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Comprehensive Conservation Plan a Priority

The Tri-Valley Conservancy (TVC) has finished mapping the Tri-Valley and has put together a conservation plan for the entire area.

Sharon Burnham, executive director of TVC, said that the different projects within the plan would cost about \$14 million to carry out. "The board has unanimously approved the plan and is ready to forward and implement the priority projects."

Among the priority projects is the creation of a comprehensive resource conservation plan for North Livermore. The plan would help provide understanding of what areas are in the most need of protection, such as Doolan Canyon, said Burnham. Among those would be the alkali sink area. Some land and some easements would need to be purchased within the watershed for the sink.

Zone 7, in conjunction with other groups, is also preparing a resource plan for North Livermore. Burnham said that the two plans have different goals. The Zone 7 led effort is strictly looking at mitigation. "That is very different than how we look at; the area. Their goal is to have regulatory agencies ease the permitting process to make mitigation easier. TVC is looking at areas for protection, not just for mitigation," she explained.

Other areas of focus include the habitat and rangelands in the southeast Pleasanton hills, where there is a desire to establish regional trail connections.

Burnham said the area is of concern. One of the reasons is its location within the urban growth boundary. The Pleasanton City Council recently approved a plan for 51 homes. The city would receive 496 acres of permanent open space as part of the plan. A referendum of the approval was launched last week. Burnham said the TVC would continue working on preservation in South Livermore. She anticipates an additional three easements over the next three years.

The TVC will work in partnership to establish a trail corridor from Del Valle to Shadow Cliffs and work on a similar connection between Brushy Peak and Del Valle, she continued.

There will be an effort to raise the visibility of conservation resources.

The TVC will need to raise the money. Burnham said a consultant has been hired to help set up a fund-raising plan. "Part of that will be asking the public to help. We will definitely need the help of the public to maintain the quality of life in the Valley."

The map prepared by TVC identifies watersheds, streams, important habitat, vegetation, trails, habitat corridors, and high risk areas. Because of increasing urban pressures, the Conservancy believes the next five years will be the key to protecting critical resource lands in the Tri-Valley Region. After that, opportunities for protection are likely to diminish rapidly.

Many scenic rural areas, farmlands, ranches, and wildlife habitats have been damaged or destroyed by subdivision and development projects that did not take into account natural and agricultural priorities and values, according to the Conservancy. The best development occurs when it is done hand in hand with the preservation of lands that provide for safe drinking water, productive farmland, and scenic beauty, according to TVC.

The Conservancy was established as part of the South Livermore Area Plan.

The Tri-Valley Conservancy's early mission was focused primarily on protecting the valuable vineyard lands within the South Livermore Valley Area Plan. From its founding in 1994, most of that goal has been accomplished. At present, the Conservancy has completed the following: Ensured that over 4,100 acres are under agricultural conservation easements; Saw to it that 1,900 acres of the 4,100 acres support the South Livermore Valley Trail System; and Initiated an education program in support of local viticulture and the winemakers.