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## USE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

To: Use and Management Committee  
Date: October 25, 2018  
From: Jennifer Hooper, Planning Technician  
RE: Update on Coyote Valley North Meadow Restoration and Public Access

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### **BACKGROUND**

On September 26, 2013, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (Authority) Board of Directors approved the *Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve Use and Management Plan*, which provides direction for a public access and recreation program and the management of natural resources in the 348-acre Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve. Within the Plan, the Use and Facilities Program includes the development of an Outdoor Learning Place and ADA-accessible trail to lead from the staging area to the proposed outdoor learning center in the area of the Preserve called the North Meadow.

The Authority received an award of funding approval from the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) on June 12, 2015 for \$200,000 toward development of the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve Outdoor Learning Center and Creekside Valley Loop Trail project. In 2017, the Authority learned through consultations with local biological experts and the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency (VHA) that the area for the proposed outdoor learning center, the North Meadow, is prime habitat for western burrowing owl enhancement. On June 29, 2018, SCVWD amended the funding agreement with the Authority to allow changes to the scope of the project based on the high conservation values of the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve's North Meadow, as well as to extend the term of the funding agreement to June 30, 2019.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### *Public Access*

The revised project scope eliminates the learning center component and re-routes the ADA accessible trail, to preserve habitat and hydrological restoration opportunities in the North Meadow while still providing an opportunity for accessibility to enhancements. The new trail development concept will incorporate the existing Heart's Delight Trail, which leads from the Staging Area along the southern portion of the North Meadow. Proposed improvements will ensure the trail meets ADA accessibility standards. The proposed project plan also includes construction of observation points with overlooks to allow for habitat and wildlife viewing and the installation of interpretive panels. Interpretive panels will be installed along the trail or at observation points, illustrating various themes relevant to the new project features. The proposed trail alignment is illustrated in *Exhibit A North Meadow Proposed Concept Plan*.

#### *Burrowing Owl Habitat Restoration*

The western burrowing owl is a covered species under the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan; declining habitat has caused a dramatic loss of the number of breeding burrowing owls in the South Bay region. Restoration activities in the North Meadow would include the installation of artificial burrows, the

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## USE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

translocation of owls to the North Meadow, and ongoing maintenance and monitoring of vegetation and burrowing owl activity. The Authority would work with VHA to oversee the installation, operations, and maintenance of the restoration project, with the VHA providing funding for costs associated with burrowing owl enhancements and monitoring through a future Burrowing Owl Management Plan and Funding Agreement. The approximate area of interest within the North Meadow for burrowing owl habitat restoration is depicted in *Exhibit A North Meadow Proposed Concept Plan*.

### *Hydrologic Restoration*

Two tributaries to Fisher Creek also flow through the North Meadow. Past agricultural activities have resulted in the partial realignment and modification of these two tributaries to support cultivation activities in the North Meadow. Hydrologic restoration activities in the North Meadow would aim to re-establish natural channel functions, notably, the creeks natural sinuosity and ability to regularly access their floodplains and fan out over the surrounding North Meadow. This work would aim to restore the North Meadow's hydrology, so it can support additional riparian and seasonal wetland habitats. The location of the creeks and a conceptual area of interest for future floodplain restoration is shown in *Exhibit A. North Meadow Proposed Concept Plan*. Hydrologic restoration would be conducted in a future phase of work, however maintaining the feasibility of this work will be incorporated into the updated plan for the North Meadow.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This is an informational item only and there is no action needed by the Committee.

*Attachment(s): Exhibit A – North Meadow Proposed Concept Plan*



- Existing Conditions**
- Existing Trail
  - Fisher Creek Tributaries
  - Preserve Boundary
  - Staging Area
- Proposed Project**
- Western Burrowing Owl Nests
  - Western Burrowing Owl Habitat
  - Interpretive Areas
  - Interpretive Area Overlooks
  - ADA Trail Improvements
- Future Conditions**
- Hydrologic Restoration
  - Regional Trail Connections

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