



January 14, 2020

Morgan Hill City Council  
17575 Peak Avenue  
Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Re: Resolution In Support Of Preservation Of Sargent Ranch/Juristac As Open Space

Dear Mayor Constantine and City Councilmembers,

Committee for Green Foothills, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, California Native Plant Society Santa Clara Valley Chapter, and Greenbelt Alliance respectfully request that the Council approve the Resolution In Support Of Preservation Of Sargent Ranch/Juristac As Open Space (agenda item 13). Our organizations work to protect open space, wildlife habitat and nature in Santa Clara County. We represent thousands of members in Santa Clara County, including in Morgan Hill.

The area known as Juristac or Sargent Ranch is a critical wildlife corridor that links the Santa Cruz Mountains to the Gabilan Range to the south and the Diablo Range to the east. This area has been identified as an important migration route in all habitat connectivity assessments for the region since the year 2000.<sup>1</sup> The Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, of which the City of Morgan Hill is a Governing Board Member, recognizes several landscape linkages running through the Sargent Ranch property (see attached map, linkages 12, 18, 19, and 20). The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority considers the “Sargent Hills” area to be one of its top 10 conservation focus areas (see attached map, focus area 8).

The impact of the proposed Sargent Ranch sand and gravel mine on Juristac could be severe for species such as mountain lions, which depend on the ability to migrate through this site for healthy population dynamics. Heavy industry such as mining causes disruption to animal movement due not only to the disturbed footprint of the project but also due to the daily noise and heavy vehicle activity, which can drive away sensitive wildlife species and prevent them from utilizing their usual migration routes. Since the proposed sand mine would potentially operate for 30 years or more, the continuing impact on the viability of these animal populations in the Santa Cruz Mountains could be severe and irremediable.

In addition, the Sargent Ranch Quarry could severely impact the local watershed. According to project plans filed with the County of Santa Clara, the quarry pits would excavate the hillsides on both sides of Sargent Creek. This creek is a tributary to the Pajaro River, which is already heavily impacted from runoff and illegal dumping. The Sargent Creek watershed encompasses over 1200 acres and is estimated to provide hundreds of acre-feet of groundwater recharge and runoff. If the pits excavate below the water table, the integrity of the

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Penrod K, Hunter R, Merrifield M (2001) **Missing Linkages: Restoring Connectivity to the California Landscape**. South Coast Wildlands Project, Los Angeles; Spencer, W.D., Beier, P., Penrod, K., Parisi, M., Pettler, A., Winters, K., Stritholt, J., Paulman, C. and Rustigian-Romsos, H., 2010, **California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project: A strategy for conserving a connected California**, report prepared for California Department of Transportation and California Department of Fish and Game; Bay Area Open Space Council 2011, **The Conservation Lands Network: San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals Project Report**, Berkeley, CA; Penrod, K., Garding, P.E., Paulman, C., Beier, P., Weiss, S., Schaefer, N., Branciforte, R. and Gaffney, K., 2013, **Critical Linkages: Bay Area & Beyond**, produced by Science & Collaboration for Connected Wildlands, Fair Oaks, CA [[www.scwildlands.org](http://www.scwildlands.org)], in collaboration with the Bay Area Open Space Council’s Conservation Lands Network [[www.BayAreaLands.org](http://www.BayAreaLands.org)].

Sargent Creek watershed would be affected and its ability to recharge groundwater significantly impaired. Sargent Creek supports a rare stream-dwelling population of California red-legged frogs, a federally listed threatened species, which could be significantly impacted by the disruption, increased sediment, and other impacts to the creek and the watershed.

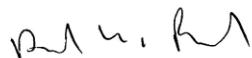
The residents of Morgan Hill stand to potentially feel significant impacts if the Sargent Ranch Quarry is approved by the County. Materials excavated at the Sargent Ranch site will be moved by truck along Highway 101, and the great majority of the destinations for these trucks will be north beyond Morgan Hill. According to the quarry plans on file with the County of Santa Clara, at peak operation there would be hundreds of truck trips each day adding to the existing congestion on Highway 101 through Morgan Hill. As one of the communities closest to the proposed sand mine site, Morgan Hill deserves to be able to weigh in on this upcoming decision by Santa Clara County.

Please approve the Resolution in Support of Preservation of Sargent Ranch/Juristac as Open Space. Thank you for your attention to these comments.

