



December 12, 2017

Via E-mail

Department of Parks and Recreation
298 Garden Hill Drive
Los Gatos, CA 95032
Kimberly Brosseau, Senior Planner Santa Clara County Parks
Michael Hettenhausen, Associate Planner Santa Clara County Parks

RE: Sanborn Master Plan Southern Area Christmas Tree Farm Site

Dear Senior Planner Brosseau and Associate Planner Michael Hettenhausen,

This letter presents the concerns of the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Santa Clara Valley Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society in regards to the Sanborn Park Master Plan Design Development, Southern Area.

It was disappointing that the only option proposed for the Christmas Tree Farm site at the Nov. 7, 2017 Public Meeting #1 was "Future *Active* Recreation". Rather, we encourage County Parks to explore only *passive* recreation since that is the only appropriate activity level at the site. We oppose the intensive use "bike park" plan proposed by the Silicon Valley Mountain Bikers (SVMTB) for the 20 acre tree lot and additional 120 acres of forest, Exhibit "A".

The Sanborn Southern Area is currently quiet and peaceful native habitat, home to a diversity of species of plants, birds and other fauna. The former Christmas tree lot tree lot itself was planted primarily with native tree species indigenous to its Santa Cruz Mountains location and it provides shelter and habitat for local birds and wildlife. And because this environment is under threat by development of private homes, vineyards, and other rural activities, protection of the undeveloped publicly owned lands in the Santa Cruz Mountains is essential to maintain the ecosystem.

County Parks must be a good steward of its open space and the native flora and fauna its natural areas preserve. With Measure A in 2016, the County Parks Charter was enacted using the following language, "*To continue protecting and preserving local parks; improving access to natural areas, open space, trails and recreational opportunities; keeping restrooms and facilities clean and safe; and maintaining, operating, acquiring and improving local parks, shall the Santa Clara County Park Charter Fund, established in 1972, be extended by an annual general fund transfer estimated to equal 1.5 cents per \$ 100 of assessed valuation of all property for 15 years, without increasing taxes and all funds benefitting Santa Clara County parks?*" Our organizations endorsed the measure and voters approved. We endorsed this measure with the expectation that County Parks will be protecting and preserving open space and natural areas

and improving access to natural areas to provide exploration and passive enjoyment of nature. We did not expect active disruption and degradation in the natural areas. The intensity of the SVMTB plan, in particular, and any "Active Recreation" development of this site is inconsistent with the Charter.

The SVMTB proposed trails at the top of the ridge, in the former Christmas tree lot, would be destructive to native habitat. This land may have been a tree lot at one time but it is forested with Santa Cruz Mountains native Douglas Fir, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, and Incense Cedar, *Calocedrus decurrens*, and the diversity of species is growing with Tanoak, Pacific Madrone, Coast Live Oaks, and native plant understory such as California Blackberry, Hayfield Tarweed, Brackenfern, and others spreading into the grove from the surrounding forest, Exhibit "B".

The access road encircling the former tree lot site and gentle slopes provide a particularly beautiful and peaceful trail that may be enhanced to provide greater opportunity for family friendly, but appropriately passive use, Exhibit "C".

There are many constraints which should prohibit the use of the site as an intensive bike park or any use beyond passive recreation. Access to the site is limited by its remote location, rugged and landslide prone geography, often inclement weather, and insufficient roadway capacity. Black Rd. is extremely narrow and winding and barely functions to serve the current traffic demands. Both HWY 35 and Black Rd. suffer closures and roadway capacity loss due to washouts and landslides caused by the heavy Santa Cruz Mountains rains. In addition to this limiting levels of recreational vehicle traffic, it also makes for long response times for first responders to accidents and limits adequate County Parks supervision.

Active recreation on the site would also necessitate expansive parking, restroom facilities, water, and other challenging and expensive infrastructure on the site. Adequate maintenance of actively used facilities would be impossible without great expense. In 2017, landslide damage to Sanborn county park trails was significant and costly to repair.

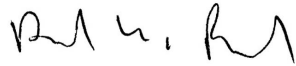
The Sanborn Southern Area forest is inflicted with Sudden Oak Death disease! Heavy use and bicycle tires churning up the soil in the diseased areas would be irresponsible because it would lead to its spread to new areas, defeating control efforts.

The bicycle tires churning up the soil with many extremely heavily used dirt trails would also be a threat to the water quality of local streams and the aquatic life that depend on it. The intensive use of the former tree lot which drains in the San Lorenzo Watershed would pose an especially concerning threat to sediment sensitive and endangered steelhead and Coho salmon present in the streams of this watershed.

The site is currently very quiet. Active recreation would interject a significant level of noise into this area where quiet is most appropriate for the natural setting.

Our organizations recognize that active outdoor activities should be encouraged and our members welcome them where appropriate access and infrastructure is available and impacts to our increasingly imperiled natural environment can be avoided.

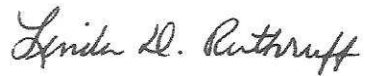
Thank you for considering our comments on the Sanborn Master Plan,



David W. Poeschel, Conservation Committee
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

CC: Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors

Exhibit "A"
SVMTB proposal



Exhibit "B"

Tree lot with Pacific Madrone, *Arbutus menziesii*, left, Tanoak, *Notholithocarpus densiflorus*, right, trees and Western Brackenfern, *Pteridium aquilinum*, understory, adding to its natural diversity.



Exhibit "C"

Former tree lot, right, surrounding forest, left.

