

COYOTE VALLEY CONSERVATION AREAS MASTER PLAN

The Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan (CVCAMP) is a multi-phased planning project that will create a roadmap for the future use and restoration over 1,500 acres of natural and agricultural lands in Coyote Valley. Coyote Valley is key to the region's long-term environmental health and resilience and its conservation will restore a landscape of regional, state and even national significance. CVCAMP is managed by the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority in close partnership with Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and City of San José.



GOALS AND TOPIC AREAS

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Enhance **Wildlife** Habitat & Ecological Connectivity
- 

Promote & Demonstrate the Benefits of Sustainable Local **Agriculture**
- 

Improve **Watershed** Health & Function
- 

Adapt to **Changing Climate** Conditions
- 

Connect **People** to Nature in Healthy & Meaningful Ways
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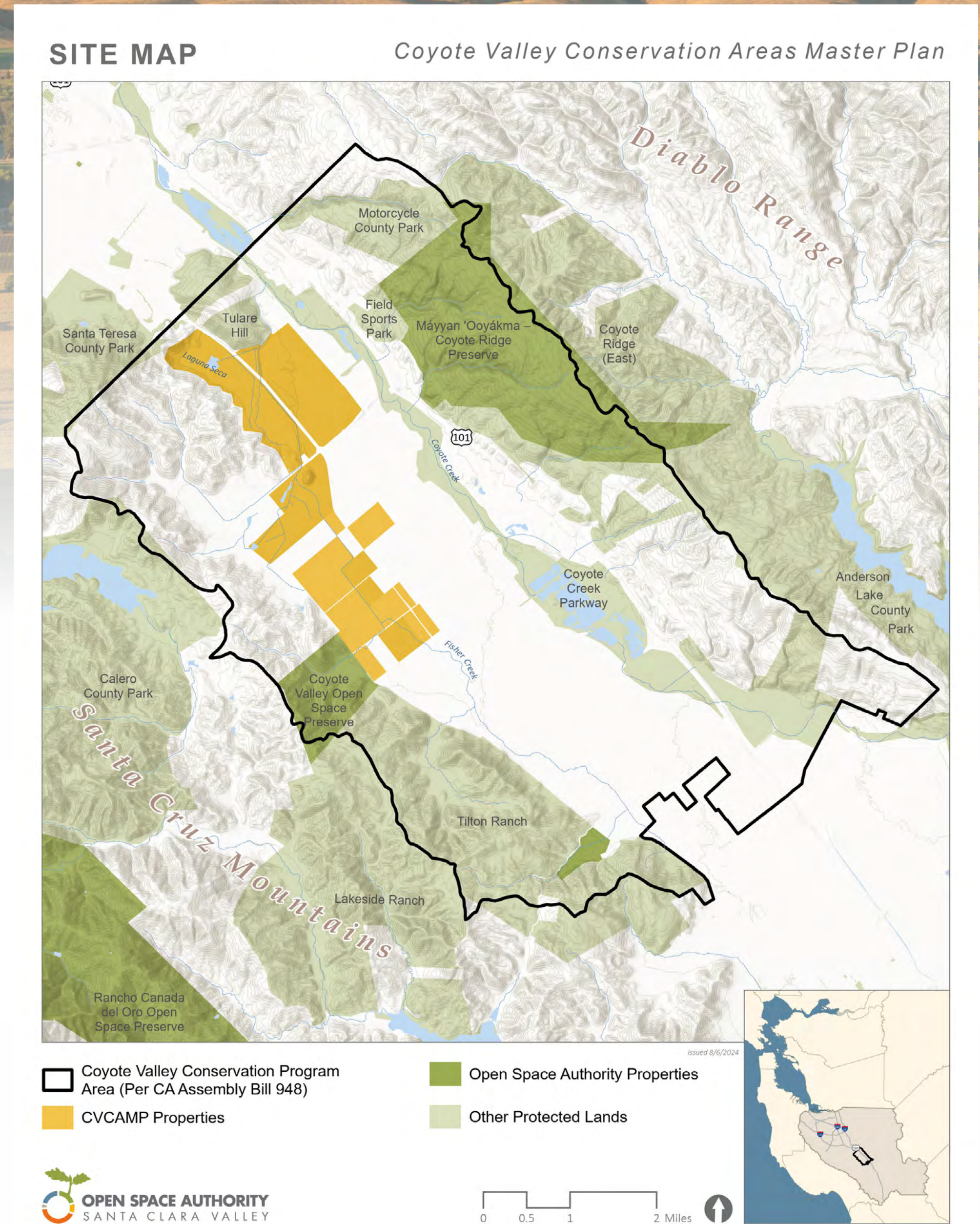
Boost the **Local Economy** through Place-Based Initiatives
- 

Foster Ongoing & Inclusive **Community Engagement** & Stewardship
- 

Promote Equitable & Sustainable **Transportation**
- 

Respect, Honor, Preserve & Interpret **Cultural Heritage** & Historic Resources
- 

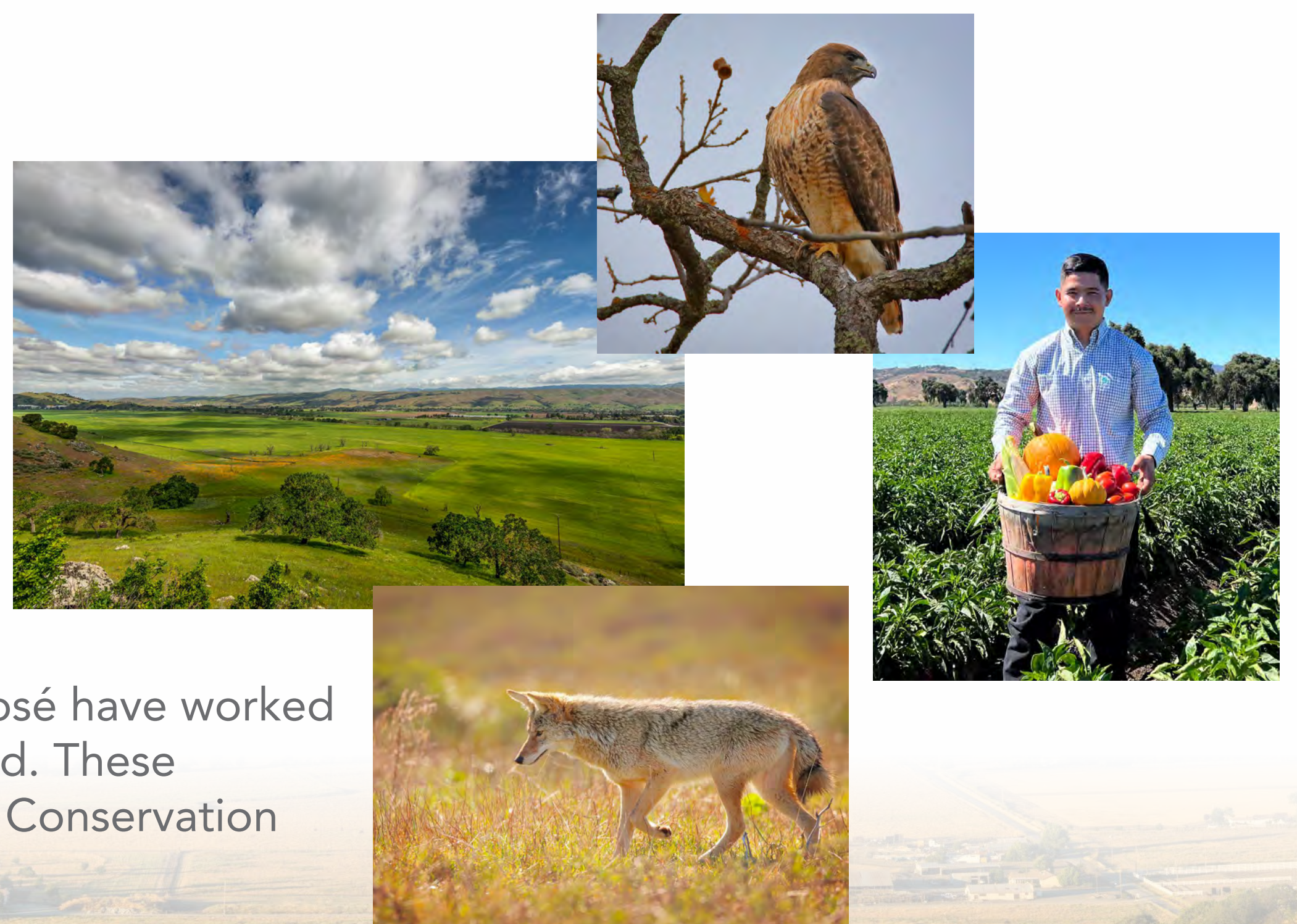
Consider a **Holistic Vision** for the Entire Coyote Valley



ABOUT COYOTE VALLEY

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.

Since 2019, the Open Space Authority, POST and the City of San José have worked together to permanently protect over 1,500 acres of valley floor land. These recently protected lands are the primary focus of the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan.





