



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Open Space Authority Acquires Coyote Ridge Property from United Technologies Corporation Through an Extraordinary Private and Public Funding Partnership**

**San Jose, CA – October 21, 2015:** The Open Space Authority has completed acquisition of 1,831 acres of open space land on the dramatic and exquisitely beautiful Coyote Ridge in the Diablo Range of Santa Clara County. The acquisition is the Open Space Authority's largest to date, with the Authority contributing a total of \$7,500 of its own funds after securing funding from a number of public and private sources towards this property worth over \$15 million.

"The Open Space Authority's *Santa Clara Valley Greenprint* identified Coyote Ridge as one of the ten most critical landscapes for conservation in the region," said the Authority's Assistant General Manager Matt Freeman. "By acquiring the Coyote Ridge property and planning for its long-term stewardship, we are helping to ensure that its significant natural resources are protected in perpetuity; that a new *Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve* can be established; and that a new segment of Bay Area Ridge Trail can be opened."

The Coyote Ridge property encompasses one of the most significant wildlife habitat areas in the Bay Area. Because it contains nearly a fifth of the remaining undeveloped serpentine grassland habitat in Santa Clara County, its lasting protection is vital to the recovery of serpentine-dependent species including the federally threatened Bay checkerspot butterfly and federally endangered Metcalf Canyon jewelflower. For this reason, it is one of the top priorities for protection necessary to implement the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan's conservation strategy. The property also provides critical habitat for the California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog, as well as Tule elk, burrowing owls, golden eagles, and many other raptors.

In addition to its unparalleled recreational and educational opportunities for the public in the Bay Area's fastest-growing county, the Coyote Ridge property is the source of three streams, together over 10 miles in length. These feed into Coyote Creek and support critical habitat for Steelhead trout, and serve as oases for wildlife. The property provides important recharge to the groundwater basin, sustaining local drinking and agricultural water supplies.

United Technologies Corporation (UTC) donated the property to the Open Space Authority through the California Natural Heritage State Tax Credit Program. Under this program, UTC is eligible for a tax credit



for a portion of the fair market value of the property and the Open Space Authority has secured grants from federal and state agencies and private foundations to reimburse the state.

The Authority received funding for the acquisition from a broad public and private partnership that included a \$2.7 million grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board, \$2 million from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 land acquisition program to further Habitat Conservation Plans under the Endangered Species Act, \$1 million from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, \$1 million from the State Coastal Conservancy, \$1 million from the Bureau of Reclamation Central Valley Project, \$400,000 from the State Parks Recreational Trails Program, and a contributor who prefers to remain anonymous. The Open Space Authority contributed \$7,500 toward the \$8.6 million total, which is approximately 55% of the property's fair market value of \$15.6 million.

Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer of the State Coastal Conservancy said, "The Coastal Conservancy strongly supports projects on the coast and in the Bay Area that provide multiple conservation benefits, such as the Coyote Ridge acquisition. Protection of this landscape will serve to preserve valuable water resources, provide public access, and close gaps in regional trails like the Bay Area Ridge Trail."

This Coyote Ridge property is the first landscape to be enrolled in the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency's Reserve System. The Valley Habitat Agency administers a 50-year regional plan to protect endangered species and natural resources through project permitting and establishment of a 33,500-acre natural reserve system.

Edmund Sullivan, Executive Officer of the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency said, "Though the UTC Coyote Ridge site was the first property enrolled into our reserve system, a historic event in and of itself, the importance of the acquisition stems from the rare serpentine plant community that supports the Bay checkerspot butterfly now being protected in perpetuity. Moreover, the Habitat Agency is excited with the prospect of partnering with the Open Space Authority to enhance and manage this property for species conservation."

For over 20 years, the Coyote Ridge landscape has been a priority conservation target for many organizations, including California Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Valley Habitat Agency and others. For 45 years, UTC built and tested engines that powered military and NASA equipment on a 3,282 acre parcel of land adjacent to the Coyote Ridge property. UTC designated this two-mile long section along Coyote Ridge as a buffer zone to separate the manufacturing and testing activity from the public. The Open Space Authority conducted extensive environmental due diligence which confirmed that there are no hazardous materials or contaminated sites on the property. The Coyote Ridge landscape neatly fits into a larger 130,000-acre complex of nearby publicly and privately protected lands in the Diablo Range.



Located at the gateway to the Diablo Range, the property is especially important for its contribution to the critical landscape linkage between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range through the adjacent Coyote Valley. Its protection will ameliorate the effects of climate change by providing connectivity and a wide range of microclimates for many rare, threatened and endangered species, so they can adapt to the shifting conditions.

The Open Space Authority will work closely with the Valley Habitat Agency to manage the property to protect and restore habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species. The Authority will also initiate planning and design to provide opportunities for appropriate public access to the future *Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve* via a multiple-use trail system, with an opening tentatively scheduled for summer or fall of 2018.

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*The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority conserves the natural environment, supports agriculture, and connects people to nature, by protecting open spaces, natural areas, and working farms and ranches for future generations. Since 1993, the Open Space Authority has protected nearly 20,000 acres of open space, preserving the region's scenic beauty, protecting water resources and other natural capital, and providing outdoor recreation opportunities for Santa Clara County residents.*