monitoring: Monitoring results indicated that even during small rainfall events and subsequent receding flow periods, flow rates were always higher at the downstream gauge than the upstream gauge. This is also typical for watersheds in this region, as the watershed size increases moving downstream, contributing more runoff.
- During dry years, there was a significant and rapid decline and lowering of the water table during the dry season, constraining the types of riparian and wetland vegetation that can be sustained under existing conditions, particularly in the upstream reaches near Laguna Avenue.
- Fisher Creek Gauges:
 - Stream Gauge 1 (Fisher Creek at Santa Teresa Blvd. culvert): During the initial monitoring period, Fisher Creek water surface elevations

CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Existing Conditions Hydrology Analysis Report, cbec *(cont)*

were always higher than the groundwater elevations, and water was infiltrating and recharging the underlying aquifer. Conversely, there were periods of groundwater contributions to Fisher Creek flow at this stream gauge location after large flow events and intervening winter baseflow periods that occur when groundwater surface elevations are higher than the creek levels. When groundwater is higher than the creek, the creek is acting as a conduit to quickly drain the surrounding area. There may be opportunities to slow down the flow in Fisher Creek, or raise the bed, so that it's not as efficient at draining the area.

- Stream Gauge 2 (Fisher Creek at Bailey Ave. culvert): At this location, water surface elevations indicate both losing (when flow is being infiltrated into the ground from Fisher Creek) and gaining (when water is flowing out of the ground and into Fisher Creek from its surroundings) creek conditions in the initial monitoring period. Gaining conditions occurred during both of the winter high flow periods. The period of gaining conditions was shorter in the first year than the second year. Understanding seasonal changes and typical ranges of groundwater elevations can inform design of wetlands.
- Groundwater Basin Water Budget: There were annual decreases in storage during most Critical and Dry years and surpluses during wet years and one below normal year (2016). Dry year decreases in aquifer storage were accompanied by a lowering of annual groundwater levels, while wet year increases in storage raised the water table elevations. Understanding these demands on groundwater will help the project team to plan for future management of these resources.

Conclusions

Monitoring water surface elevations in Fisher Creek and groundwater wells is helping us better understand the unique flow regime of Coyote Valley. In our experience, it's rare for the main creek or river that runs through a valley to not be at the bottom of that valley, but that's the situation here. Coyote Creek flows year-round and is perched about 20 feet above Fisher Creek and other low-lying areas of the valley. Since Coyote Creek is a natural earthen-bed channel, water is always seeping out the bed and banks, flowing downhill toward the lowest areas of the valley, or following "cones of depression" at active groundwater pumping wells. As was seen in 2021 and 2022 when flows in Coyote Creek were greatly reduced while work was being performed on Anderson Dam, areas of Fisher Creek that would normally stay wet dried out completely, likely because no water was seeping westward from Coyote Creek. It's important for the project team to understand how dependent this ecosystem is on Coyote Creek, as management of that resource is controlled by others.

Collecting data related to rainfall, streamflow, groundwater pumping, and groundwater elevations provides our team with evidence of how much water is typically available, where it comes from, and where it goes. We will continue to operate our monitoring system for the foreseeable future, which will allow us to keep a finger on the pulse of the hydrology of the valley and understand how trends are forming over longer periods of time.

CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Hydrologic Model Development, cbec

Purpose of Report/Study

The purpose of creating a numerical rainfall-runoff model (hydrologic model) was to develop a tool for simulating how much of the rain that falls can be expected to be “lost” to evapotranspiration and infiltration into the ground, and how much will end up flowing into Fisher Creek and its tributaries. This tool can then be used throughout the master planning process to calculate runoff hydrographs during different types of water years at various points throughout Coyote Valley to support engineers and planners in making management decisions. For CVCAMP, the primary goal of the hydrologic model was to recreate recent hydraulic conditions (over the past 20 years) in Coyote Creek and Fisher Creek, with an eye toward understanding the frequency of overbank flows, floodplain inundation depths and durations, and frequency of occurrence of favorable habitat conditions within the study area. The calibrated and validated model will be a valuable tool with which to evaluate proposed restoration projects and changes to land and water management with the CVCAMP area.