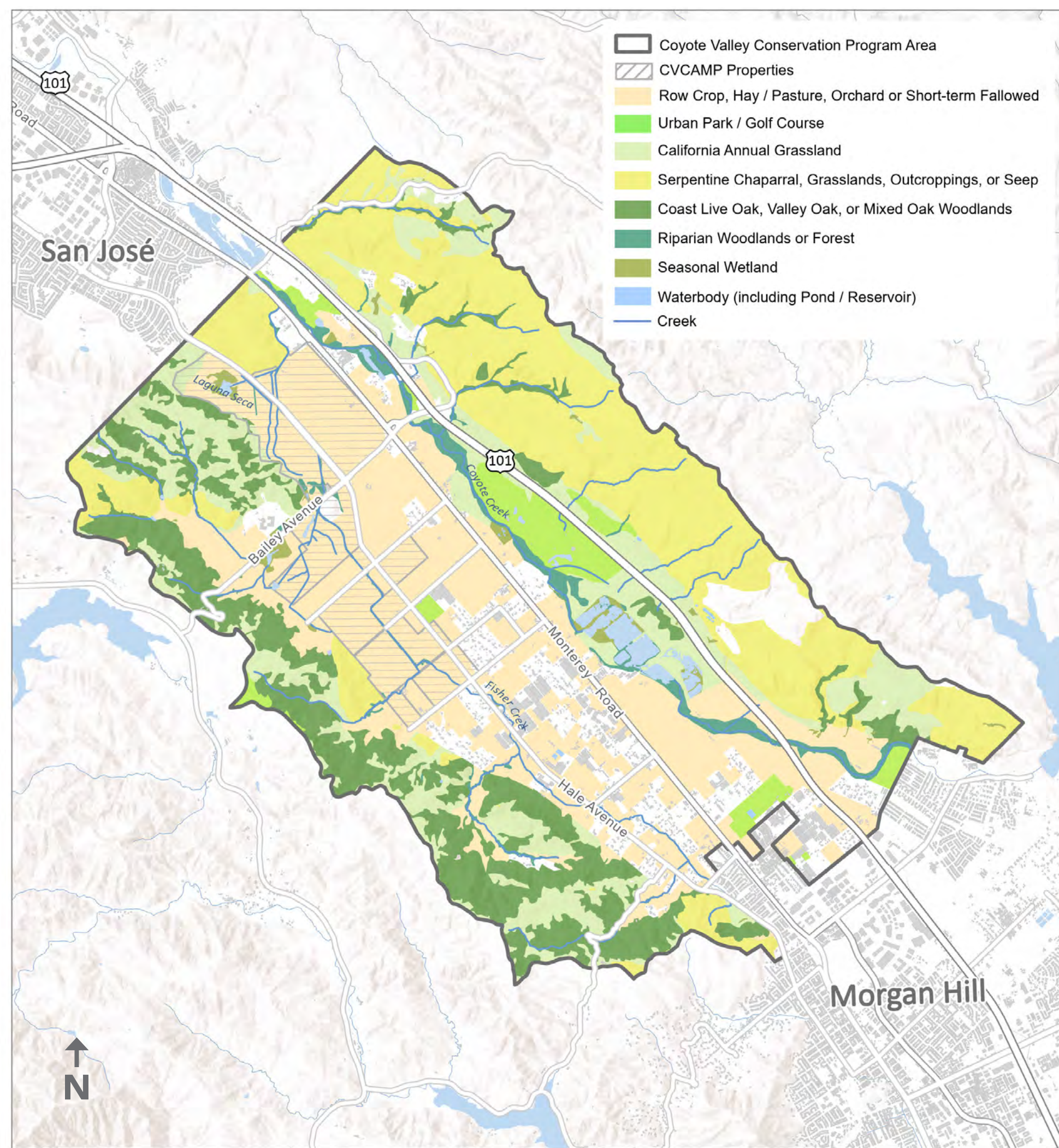
Wildlife & Habitat

Coyote Valley is a biodiversity hot spot, home to many unique species of wildlife and rare habitat. There is great potential to expand and restore natural habitats in Coyote Valley to create a healthier environment for wildlife to live in and move through as they travel between the surrounding mountain ranges.

Photo: Bobcat

Land Cover & Vegetation

Coyote Valley is made up of many kinds of natural habitat that can be restored and expanded. Each habitat type has unique characteristics and value to wildlife and humans.



Pond

Coyote Valley is home to natural ponds, like Laguna Seca, as well as manmade ponds. Many native plants and animals are adapted to seasonal ponds that dry up during California's dry summers.



Seasonal Wetland

Seasonal wetlands are areas where water covers the soil for part of the year, providing unique habitat. Coyote Valley's wetlands were drained for agriculture in the 1910s, but remnant seasonal wetlands still exist in low-lying areas and along the edges of manmade water features.



Riparian

Riparian habitats are woodlands and brush found adjacent to waterways. Coyote Creek and Fisher Creek are lined by riparian habitat. Although Fisher Creek is a manmade drainage canal, it now provides important riparian habitat.



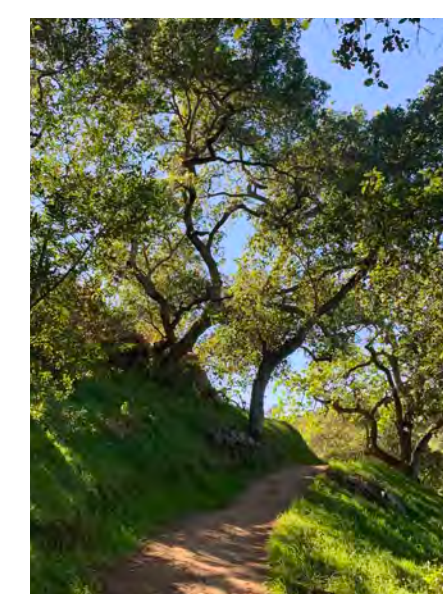
Californian Annual Grassland

Grasslands, mostly now dominated by European grasses, cover much of Coyote Valley and the surrounding hillsides.



Serpentine Grasslands

The hills surrounding Coyote Valley are home to some of the largest areas of serpentine soils and grassland in the region. This rare habitat type is home to a high number of unique native species.



Mixed Oak Woodland & Forest

Much of Coyote Valley was once covered by oak savanna and more dense oak woodlands. Remnants of these woodlands still exist with great potential for restoration across the landscape.



Row Crop, Hay and Pasture or Fallow

Though not a native plant landscape, hayfields and pastures still provide important places for wildlife to live and find food. Row crops are farmland crops planted in rows that are tilled or otherwise cultivated by agricultural machinery. The habitat value of row crops can be enhanced by adding hedgerows and farmscaping that provide habitat for beneficial insects, pollinators and wildlife.

Focal Species

Focal species are species within the region that will be prioritized for conservation and restoration planning. These focal species were selected by local science experts to reflect the diverse habitat requirements and unique needs of wildlife in Coyote Valley.



*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.

KEY FINDINGS



Large-scale habitat restoration is needed. Coyote Valley has been heavily altered by human use. Habitat restoration would increase biodiversity, promote healthy wildlife movement and protect both common and rare native species.



There is great potential to restore vital aquatic habitat. Restoration will benefit rare wildlife like California tiger salamander. Invasive aquatic species like bullfrogs and crayfish are present nearby and must be carefully controlled.

Photo credits: David Mauk, Derek Neumann, Cassie Kifer, Nick Perry, Stephen Joseph, Annamarie Pilon, Cait Hutnik, Beth Hamel, Michael Van Hatten



Wildlife & Habitat The Landscape Linkage

Coyote Valley is where the Santa Cruz Mountains and Diablo Range come together, making it one of California's most important landscape linkages — a place where undeveloped land allows wildlife to move between 1.13 million acres of core habitat in the mountain ranges and maintain healthy populations.

