

Government

Peninsula Gains Key Parcel That Links Thousands of Acres of Parkland

With the purchase of only 54 acres, Peninsula Open Space Trust secures a wildlife corridor and watershed for thousands of acres in Stevens Canyon near Cupertino.

By [L.A. Chung](#) | [Email the author](#) | March 18, 2011



Credit Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

If you've hiked these adjacent parklands, what do you look forward to, once the property becomes part of our open space district? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

The Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) has purchased a small but key parcel in Stevens Creek Canyon, a move that will link thousands of acres of protected open space in the hills overlooking Cupertino.

Although relatively modest in size, the 54-acre property makes possible the future extension of the Tony Look Trail, a popular hiking trail in nearby Santa Clara County parkland. It was the result of a joint and concerted effort of three agencies to increase public access to unconnected park parcels.

"This property creates connectivity," said Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District General Manager Steve Abbors. "It connects existing public open space and parkland in Stevens Canyon for the benefit of watersheds and wildlife, while also providing the opportunity for regional trail connections."

As a linking property, it will enable migrating wildlife to have continuous corridor and provides watershed protection within Stevens Creek Canyon. It is adjacent to 3,133-acre [Monte Bello Open Space Preserve](#) and 1,780-acre [Saratoga Gap Open Space Preserve](#), owned by the [Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District](#) (MROSD), headquartered in Los Altos.

POST purchased the property for \$1.5 million from private sellers. The property joins the larger regional network of open space that includes POST, and MROSD, Santa Clara County. POST, a private nonprofit land trust, will sell the land to MROSD, a public agency, for \$1.5 million.

The open space district is scheduled to take ownership of the property from POST by the end of the month, said Leigh Ann Gessner, the district spokeswoman.

"A greenbelt of protected land close to our cities and suburbs will ensure we have clean air and clean water, vital wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities that support public health and enjoyment," said POST president Audrey Rust. "This project brings us one step closer to those goals and also helps the county leverage its limited financial resources."

POST describes the property as one with impressive views of forested hillsides along Stevens Canyon. The land will expand the connection between the two preserves and is identified as a corridor for the extension of the Stevens Creek Tony Look Trail between nearby **Stevens Creek County Park and Upper Stevens Creek County Park**. The trail is named for Claude A. "Tony" Look, the late county parks commissioner and executive director and board member of **Sempervirens Fund**, who helped revive that organization in the late 1960s and worked to expand land protection in the Santa Cruz Mountains until his death in 2006. The Los Altos-based Sempervirens is California's oldest land trust.

Santa Clara County will contribute \$750,000 to MROSD for the agency's eventual purchase of this land. The county will also hold a conservation easement over the property that ensures future public access, achieving the vision of many residents in acquiring land for parks and open space that will provide future trail linkages. The county previously partnered with MROSD to acquire other critical properties, the Keyani and Hall acquisitions, which encompass 193 acres along this trail route. The county's support of these purchases was made possible through the voter-approved Park Charter, renewed in 2006 to fund county park acquisition, capital development, operations and maintenance through the year 2021.

"This is the kind of project that requires sustained vision and persistence," said Santa Clara County Supervisor Liz Kniss, whose district includes the newly protected property, which she called "this stunning canyon."

POST previously partnered with MROSD to protect land in the hills overlooking Cupertino in 2004, when it purchased 238-acre Stevens Canyon Ranch for \$6.6 million from private sellers. POST transferred that property to MROSD two years later, continuing to manage the orchard on-site until recently. That joint project was made possible in part by additional public funding from the Santa Clara Valley Water District.