Research or Management Question

- Where are the opportunities for natural flood peak attenuation and restoration of wetland habitat in Coyote Valley?

Methods

The hydrologic modeling was performed using HEC-HMS software, developed by the US Army Corps of Engineers Hydrologic Engineering Center in Davis, California. Data inputs on terrain, land cover, soil, evapotranspiration, canopy cover, and precipitation were included in the model. The model was calibrated (parameters were configured to match observed historical data) and validated using flow data from two gauges on Fisher Creek. The Fisher Creek model was calibrated to several

consecutive storm events throughout the 2023 water year at the Stream Gate 2 (SG2) gauge. The Laguna Ave. gauge flow record was not considered in the calibration process, because Valley Water indicated that the area surrounding the gauge is too densely vegetated to obtain reliable measurements. Similarly, although there is data for the 2022 water year at the SG2 gauge, the reliability of the data is uncertain; therefore, validation was not possible.

Findings/Conclusion

- The Fisher Creek HMS model performed relatively well, but additional refinements are currently underway to better represent baseflow conditions. The variability in model simulation results versus observed values could be due to inaccuracies in the rating curves used to estimate flow at the Fisher Creek gauges, and complexities of simulating baseflow contributions from Coyote Creek.
- The installation of a new third stream gauge on Fisher Creek in March 2023 will lend an additional calibration point to future modeling efforts and further increase certainty in the model.
- Overall, the model is expected to be a useful tool for supporting engineering and planning decisions throughout the master planning process.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Existing Conditions Hydraulic Model Development, SWCA Environmental Consultants

Purpose of Report/Study

The purpose of this study was to develop, refine, calibrate, and validate a hydrodynamic model that can be used to better understand historical and existing hydraulic conditions in Coyote Valley, particularly in Fisher Creek and its floodplains. Different from hydrology (study of water in its natural setting and how it interacts with other natural systems), hydraulics refers to the movement of water in physical systems such as evaluating flows in rivers, streams, etc. The model simulated the flow of water across the landscape by recreating recent hydraulic conditions. The model will help evaluate proposed restoration projects and changes to land and water management within the CVCAMP area.

Research or Management Question

- Can the hydraulic model successfully recreate recent hydraulic conditions over the past 20 years in Coyote Creek and Fisher Creek?
- Can this model accurately simulate the frequency of overbank flows, floodplain inundation depths and durations, and frequency of occurrence of favorable habitat conditions within the study area?

Methods

Comprehensive data was collected, including topographic data, flow rates, water levels, and hydraulic properties from various sources, including surveys in 2014 and 2015 and historical records. A rainfall runoff model that incorporated precipitation and evapotranspiration was used for streamflow data. The USACE Hydrologic Engineering Center's River Analysis System (HEC-RAS) was used to develop the surface water hydraulics modeling. A fully two-dimensional (2D) model was developed of Fisher Creek and the surrounding area. The model went through a calibration process to ensure that the model accurately simulates the real-world hydraulic behaviors of Fisher Creek under various flow conditions. The calibrated model was validated using an independent dataset collected during a different time period.

Findings/Conclusion

- The HEC-HMS runs were performed for each individual water year from Water Year (WY) 2003 through WY 2023. The amount of baseflow occurring in Fisher Creek was a function of water year type.
- Floodplain inundation maps representing a wet water year show the maximum depth of flow for WY 2023. This will serve as baseline information to compare to any proposed modifications associated with the restoration of the creek.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

EcoHydrology Study, McBain Associates/Applied River Sciences

Purpose of Report/Study

The purpose of the EcoHydrology Study was to build on other studies and conduct new analyses that evaluate the relationship between hydrological and biological processes in Coyote Valley. The study evaluated the connections between ecological linkages and the watershed, identifying the connections between the first two goals for CVCAMP (wildlife and water resources).

Research or Management Question

- How do water resources and wildlife resources connect and how can we use this information to inform the potential for restoration within Coyote Valley?