Photo: Coyote Valley and Santa Cruz Mountains

DIABLO RANGE

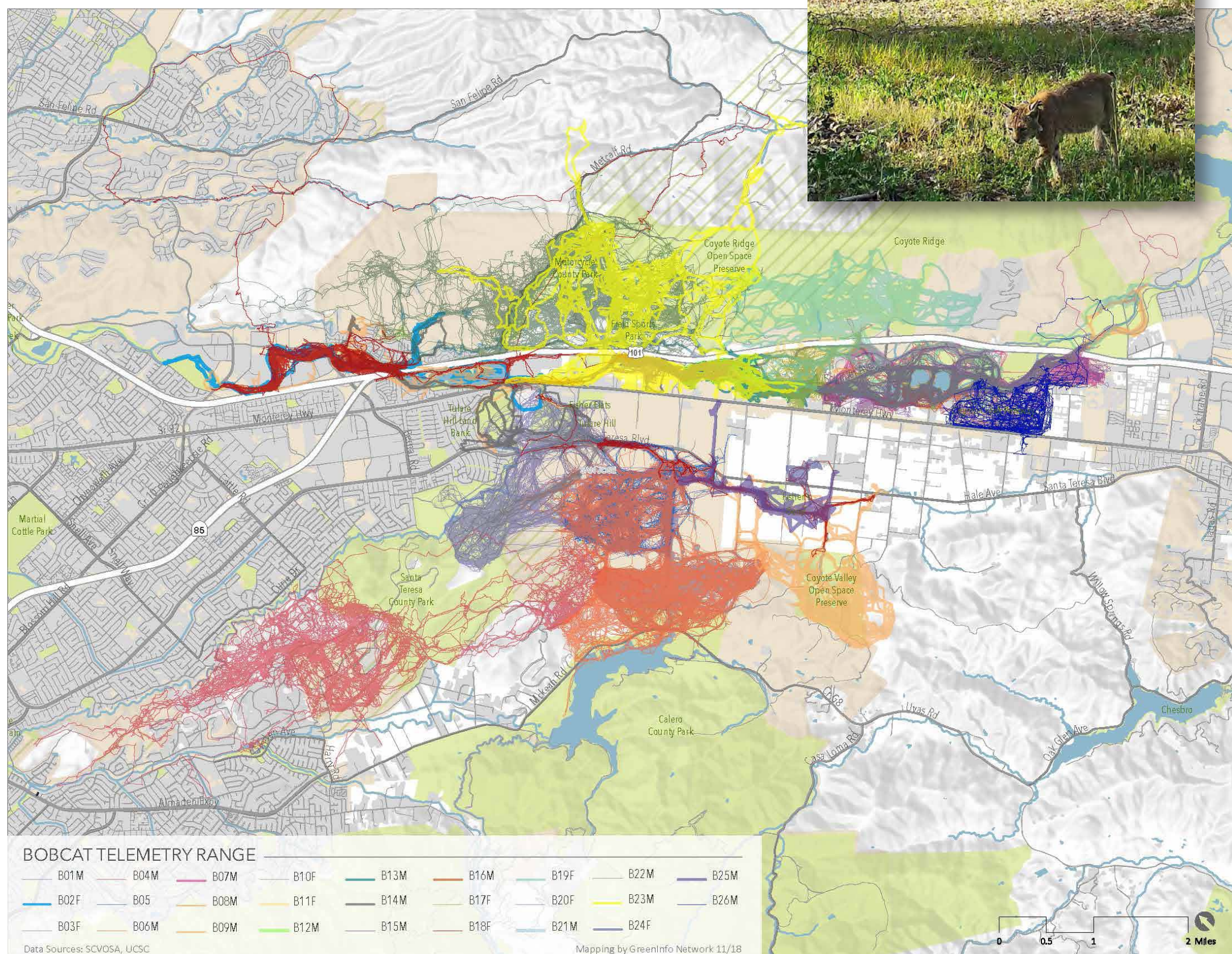
The **DIABLO RANGE** defines the eastern edge of Coyote Valley. It is a largely undeveloped mountain range that runs north-south through the middle of California. It is home to a remarkable variety of plants and animals and contains large uninterrupted areas of habitat that are key to healthy populations of wildlife.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

The **SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS** define the western edge of Coyote Valley and contain most of the wildland on the San Francisco Peninsula. They are at risk of becoming ecologically isolated from the rest of California due to development. Open space in Coyote Valley is a vital connection between the mountain ranges, allowing wildlife to migrate, find mates and adapt to climate change.



Bobcat Collaring Study



Low land with vegetation cover, such as Fisher Creek and Coyote Creek, are ideal for safe movement of wildlife through Coyote Valley. Developed areas, like roads and houses, interrupt natural corridors and create dangerous conditions for bobcats. By tracking bobcat movement throughout Coyote Valley we have learned that protecting open space and restoring creeks is some of the most important work we can do to keep these cats safe and facilitate their movement through the landscape.

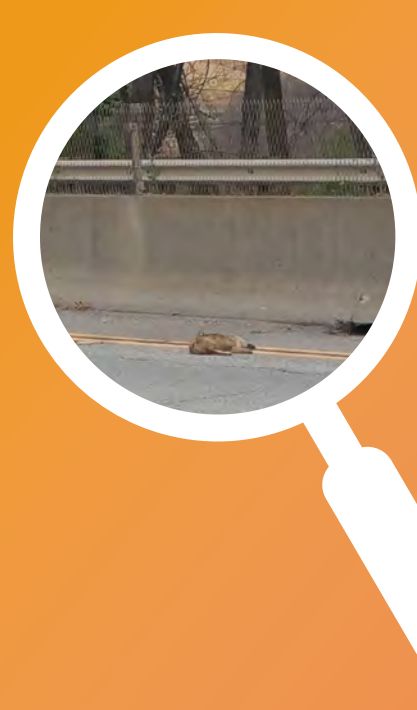
Roadkill Data



Wildlife-vehicle collisions occur frequently in Coyote Valley, creating unsafe conditions for people and often deadly results for wildlife. Recent studies are helping pinpoint roadkill hotspots, and planning work is underway to identify and design wildlife crossings along Coyote Valley's busy roads and highways to help maintain connectivity through the landscape and between the surrounding mountain ranges.

KEY FINDINGS

Roadways are fragmenting habitat and killing wildlife. Changes to roadway design, fencing and infrastructure like wildlife under-crossings will allow wildlife to more safely cross Coyote Valley.



New uses must be planned with wildlife in mind. Coyote Valley's role as a successful landscape linkage for wildlife depends on reducing the effects of human use and activity. Noise, lighting, traffic and other factors must be carefully considered when new uses are planned.



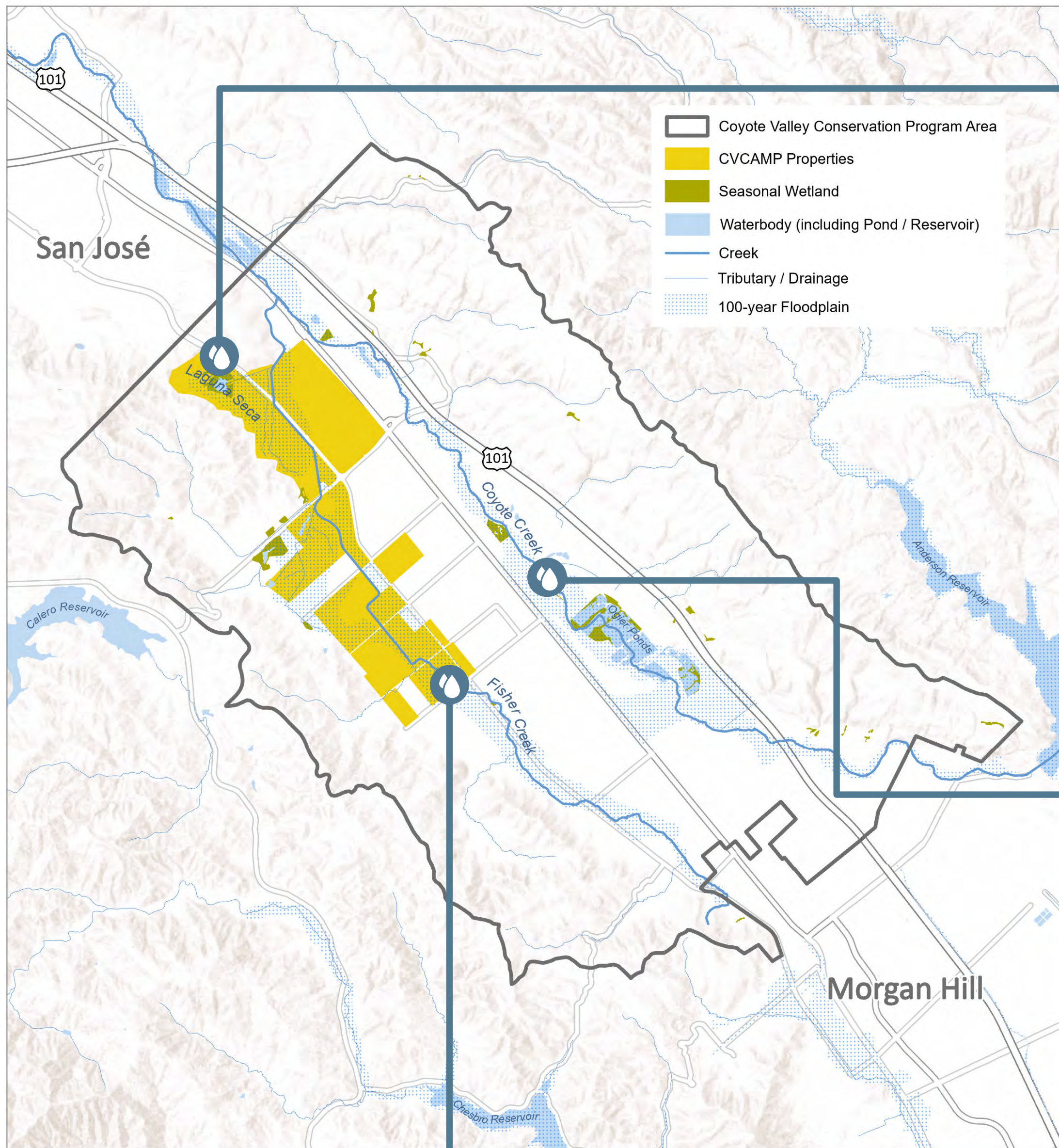
Local mountain lions are struggling and need a safe wildlife corridor in Coyote Valley.



