



August 29, 2018

Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 329
San Rafael, CA 94903
Via Electronic Mail

Re: Support for Marin County's Acquisition of the San Geronimo Golf Course

Dear Supervisors,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, who are advocates and stakeholders that are supportive of public land acquisition and conservation efforts in Marin County, we respectfully submit this letter to express our continued support of Marin County Parks' acquisition of the 157-acre San Geronimo property.

In the winter of 2017, many of our organizations submitted individual letters and provided public testimony supporting the acquisition of the property and the public planning and visioning process for conversion to a public park. The Trust for Public Land acquired the property in December 2017, after an independent, expert analysis indicated the golf course was unlikely to survive at the location, so rapid action was needed to ensure the community could continue to benefit from the land and influence its future use.

At that time, and continuing today, there is broad based community support for the creation of a park in the heart of the San Geronimo Valley.

In light of the recent events that have complicated Marin County's acquisition of the property, we would like to reaffirm our support for this project and the wonderful opportunity and unique gift Marin County will provide for the environment and current and future generations of Marin County residents.

Ecological Improvements

The conversion of the property to a park and restoration of habitat will create several ecological benefits for the upper watershed of Lagunitas Creek and Tomales Bay watershed that will improve endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout habitats and water quality; minimize and/or eliminate the use of fertilizers and pesticides; save water; protect migratory birds, threatened status species like the Northern Spotted Owl, and other native plants and animals; and result in additional tree plantings.

Marin County's acquisition of the property would be extremely beneficial to the upper watershed of Lagunitas Creek and would increase the potential for protection and restoration of endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout habitats as outlined by the National Marine Fisheries Service. With the current federal administration's recent threats to endangered species, it is critical to strengthen local protections and restoration efforts before it is too late to save species from extinction.

Restoration of creek and floodplain habitats will capture sediments, particles, and pollutants that will result in improved downstream water quality, thus improving habitat. Restoration to the riparian corridor by planting native species will improve the health and populations of migratory and nesting birds, amphibians, fish, invertebrates, and other native wildlife. These efforts will also result in the long-term sequestration of carbon.

The minimization and/or end of pesticide, fertilizer, and insecticide use on this property will also have important air and water quality benefits within the watershed.

Finally, there will be significant water use savings in Marin County (estimated at 49 million gallons of municipal water per year), as the intense water needs for golf course landscaping will be eliminated.

Community Benefits

The creation of a 157-acre public park within the heart of the San Geronimo Valley provides several new opportunities for community use and public safety. The property can be used for several community public access benefits like bicycling, walking, dog walking, picnicking, birdwatching, photography, and exploration.

The property is uniquely positioned and borders the San Geronimo Valley Community Center, middle school, and elementary schools. Utilizing the existing pathways on the property for pedestrian and bicycle traffic will remove children from the high traffic, small shoulder of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. In addition, the Community Center, middle school, and elementary schools could utilize the network of pathways for safe access for increased educational opportunities to access Roy's Redwoods Marin County Open Space Preserve and other areas of San Geronimo Valley for activities including field trips and exercise.

Letter to Marin County Supervisors re. Golf Course
August 29, 2018

In June 2018, Marin County opened the property on Sunday afternoons and evenings for public access. Since that time, we have witnessed a growing number of individuals and families taking advantage of the property for cycling, teaching children to ride bikes, running, walking, picnicking, dog walking, and fishing (in the ponds). We are able to see a glimpse of a true vision of the future use of the property, where the public is using the property in ways they could not have imagined before and creating life-long memories in the process.

Thank you for your continued support to create a park that will serve a broad base of community constituents, provide several critical environmental benefits, and be a lasting legacy and gift to the current and future generations of Marin County and the San Geronimo Valley.

We thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Morgan Patton
Executive Director
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin

Thomas Gardali,
Director, Pacific Coast and Central Valley Group
Point Blue Conservation Science

Michael Stocker
Director
Ocean Conservation Research

Megan Isadore
Executive Director
The River Otter Ecology Project

Todd Steiner, Executive Director
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Salmon Protection and Watershed Network

Kelle Kacmarcik
Director of Wildlife Solutions and Advocacy
WildCare

Daniel Dietrich
Founder
Conservation Kids

Susan Morgan
Founder and Director
Indivisible Marin

Brian Staley
Chair
San Geronimo Valley Planning Group

Carolyn Longstreth
Marin Chapter
California Native Plant Society

Laura Chariton
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Patrick Samuel
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Camilla Fox
Founder and Executive Director
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Sandra Guldman
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Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed

Eileen Fisher
Treasurer
Mill Valley Community Action Network

Barbara Salzman
President
Marin Audubon Society

Letter to Marin County Supervisors re. Golf Course
August 29, 2018

Nona Dennis
Chair, Parks and Open Space Committee
Marin Conservation League

cc: Max Korten, Marin County Parks
Brendan Moriarty, Trust for Public Land