Methods

This study developed a conceptual model that relates hydrologic processes to biological processes, then conducted specific analyses to begin developing quantitative relationships between hydrology and biological processes. Surface water data was provided by Coyote Creek and two Fisher Creek gauges maintained by Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water), as well as modeling data and some recent monitoring data collected by cbec. Groundwater data was provided via a network of groundwater monitoring wells monitored by Valley Water and the OSA. Information about historical flora and fauna presence was available in the form of historical surveys and photographs.

Findings

- Groundwater levels are generally 2-5 feet below the land surface in Laguna Seca, except in drought periods. Historically, there were small perennial ponds in Laguna Seca, indicating groundwater levels were just a few feet higher. Still, there are opportunities to restore the laguna (lake) with a combination of excavation and/or increases in groundwater recharge (and potentially through reductions in groundwater pumping, where possible).
- High groundwater levels continue from Laguna Seca to the confluence with Coyote Creek, making this a gaining reach in most conditions, and therefore a prime candidate for riparian forest restoration, ponds for herpetofauna, and generally aquatic focused restoration activities.
- Further south along Fisher Creek, groundwater levels change depending on the water year type and the season. Generally, Fisher Creek at Laguna Avenue is gaining in the spring, and losing in the fall, with groundwater levels deeper during dry years and shallower during wet years. Groundwater levels in the fall are usually 5-10 feet below Fisher Creek at Laguna Avenue, meaning that restoration to create perennial ponds in this location is likely unrealistic (would require excavating down below Fisher Creek). However, there is potential for some ephemeral ponding in this area that could be ideal for some species of native herpetofauna with shorter required hydroperiods for reproduction (e.g., Sierran Treefrog, California Toad).



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

EcoHydrology Study, McBain Associates/Applied River Sciences *(cont)*

- For vegetation restoration, Fisher Creek flows upstream of Laguna Seca are “flashy”, but may result in some passive riparian recruitment in about half of the years. Historically, this area was wet meadow and valley oak savanna and there was no defined Fisher Creek channel. Restoration actions may want to focus on groundwater recharge and upland restoration in this area, or possibly explore sustainable agriculture. Ideally agriculture in this area would consist of grazing or similar activities that can accommodate periodic flooding and also do not require groundwater pumping for survival of crops.

Conclusion

By evaluating the hydrology as well as the flora and fauna in Coyote Valley, restoration actions can be identified that resemble historical conditions and sustain overall ecosystem function.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Public Access Use Report, WRA Environmental Consultants

Purpose of Report/Study

This report described the existing conditions related to public access in Coyote Valley; specifically, this report was prepared to estimate the amount and types of trail use and to understand the perceptions and characteristics of current visitors to existing open space areas in and around Coyote Valley.

Research or Management Question

- What public access opportunities already exist in Coyote Valley and who is participating in recreation activities there today?

Methods

WRA Environmental Consultants (WRA) staff conducted desktop reviews of public lands using satellite imagery, attended site visits to open space areas and undeveloped lands managed by County of Santa Clara Parks and OSA, and collected and evaluated on-site data at the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve (CVOSP) and Santa Teresa County Park from June through September 2023. Responses to CVCAMP's Spring 2023 community outreach survey (conducted online and in-person) were also evaluated.

Findings

Review of existing publicly accessible facilities found multiple parks in nearby locations offering a range of outdoor recreation activities. Many of these other publicly accessible locations offer trails and trailheads traditionally associated with minimally developed open space areas where conservation and stewardship of sensitive natural and cultural resources is a priority.

Surveyed visitors to the CVOSP reported visiting frequently with over 70% of respondents visiting monthly and the majority of visitors staying for one to three hours. Most visitors traveled to the CVOSP by car and the primary motivation for visiting was to get exercise. The most popular feature desired by both the Spring 2023 community survey and on-site survey respondents was trails for hiking, with 43% reported by Spring 2023 survey respondents and 83% reported by on-site survey respondents. Other features mentioned include wildlife viewing areas and places to sit/rest and enjoy scenic views.

CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Public Access Use Report, WRA Environmental Consultants *(cont)*

Conclusion

- The following information will need to be considered before planning future public uses in the CVCAMP:
 - verify if there is latent demand for public access at CVOSP and Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge OSP among disadvantaged groups,
 - identify optimal areas for scenic viewing and wildlife viewing, and
 - develop a better understanding of visitor use levels in CVCAMP with other data sources.
- Trails and wildlife viewing areas are desired by the public but will need to be carefully sited to avoid conflicts with wildlife habitat and movement corridors. It is important to provide open space recreation opportunities for visitors who aim to exercise and those who may have mobility limitations.
- Future options for cycling should continue to offer both road and trail experiences for visitors.
- Consider that the population using this space is ethnically diverse and may need information in multiple languages. Additionally consider the need for facilities (e.g., picnic areas, parking areas) that can accommodate relatively large groups of visitors as previous research has demonstrated outdoor recreation occurring in larger groups among Latinx visitors compared to Anglo/Caucasian visitors.¹

¹ Chavez, D., Larson, D., & Winter, P. (1995). *To be or not to be a park: That is the question*. General Technical Report PSW-156, USDA Forest Service. Retrieved from https://www.fs.usda.gov/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr156/psw_gtr156_3_chavez.pdf



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Archaeological Assessment, SWCA Environmental Consultants

Purpose of Report/Study

The purpose of the archaeological assessment was to identify and map the areas of prehistoric archaeological sensitivity for both buried and surface deposits that may be present in the Coyote Valley study area.

Research or Management Question

- What is the potential for buried sites in different parts of the study area?
- Is there potential for archaeological site(s) to be impacted by the project?

Methods

There are many different environmental variables that can influence Native American settlement patterns throughout California. SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) geoarchaeologist reviewed pertinent environmental data including the distance to surface water, surface slope, prehistoric site locations, and the age of surface landforms during the development of this map and assessment. The study area for the assessment covered the entire CVCAMP focus area (over 1,500 acres).

Findings

Results of the archaeological sensitivity model indicate that areas with the Highest sensitivity make up only about 3.0 percent (219 acres) of the study area and areas with High sensitivity account for about 13.8 percent (1,014 acres), which together equal less than 15 percent of the entire Study Area. The most extensive of these areas occurs near the perennial sources of water along Coyote Creek and around the Laguna Seca wetland complex. More than 20 percent (1,486 acres) of the Study Area is modeled as having a Moderate sensitivity, which is associated with relatively level land surfaces that occur in proximity to a seasonal water source.

In contrast, the buried site model indicates only about 1.7 percent (~123 acres) of Highest potential and about 8.0 percent (~590 acres) of High potential for buried sites, or less than 10 percent of the overall Study Area. These areas are located where late Holocene-age depositional landforms occur near the perennial water sources. Areas of Moderate buried potential cover nearly 16 percent (1,161.1 acres) of the Study Area, which are associated with late Holocene-age depositional landforms that are near a seasonal water source or at some distance from a perennial water source. The Low potential areas are mainly associated with older landforms without a nearby water source, while Lowest potential areas are largely restricted to the bedrock uplands on the west side of the Study Area.

Finally, the sensitivity and buried site models were integrated into a single “combined model” to help simplify the modeling results for general planning and management purposes.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Archaeological Assessment, SWCA Environmental Consultants *(cont)*

Conclusion

Whether they are at the surface or are buried, archaeological resources must first be identified if they are to be avoided, evaluated, or otherwise managed. This can be an especially difficult problem in areas like Coyote Valley where archaeological sites have been buried by sediments, disturbed or destroyed by excavation (e.g., for agriculture, grave sites, quarries, or drainage ditches), or covered by fill material (e.g., for levees, roads, or structures). It is also a practical problem for agencies and resource managers who are responsible for seeing that reasonable efforts are made to identify archaeological deposits in keeping with the regulatory requirements that govern the treatment of cultural resources and historic properties.

The buried site potential model and maps developed by this study provide a framework for making informed decisions regarding: (1) the potential for archaeological deposits in different areas, (2) whether or not additional study is needed to determine if archaeological sites are present or absent, and (3) the appropriate field methods and level of effort needed to determine if unidentified sites are present or absent in areas where project-related impacts are planned. When this type of information is used appropriately, it offers a means to explicitly address “good-faith effort” identification requirements, while helping to ensure that potentially important cultural resources are not adversely affected by the undertaking.