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

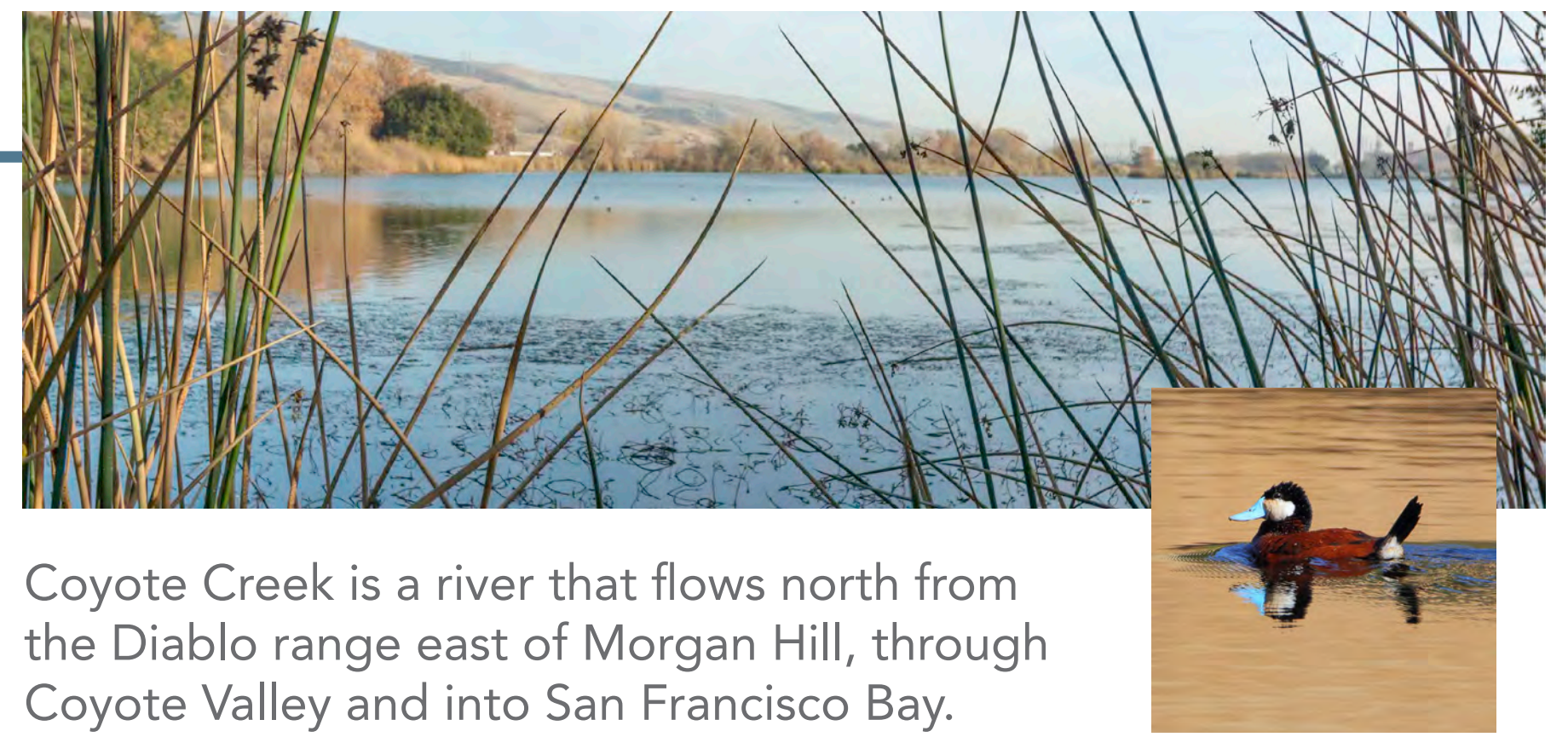


Laguna Seca



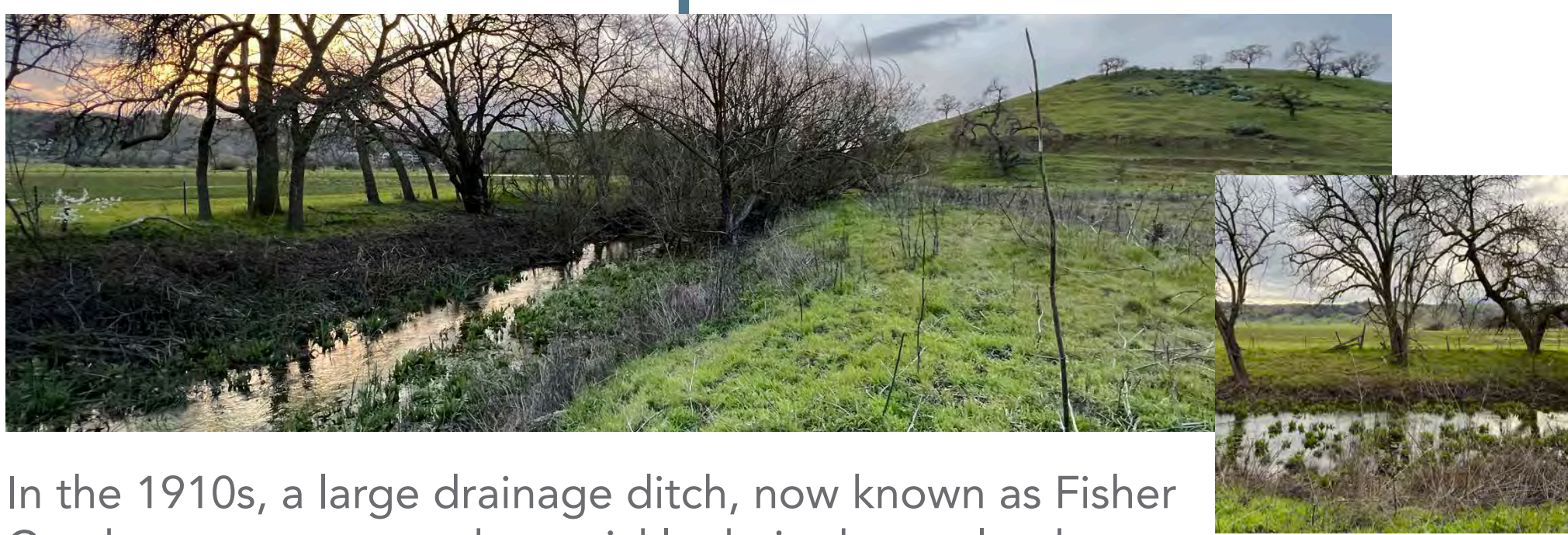
Laguna Seca (Spanish for "dry lake") is a seasonal lake and freshwater marsh in northwest Coyote Valley. The footprint of Laguna Seca was drastically reduced in the 1910s by the construction of drainage canals for agriculture (see photo on right). Further changes came in the early 2000s when an earthen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



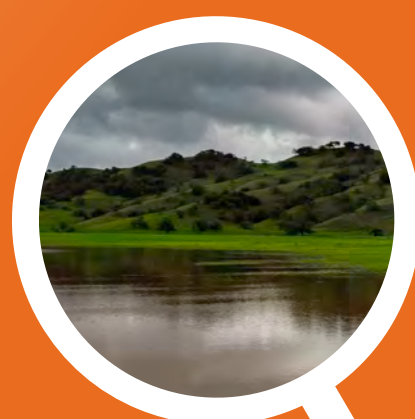
Groundwater is water that exists underground in the spaces between soil. Much of Santa Clara County's drinking water comes from groundwater, which is why it's so important to manage lands for clean water. In northwest Coyote Valley, groundwater is relatively close to the surface, historically creating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



Public Health & Access

Many parks, preserves, and recreation facilities already exist within Coyote Valley. The protection of additional lands offers the opportunity to strengthen Coyote Valley's role as a place where people can connect with nature and improve their health and wellbeing.

Photo: Hikers at Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve

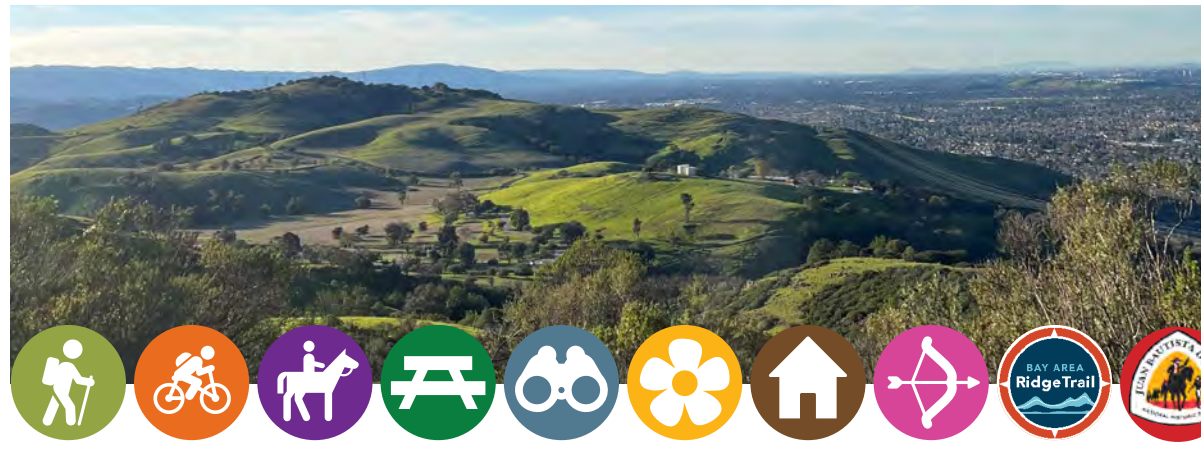
Existing Parks & Open Spaces

Hiking trails, parking areas and other public uses need to be carefully planned and managed to limit impacts on Coyote Valley's wildlife and farmland. Understanding the recreational uses already available in Coyote Valley will help us plan for new public uses on these precious lands that complement, not needlessly duplicate, what already exists.



