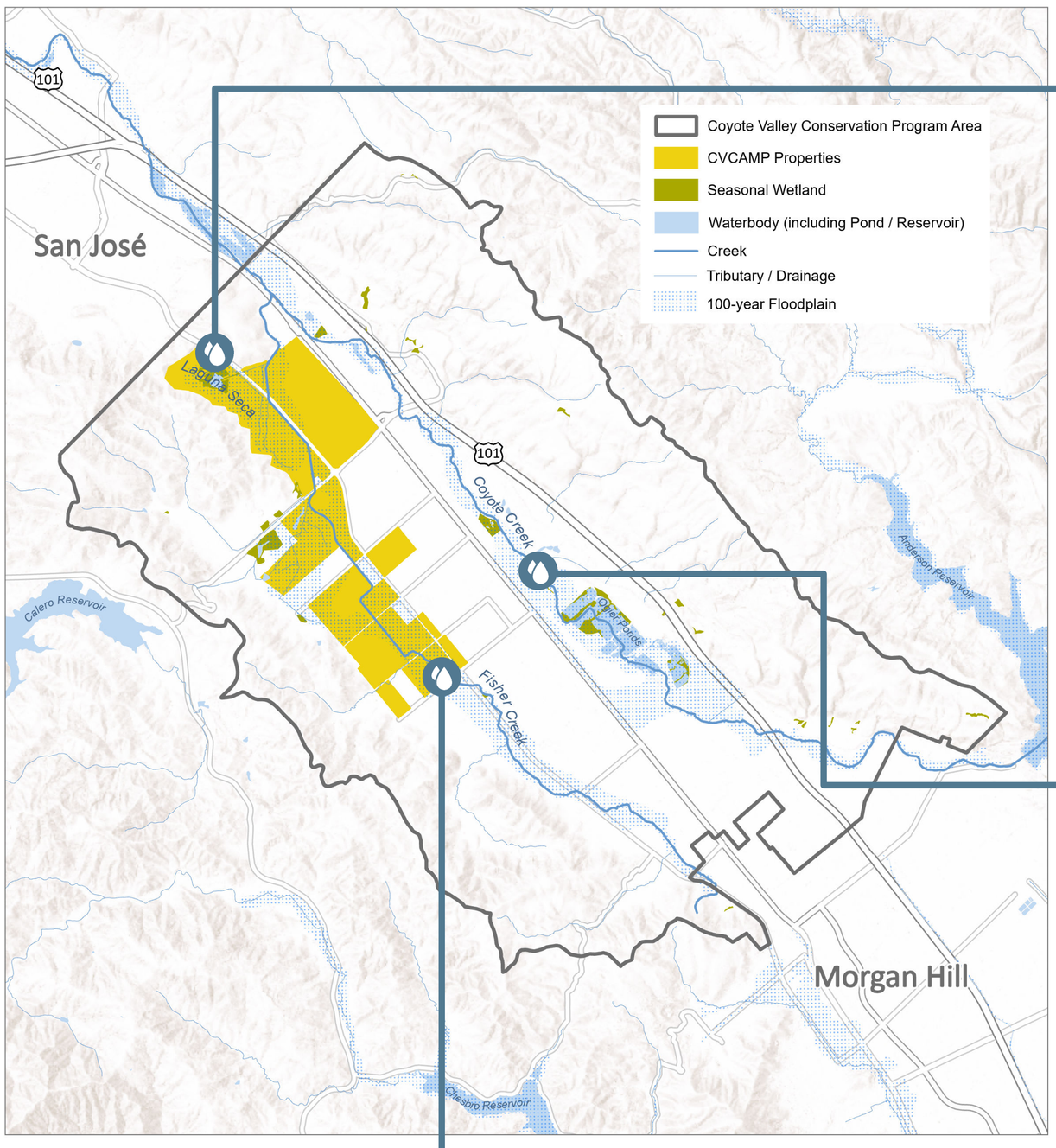
Water Resources

Coyote Valley contains regionally important water resources that have been extensively modified by human development. Conserving and restoring Coyote Valley's wetlands, creeks and groundwater can improve ecosystem function, flood protection and water supply for the benefit of the entire Santa Clara Valley.