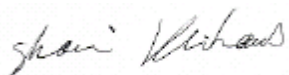
Sincerely,



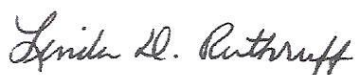
Alice Kaufman, Legislative Advocacy Director  
Committee for Green Foothills



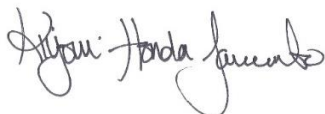
Dave Poeschel, Open Space Committee Chair  
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter



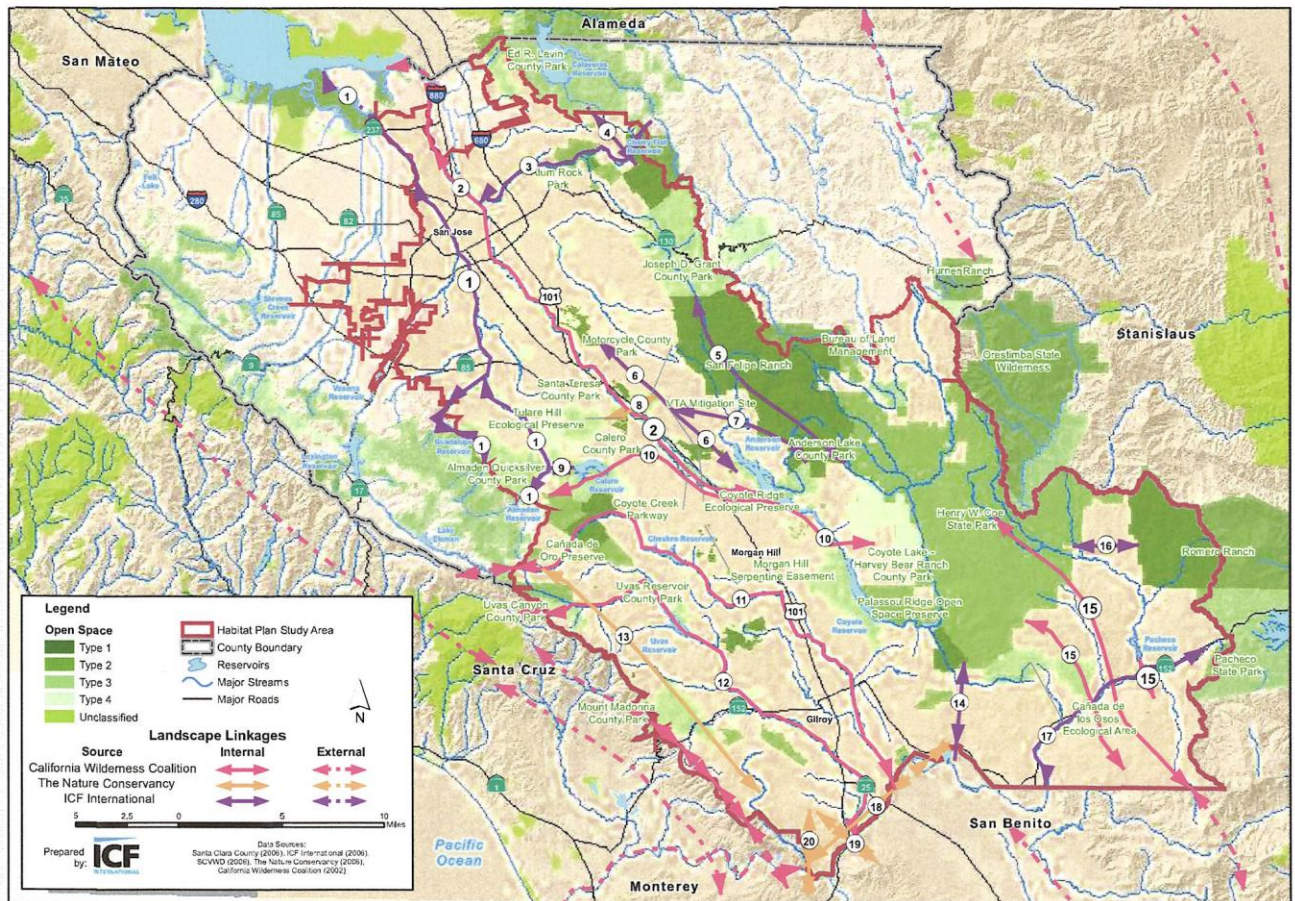
Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate  
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society