Santa Teresa County Park

Land Manager: Santa Clara County Parks



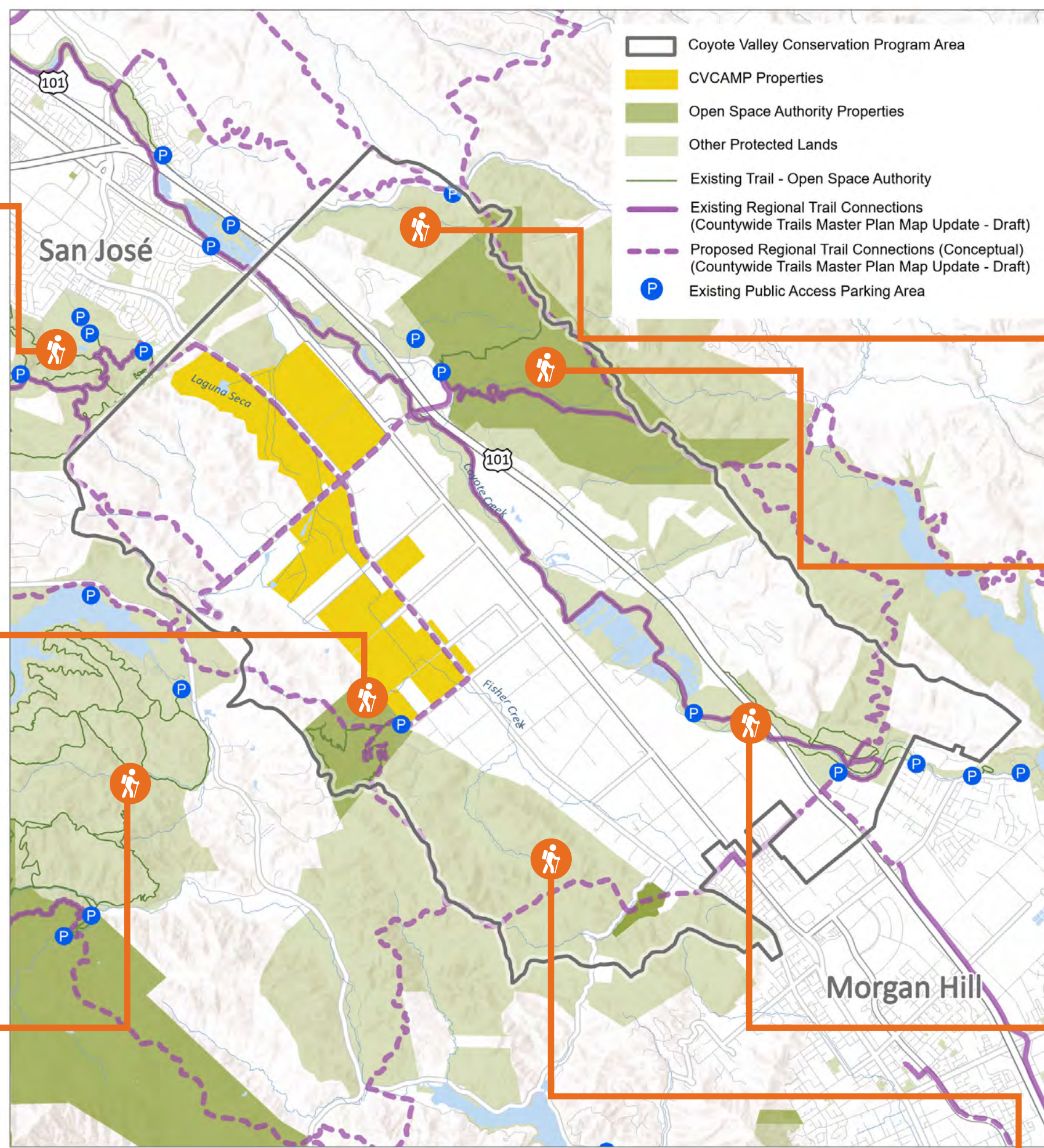
Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve

Land Manager: Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority



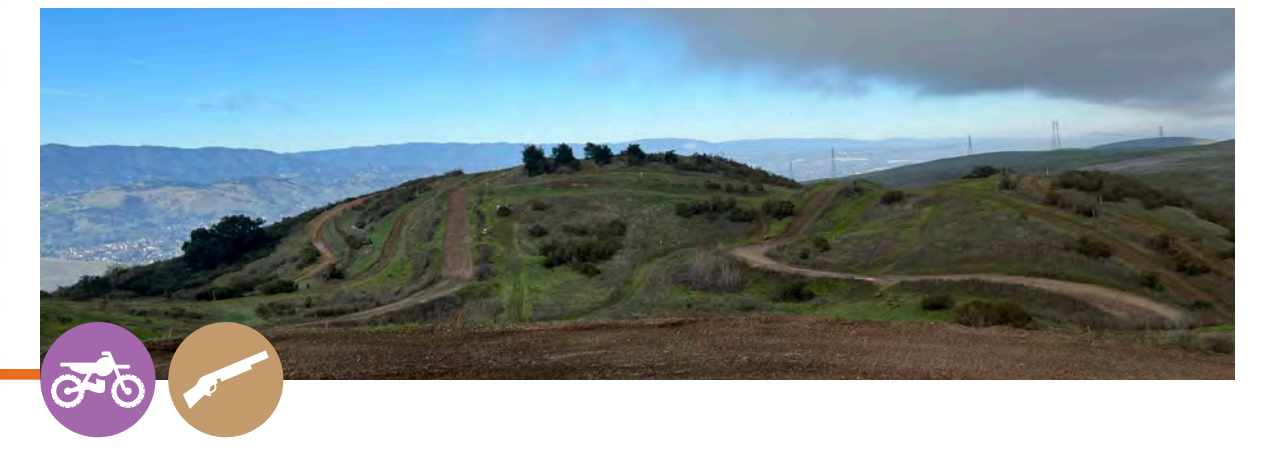
Calero County Park

Land Manager: Santa Clara County Parks



Metcalf Motorcycle County Park & Field Sports Park

Land Manager: Santa Clara County Parks



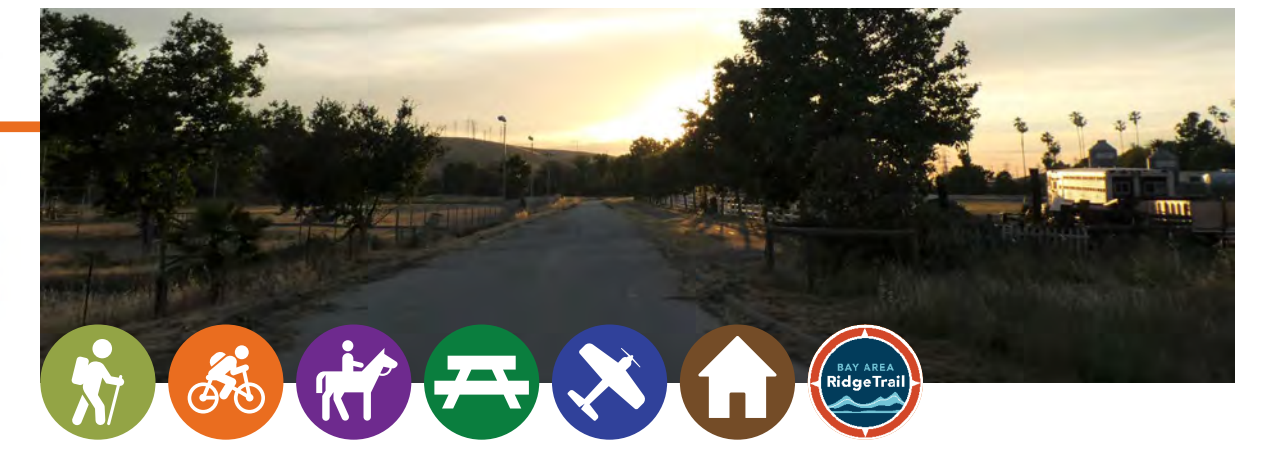
Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve

Land Manager: Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority



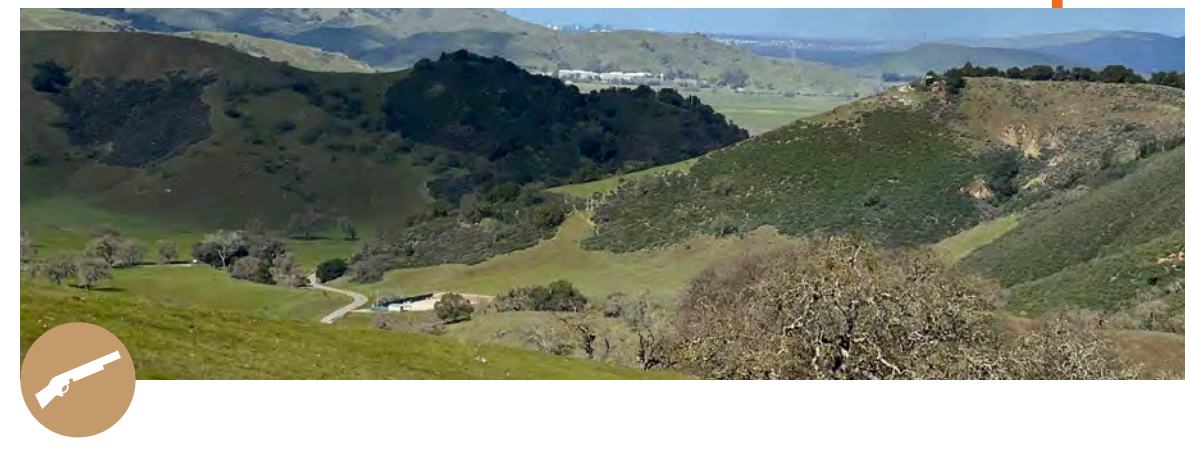
Coyote Creek Parkway

Land Manager: Santa Clara County Parks



Tilton Ranch

(Not currently open to the public - special access only)
Land Manager: Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority



Regional Trails

Several existing and planned regional trails pass through Coyote Valley, connecting it to surrounding preserves, parks and neighborhoods. Closing gaps in this trail network would greatly enhance and expand public access to nature and create an interconnected regional trail loop in Coyote Valley.