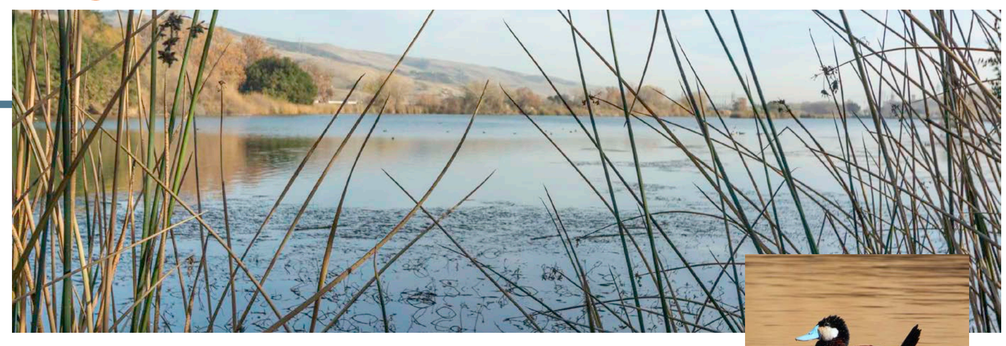
Photo: Laguna Seca seasonal wetland

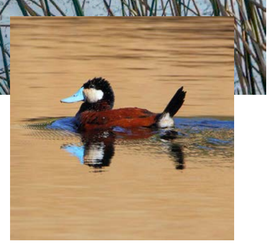


Laguna Seca

Laguna Seca (Spanish for "dry lake") is a seasonal lake and freshwater marsh in northwest Coyote Valley. The footprint of Laguna Seca was drastically reduced in the 1910s by the construction of drainage canals for agriculture (see photo on right). Further changes came in the early 2000s when an earthen dam was built in the middle of the Laguna Seca in anticipation of then-planned development.

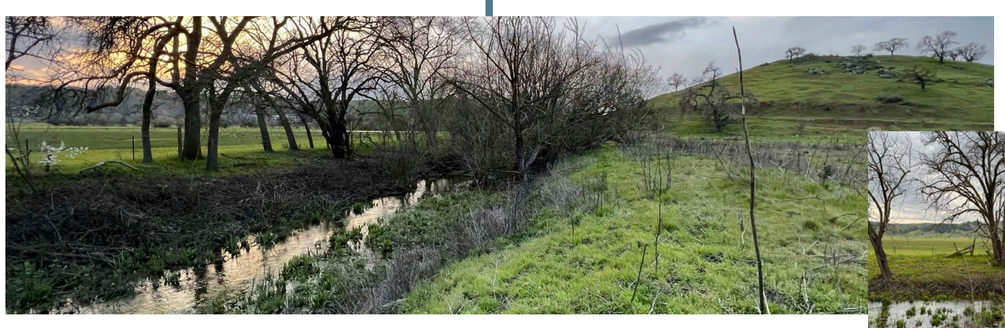
Coyote Creek

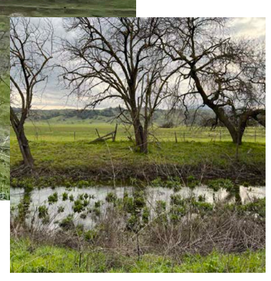




Coyote Creek is a river that flows north from the Diablo range east of Morgan Hill, through Coyote Valley and into San Francisco Bay. The flow of water in the creek is managed by Valley Water through Anderson Dam and other infrastructure. The amount of water released into Coyote Creek changes groundwater levels in Coyote Valley, which in turn influences the presence of groundwater-dependent habitats like ponds and wetlands.

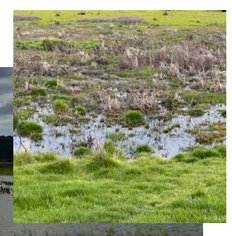
Fisher Creek





In the 1910s, a large drainage ditch, now known as Fisher Creek, was constructed to quickly drain the wetlands on the western side of Coyote Valley for agricultural uses. Instead of slowly flowing through a natural floodplain with seasonal channels and wetlands, rainwater is now quickly conveyed in the Fisher Creek channel and into Coyote Creek, increasing the risk of flooding downstream.

Groundwater



Groundwater is water that exists underground in the spaces between soil. Much of Santa Clara County's drinking water comes from groundwater, which is why it's so important to manage lands for clean water. In northwest Coyote Valley, groundwater is relatively close to the surface, historically creating extensive wetlands and limiting the ability to easily farm or develop the land.

Photo credits: Nick Perry, David Mauk, Jordan Plotsky, Derek Neumann, Valley Water

KEY FINDINGS

Reconnecting Fisher Creek to its historic floodplain will reduce downstream flood risk, enhance habitat and improve water quality. Modeling has confirmed the benefits of water retention to local habitat and also slowing flood waters to Coyote Creek.

North Coyote Valley offers the greatest potential for restored aquatic habitats due to shallow groundwater, which could support a diverse range of habitat types.

Mid-Coyote Valley offers the greatest potential for restoration of habitat like oak savannah that is less dependent on surface and groundwater and more resilient to drought conditions.