While the sensitivity model and maps developed for the project should be relatively accurate in identifying areas most likely to contain prehistoric archaeological resources, they cannot be expected to pinpoint their exact locations because too many factors remain unknown. It is acknowledged that the areas of archaeological potential identified by this study do not represent absolute certainties but are instead probable “best estimates” using reasoned assumptions derived from available datasets. Recognizing this, they should not be treated as rigid depictions of exactly where a site will, or will not be, located. Instead, they should be viewed through the lens of personal experience, professional judgment, field observations, and project-specific information to be most effective.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Climate Resiliency Framework, Greene Economics

Purpose of Report/Study

This study helped to identify a preliminary framework for climate resiliency that will allow CVCAMP to proceed with a consistent approach across disciplines (water, wildlife, agriculture, transportation, etc.) that addresses uncertainty associated with climate change impacts.

Research or Management Question

- What will the future impacts of climate change on Coyote Valley potentially be?
- How can we best respond, and what should our climate resiliency framework include?

Methods

The research process consisted of literature review (including tools, guidance documents, and datasets) and interviews with stakeholders, including the consultant team, OSA, POST, and CVCAMP Science Advisory Group. From this, a workshop was held with an interdisciplinary cross-section of the Consultant Team to move towards some common ideas regarding the climate resiliency framework.

Findings

- Hydrology and hydraulic modeling associated with CVCAMP will govern much of the climate-related research and planning for the project as most of the disciplines' plans are impacted by future water availability.
- The team members working on water resources should meet separately to discuss water modeling.

- An iterative approach between the water group and the larger group would help define the scenarios in terms of, for example, how much water would be used for agriculture or restoration in each of the scenarios. In this way, all researchers could continue to collaborate and complete their research.
- Scenario planning that involves extremes may be utilized, but whether to use monthly or daily forecast data requires further discussion. Scenario planning would also help inform adaptive management strategies.
- Conceptual modeling and the Resist-Accept-Direct (R-A-D) decision framework were appealing and may have a place in the CVCAMP process. The R-A-D Framework was created by the National Park Service to help decision makers make thoughtful choices on how they will manage species/habitats/ecosystems in the face of a changing climate.
- Utilize Climate-Smart Planning Techniques and Tools: Take climate projections into account when planning and designing restoration and access improvements in Coyote Valley, Consider using a 'climate analog' approach, such as Point Blue's Climate Smart toolkits, to designing habitat improvements (i.e., selecting native plant species from other locations in California that currently have a similar climate to the projected future conditions in Coyote Valley) to ensure that critical vegetation-wildlife habitat associations can be maintained over time. This approach may also be utilized to select agricultural crops that will be suitable for changing climatic conditions in the Valley as well.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Climate Resiliency Framework, Greene Economics *(cont)*

Conclusion

The climate resiliency framework will inform how the Project Team thinks about climate change in Coyote Valley and incorporate this thinking into their initial plans. In summary, the disciplines will be using the climate projections provided by DWR for scenario planning. Once water resources have run their climate models, the water availability results, and allocation of available water will inform each discipline's project plans. Their plans should be feasible under all climate scenarios and range of water availability. By ensuring project plans are viable under a range of future conditions, the planned projects should be resilient to future climate change impacts.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Agricultural Project Feasibility Screening Tool, Greene Economics

Purpose of Report/Study

The Agricultural Project Feasibility Screening Tool presented the results of a high-level screening for the suitability of several agricultural activities that can be a springboard for site- and farm-specific planning that will occur later in the CVCAMP process. Screened activities included:

- Apricot orchard(s)
- “Agro-Ecosystem” demonstration farm(s)
- Native plant nursery
- Poly-species adaptive grazing (ruminants and chickens)
- Diversified production farm
- Land access/lease program
- Small farm incubator
- Aggregation, processing, and distribution center
- Marketing, branding and promotion of Coyote Valley agricultural products

The purpose of the screening was to determine whether different agricultural activities or programs might be suitable candidates for further promotion through CVCAMP.