Bay Area Ridge Trail



Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail



Countywide Regional Trails

Explore Coyote Valley!



Check out our Events Calendar for opportunities to explore Coyote Valley!
openspaceauthority.org/events



KEY FINDINGS



Coyote Valley already offers many recreational activities in scenic settings that benefit from the protection of the valley's open spaces. Hiking, golfing, model aircraft flying, fishing and shooting sports are just some of the many varied outdoor recreational activities available.



Public access to open space in the region is plentiful but disconnected. Coyote Valley is identified as a place for important regional trail connections by Santa Clara County and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council.



Flat valley-floor lands provide an opportunity for more easily-accessible nature experiences where people of varying physical abilities can connect with nature without having to navigate existing hilly parks and trails.



Coyote Valley can provide wildlife-friendly public access for the Bay Area's community. Public engagement to date has identified hiking trails, wildlife viewing areas and scenic views as public access features that are most desired.



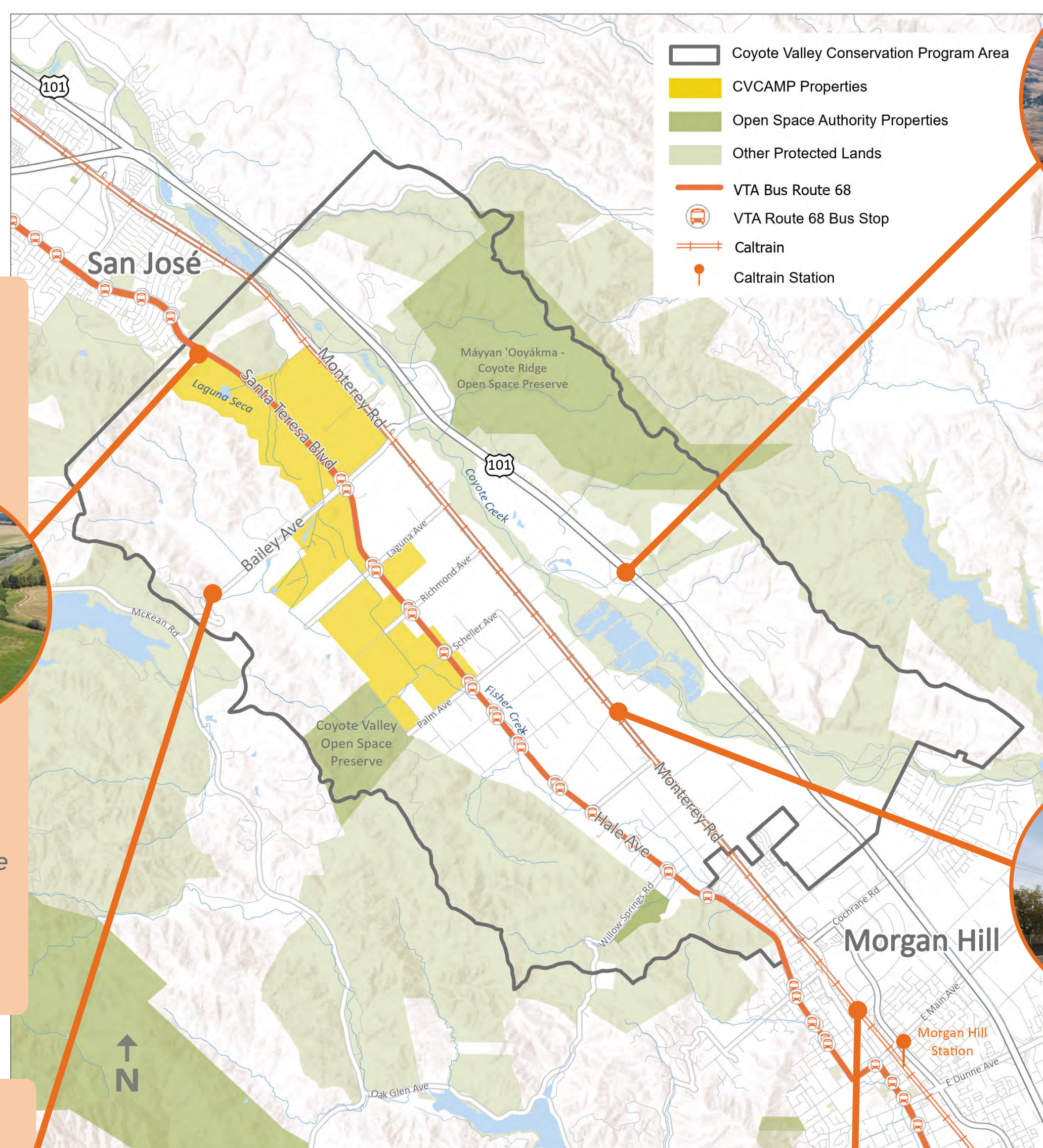
Transportation

The narrow gap in the coastal mountain ranges created by Coyote Creek—known as the Coyote Narrows—has long made Coyote Valley an important transportation corridor. Today, hundreds of thousands of people use Coyote Valley’s highways, roads and railroads every day—creating challenges and opportunities for safe access to open space for both wildlife and people.

Photo: US Route 101, Monterey Road and Santa Teresa Boulevard/Hale Avenue

Major Transportation Infrastructure

- Speed limit
- Bike facilities
- Traffic volume
- Notable facts



Santa Teresa Boulevard/Hale Avenue

Runs north-south through the middle of Coyote Valley, connecting San José with Morgan Hill.

- 45 mph
- ~8,800 vehicles per day
- Bike lane
- Primarily built in the 1960s (north of Scheller Avenue)
- VTA Route 68 offers frequent bus service
- Officially designated Scenic Road by County of Santa Clara



US Route 101

Runs north-south along the eastern side of Coyote Valley, extending from Los Angeles to Washington.

- 65 mph
- ~150,000 vehicles per day
- N/A
- Coyote Valley segment built in 1984
- Bridge over Coyote Creek is important wildlife undercrossing

Bailey Avenue

Runs east-west through North Coyote Valley, connecting US 101 to Santa Teresa Boulevard and McKean Road.

- 50 mph
- ~9,400 vehicles per day
- Planned bike lane
- Potential alignment of Bay Area Ridge Trail
- US 101 interchange did not exist until 2004



Union Pacific Railroad

Runs north-south parallel to Monterey Road providing passenger (Amtrak, Caltrain) and freight rail service to the region.

- Coyote train station operated c. 1869 to 1959
- Historic Coyote depot relocated to San José History Park in 2024
- Planned route of California High Speed Rail



Monterey Road

Runs north-south through Coyote Valley, extending from Downtown San José to Gilroy.

- 55 mph
- ~10,900 vehicles per day
- None (Proposed VTA Bike Superhighway)
- Historic/former route of US 101
- Median barrier prevents safe wildlife crossing

KEY FINDINGS

Photo credits: Nick Perry, Jordan Plotsky, Andrea Laue, Matt Dolkas



Collision and roadkill data indicate many roads in Coyote Valley are unsafe for both people and wildlife. Changes to roadway design, speed limit reductions and safer crossings could enhance pedestrian, motorist and wildlife safety.



Traffic analysis indicates the short, multi-lane segments of Bailey Ave and Santa Teresa Blvd are overly wide. This encourages speeding and increases the risk of collisions and roadkill.



Pedestrian routes are lacking. Dedicated footpaths parallel to key roads could provide safer pedestrian routes between destinations and serve as part of Coyote Valley’s larger regional trail network.



Bus service could provide sustainable open space access. Improving existing VTA Route 68 bus stops with amenities like shade structures and pathways to future trailheads would make accessing open space via public transit more comfortable and convenient.