Linda Ruthruff, Conservation Chair  
California Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Valley Chapter



Kiyomi Yamamoto, South Bay Regional Representative  
Greenbelt Alliance

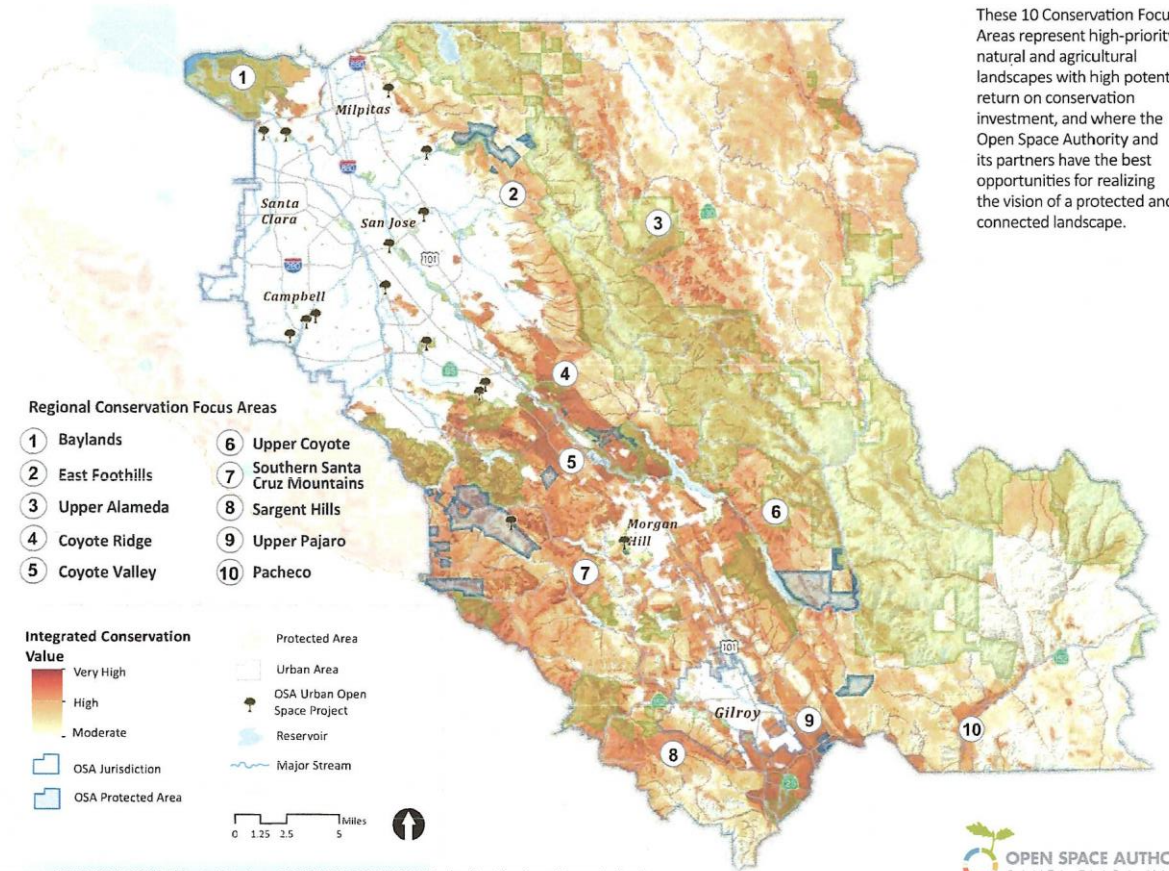


**Figure 5-6**  
**Potential Landscape Linkages in and Near the Study Area**

Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan, Figure 5-6, "Habitat Linkages." <https://scv-habitatagency.org/DocumentCenter/View/98/Figure-5-06-Habitat-Linkages>



Conservation Focus Areas



These 10 Conservation Focus Areas represent high-priority natural and agricultural landscapes with high potential return on conservation investment, and where the Open Space Authority and its partners have the best opportunities for realizing the vision of a protected and connected landscape.

Data sources: CPAD 2013, SCC Parklands Database, FMMP 2010, SCVWD Waterbodies, the Open Space Authority.



Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, Conservation Focus Areas,  
[https://www.openspaceauthority.org/system/user\\_files/Documents/Conservation%20Focus%20Areas.pdf](https://www.openspaceauthority.org/system/user_files/Documents/Conservation%20Focus%20Areas.pdf)