Research or Management Question

- How will agriculture and working lands best fit into CVCAMP?
- Which activities are potentially well-suited to the goals for the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas?

Methods

Each of the activities was selected as potentially appropriate working lands activities for CVCAMP based on a review of existing agricultural plans in Coyote Valley and the greater Santa Clara Valley, along with discussions with OSA staff and other stakeholders. Uses were scored as favorable, unfavorable, or somewhere in the middle (mixed) for each criterion. The criteria were split into two categories: Technical Suitability and CVCAMP Suitability. Technical feasibility examined whether the existing infrastructure and conditions could support the agricultural activity or program in question. CVCAMP suitability examined whether the agricultural activity or program would align with the goals and objectives of CVCAMP. This preliminary screening process was meant to broadly assess potential agricultural activities for their general suitability in Coyote Valley. A more detailed evaluation of the suitability of specific parcels of land to support these activities may be conducted in future phases of the planning process, and screened activities may not necessarily be sited on existing conserved lands with Coyote Valley that may have higher conservation value as wildlife habitat. CVCAMP will ultimately determine what portions of the conserved land may be suitable for these and other potential agricultural uses.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Agricultural Project Feasibility Screening Tool, Greene Economics *(cont)*

Findings

- The following five activities received a favorable overall feasibility score and will therefore likely be suitable for Coyote Valley based on their technical requirements and ability to support CVCAMP goals: agro-ecosystem demonstration farms, native plant nursery, poly-adaptive grazing, land access/leasing program, and marketing/branding campaign.
- The following four activities received a mixed overall feasibility score: apricot (or other stone fruit) orchard, diversified production farm, small farm incubator, and processing and distribution center.
- Of the five top-scoring activities, a native plant nursery and marketing/branding campaign for Coyote Valley regenerative agriculture are exceedingly well suited for CVCAMP as they scored favorable for both technical feasibility and CVCAMP suitability. These two activities have little to no drawback and fully support larger CVCAMP goals.
- Benefits of the native plant nursery include supplying future restoration efforts in Coyote Valley and the greater Santa Clara Valley region, providing an educational opportunity for the local community, and supporting wildlife connectivity.
- Strategic marketing and branding of goods grown or made in Coyote Valley in support CVCAMP's goals would allow consumers to know their purchases are supporting Coyote Valley's conservation vision and could increase the market value of these goods, thus providing more revenue to farmers.

Conclusion

- A native plant nursery and marketing/branding campaign for Coyote Valley regenerative agriculture are exceedingly well suited for the CVCAMP and work for these activities can begin in the near term if deemed appropriate by OSA.
- A land leasing program, agro-ecosystem demonstration farms, and poly-species grazing venture should be considered but will require additional research regarding their feasibility and placement within Coyote Valley.
- Although the diversified production farm, apricot orchard, small farm incubator, and processing and distribution center received mixed overall feasibility scores, this does not mean that said agricultural activities are not well-suited for Coyote Valley, but rather that these activities require more research and consideration before pursuing them further. Therefore, there is a potential future for any one of these agricultural activities to be pursued via CVCAMP upon further investigation.

CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Agricultural Program Alignment, Greene Economics

Purpose of Report/Study

The goal the Agricultural Program Alignment process was to better understand how existing plans, programs, and farming practices might be leveraged and supported by CVCAMP.

Research or Management Question

- How can CVCAMP support agricultural ventures that pay homage to Coyote Valley's agricultural heritage while mitigating/preparing for climate change impacts?
- How will agriculture fit into conservation and restoration goals and which agricultural activities can support wildlife restoration goals?

Methods

Researchers completed outreach to Santa Clara County agricultural institutions (e.g., University of California's Cooperative Extension representatives, the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau, research institutions, etc.) and local farmers. The outreach also involved those interested in local foods, food security, farmers markets, agricultural tourism, conservation easement programs, and other climate smart agricultural activities in the area. Information on existing easement programs and other regenerative agricultural activities was collected. The researchers led individual informal interviews with agricultural experts and other regional representatives, followed by a larger roundtable discussion that brought stakeholders together to share ideas and start to identify common strategies.