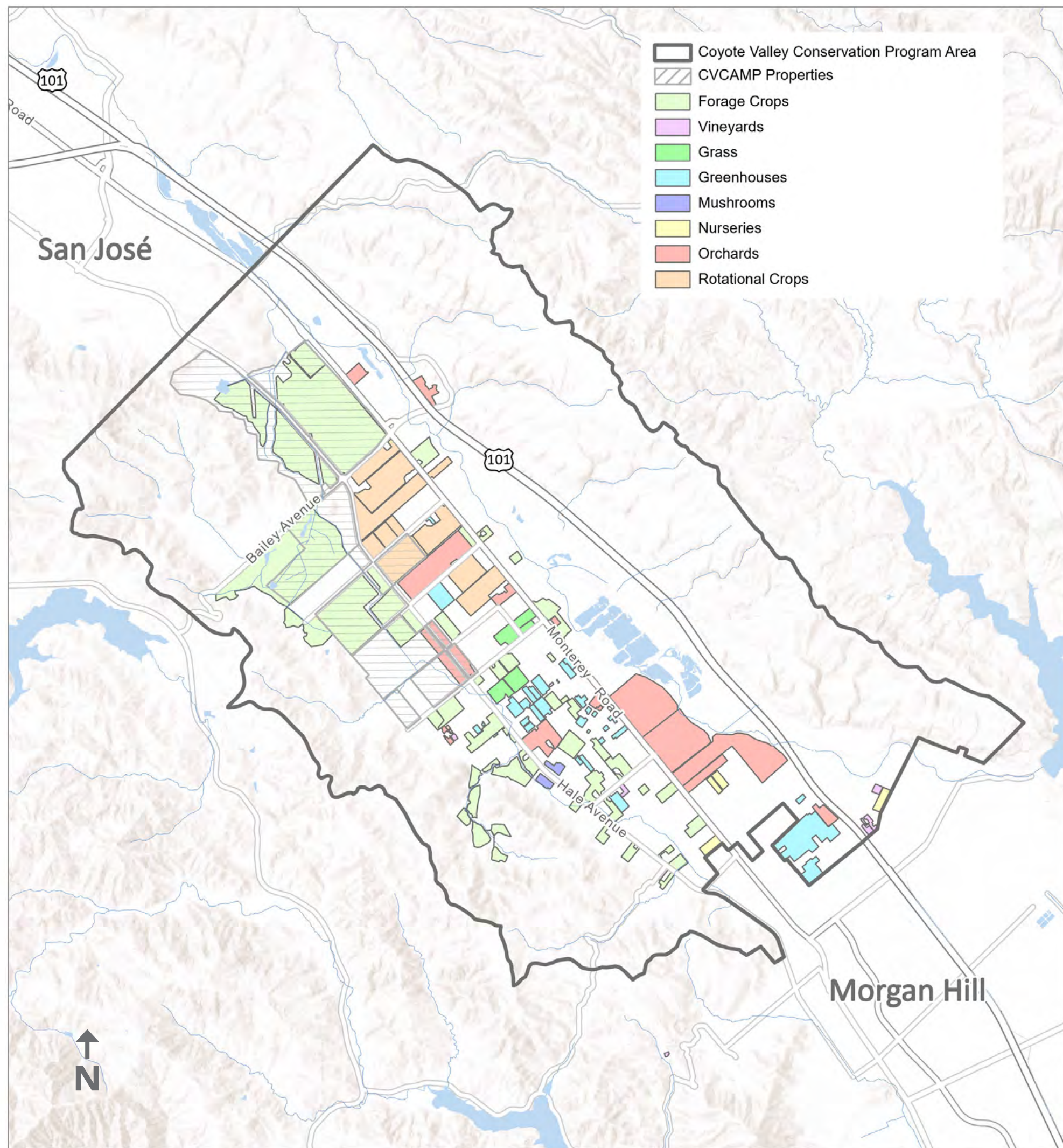
Local Agriculture

Agriculture is the primary land use in Coyote Valley today and contributes to Santa Clara County's \$358-million-dollar agricultural economy. Permanent protection of valley-floor land is creating new opportunities to add agricultural uses that create jobs, support the economy, sequester carbon and offer access to healthy local food.

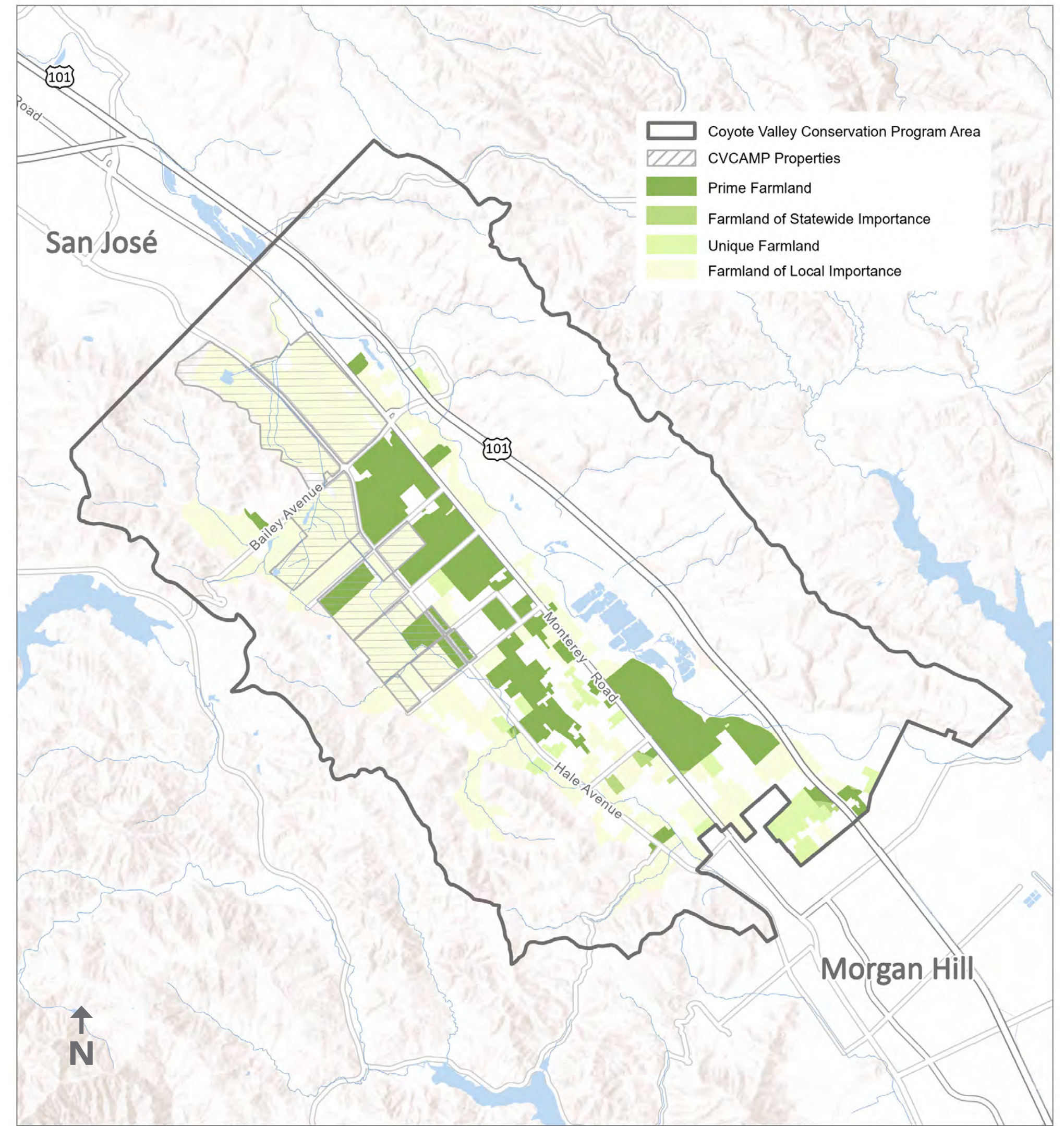
Photo: Spina Farms Pumpkin Patch

Existing Agricultural Crops

There is a wide diversity of agricultural activity found in Coyote Valley. The crop types shown in the map below are based on 2024 data and observations. Although not shown on the map, grazing is a major agricultural use taking place on many public and private lands in Coyote Valley. Infrastructure and other improvements affect the type of crops grown. For example, land which has seen limited investment for agricultural purposes, which may be in part due to speculation for development, can influence crop type.



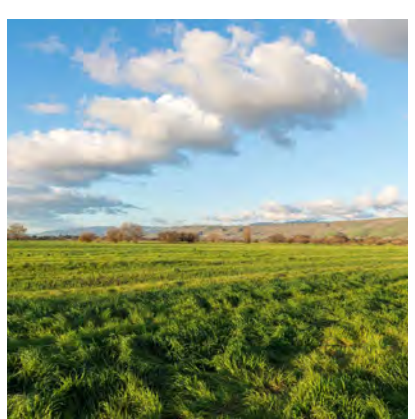
Prime Farmland



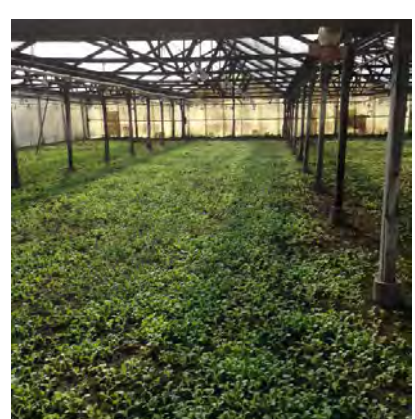
"Prime Farmland" is a designation for lands that have the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food or other crops. A total of approximately 1,470 acres of farmland in Coyote Valley are designated as Prime Farmland, according to CA Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program.