Findings

- Some key considerations identified by the broader agricultural community include:
 - Making land accessible to farmers and ensuring they have strong land tenure.

- Supporting farmer needs to be flexible in their production systems.
- Ensuring water availability.
- Compensating farmers for their conservation and CSA practices.
- There is an opportunity to develop a strong working relationship on agricultural projects (e.g. native plant nurseries) with Tribal partners via their Tribal land trusts.
- Farmers will need regulatory and policy support to ensure affordable housing for farm employees and farmers is available nearby.
- OSA and its partners will also need to find ways to make regenerative agricultural practices attractive to farmers in Coyote Valley through programs that compensate them for the environmental services they provide.
- Future agricultural activities could include: a food hub, cooperative or shared infrastructure that helps farmers prepare their products and reach larger markets, small ruminant grazing working in tandem with row crops, previously successful agricultural activities in Coyote Valley like walnut and stone fruit orchards, grain production, an agriculture park, conservation easements, and a Coyote Valley marketing campaign that would encourage local markets to purchase wildlife friendly/climate-smart products at a higher market price.

Conclusion

Bringing stakeholders and farmers from Coyote Valley and Santa Clara County together to share strategies and discuss potential collaboration is an important activity that can help streamline and strengthen the CVCAMP process. In general, participants recognized the potential to leverage skills, resources, and planning activities to bring about the shared goals of supporting agriculture in Coyote Valley.



CVCAMP STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Transportation Existing Conditions Analysis, W-Trans

Purpose of Report/Study

The Transportation Existing Conditions Analysis described the existing and planned transportation facilities and services in Coyote Valley, recent history of collisions to identify potential safety concerns, existing travel patterns through the CVCAMP area, and visitation patterns at existing public access sites in the project vicinity. This analysis also provided a preliminary feasibility assessment of the potential to repurpose portions of the available right-of-way for enhanced bike lanes, bus lanes, or other beneficial land uses by removing excess travel lanes that were added for speculative development in Coyote Valley that never occurred.

Research or Management Question

- Can the existing roadway network be rightsized and the right-of-way repurposed to accommodate new, reduced growth projections and promote pedestrian/bicycle access or other land uses under the CVCAMP?

Methods

The research process included a literature review, covering numerous plans that have implications for the future transportation network in the CVCAMP area. Following this, the existing transportation setting was studied, including highways, roads, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit facilities, and safety and collision history. A roadway capacity analysis was conducted, comparing current and estimated future traffic volumes with maximum capacity of available travel lanes to assess the potential for a “road diet” (i.e. excess travel lane reduction). Travel patterns and parking lot usage at nearby open space preserves were also assessed using mobile device data.

Findings

- The existing Coyote Creek Trail provides a major regional north–south pedestrian and bicycle corridor parallel to US 101, but there is minimal pedestrian and bike infrastructure elsewhere in the area.
- There is frequent bus service available along Santa Teresa Boulevard and Hale Avenue, but few passengers board or exit the bus at stops in the area. Additionally, none of the bus stops have shelters that provide protection from summer sun or winter rains.
- The collision history at study area intersections indicated that there were a high number of injury collisions relative to total collisions recorded at the intersections of Bailey Avenue/McKean Road, Bailey Avenue/Monterey Road, and Bailey Avenue/Santa Teresa Boulevard. A number of wildlife-vehicle collisions have also been identified in the study area. A more detailed review of both vehicle collision records as well as the vehicle-wildlife collisions will be conducted as part of a future transportation impact analysis to identify any existing safety issues that need to be addressed.

Conclusion

The segments of Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard that were evaluated carry traffic volumes that are well below their capacity. If a travel lane on the multi-lane sections of these roadways were to be eliminated, volumes would remain below capacity even with increased future levels of traffic. Monterey Road would be approaching peak capacity if a travel lane were to be eliminated, so additional analysis would be required in future phases of CVCAMP to determine the feasibility of repurposing any portion of the Monterey Road right-of-way.



View of Coyote Valley looking east over Palm Avenue from the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, credit: Nick Perry





**COYOTE
VALLEY**

CONSERVATION AREAS
MASTER PLAN