Forage crops



Grass



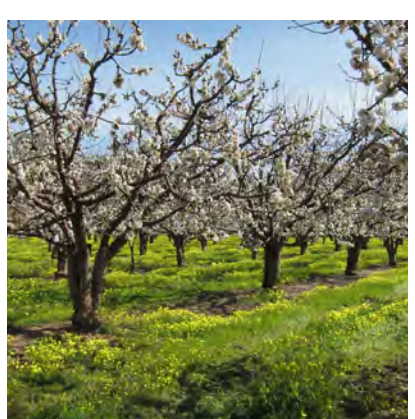
Greenhouses



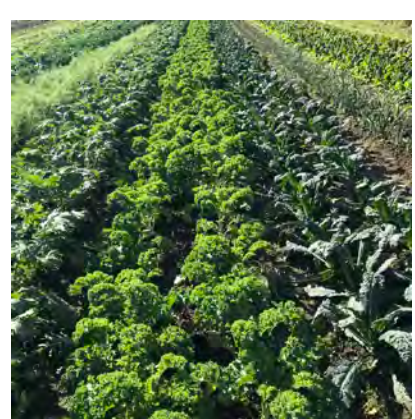
Mushrooms



Nurseries



Orchards



Rotational crops



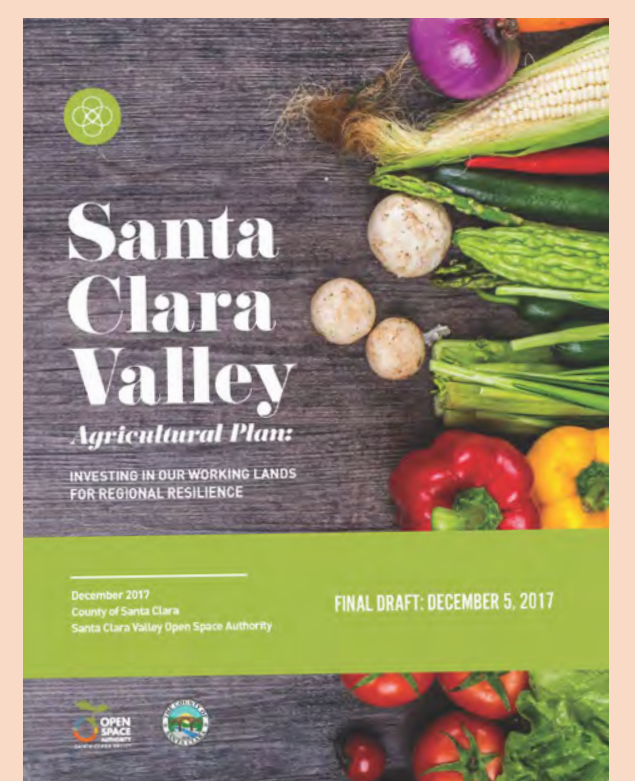
Vineyards

Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan

The 2018 Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan identifies Coyote Valley as one of eight sub-areas within the County's Agricultural Resource Area. Most of Coyote Valley is identified as farmland with relatively high viability. Highly viable farmland resources are defined as:

- Undeveloped prime or important farmland soils greater than 40 acres in size
- Adjacent to existing farming operation that has been active in the last four years
- Overlaying a groundwater basin

Challenges for agriculture in Coyote Valley identified by the plan are interface with commuter traffic and future development or annexation.



Key Findings



Development speculation has led to underinvestment in agricultural infrastructure and preponderance of short-term crops, like hayfields. Permanent protection of Coyote Valley's agricultural lands allows farmers to more securely invest resources and increase the diversity of crops grown in the area.



Building awareness and appreciation for Coyote Valley-grown goods can increase their value. There is a strong market for locally-grown goods. Expanded agritourism, branding and marketing could strengthen the economic viability of farming in the region.



Regulatory and policy support is needed to ensure access to the resources needed for farming, including affordable access to water and affordable housing for farmers and farm employees.

Photo credits: Nick Perry, Annamarie Pilon, Tyler Flippo, Sibella Kraus



Cultural Heritage & Historic Resources

Photo: Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve

HISTORY OF COYOTE VALLEY

Indigenous Peoples live in and steward Coyote Valley for millennia, relying on Laguna Seca, Coyote Creek and the surrounding area to provide a variety of resources.

Spanish explorers and colonists pass through the area as part of the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition. They name prominent geographic features, like Arroyo del Coyote ("Coyote Creek").

A trail connecting the Spanish missions, El Camino Real, runs through Coyote Valley (today, Monterey Road). Coyote Valley becomes part of the lands of Mission Santa Clara de Asis.

Indigenous Peoples are relocated to Mission Santa Clara and other nearby missions, where disease kills much of the population and traditional culture is restricted.

The Spanish mission system is disestablished, and many Indigenous Peoples are displaced. The nearly 20,000-acre Rancho Laguna Seca is granted to Juan Alvires, encompassing most of Coyote Valley.

Captain William Fisher, an English immigrant, acquires Rancho Laguna Seca. Today, the Fisher family's historic homestead is part of the Coyote Ranch event venue in the Coyote Creek Parkway.



Do you have more Coyote Valley history to share? This timeline only captures some of the many milestones in Coyote Valley's rich history. If you have stories or photos to share, contact us!



We acknowledge that the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority works within lands that were originally stewarded by the Awaswas-, Chochenyo-, Mutsun- and Thámien-speaking peoples. Today we are honored to partner with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area and the Tamien Nation in our shared work to protect and restore the environment and connect people to land.

Photo credits: David Mauk, Cassie Kifer, Vivarium

KEY FINDINGS



Coyote Valley is a culturally significant landscape for Native Americans. Coyote Valley is home to one of the oldest recorded archaeological sites in Santa Clara County and has a high density of pre-contact sites overall. Sensitive areas may be better understood, protected and stewarded through ongoing study and engagement with local tribal partners.



Coyote Valley connects people to Santa Clara Valley's history. All major eras of Santa Clara Valley's history are evident in Coyote Valley, including natural history, Tribal history, Spanish and Mexican eras, "Valley of Heart's Delight" agricultural era and early Silicon Valley. This rich cultural landscape is ripe with opportunities to interpret the region's complex history.



Community Engagement

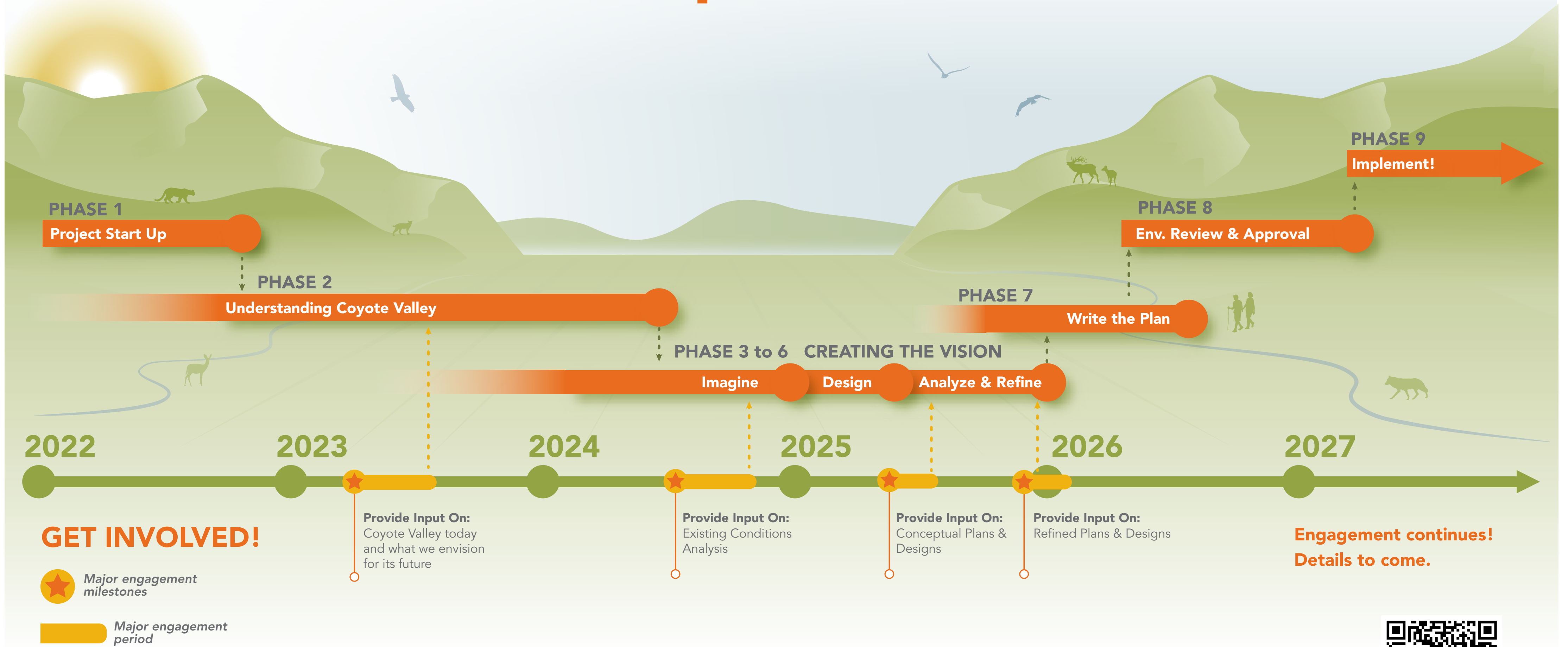
Community members and organizations can participate in interactive activities and attend public access events and guided tours to learn more about Coyote Valley and CVCAMP.

Photo: Earth Day Public Access Event at Spreckels Hill in North Coyote Valley

"Coyote Valley is important to me because..."



Timeline and Next Steps



The completion of the *Understanding Coyote Valley* report concludes CVCAMP's site assessment phase. The project is now shifting toward creating a vision for future use and restoration. Get involved and stay up-to-date on future engagement events by joining our mailing list!

