

Tri-Valley Conservancy Conservation/Implementation Plan

Adopted September 18, 2007

Background

Today the Tri-Valley Region is at a crossroads. Although Measure D was able to provide some protection for the open space lands surrounding the cities of Livermore, Pleasanton and Dublin by establishing a boundary of urban development, it did not prohibit annexations of these lands by cities for future development. Many people in the region perceive that the open space lands beyond the Measure D boundary are permanently protected. They are unaware that some of these lands have recently been purchased by developers who have paid prices that exceed \$10,000 per acre. Equally high sums are being spent on obtaining development entitlements, as the stakes are so high. Far from being protected, the region's open space lands are actually highly threatened, which makes Tri-Valley's conservation efforts more urgent than ever, and its need for financial resources ever so great.

Although developers in the region have recently been creating more transit-oriented high-density neighborhoods, most notably in the Dublin area, development patterns in the hills typically result in a low density sprawl that greatly diminish the region's conservation values. Hillside developments typically must protect some minimum amount of open space for endangered species habitats, such as an eagle's nest, or a small wetland with red-legged frog habitat. However, these "set aside" lands are often cut off from one another by roads and residences, and over time become little more than isolated patches of open space void of the habitats that they were intended to protect. The ongoing conversion of ranchlands just east of Dublin (collectively known as the East Dublin Property Owners, or "EDPO") are an example of such a development pattern. In addition, the open space 'set-aside' lands in such developments are typically privatized, and regional public trail opportunities may be lost.

Because of increasing urban pressures, the next five years will be key in protecting critical resource lands in the Tri-Valley Region. After that, opportunities for protection will likely diminish rapidly. However, the good news is that many long-term residents, as well as newcomers to the region, are highly passionate about the region's scenic, biological and recreational resources, and will work hard to protect these resources. There are also more opportunities for state-wide land acquisition funding due to the passage of Proposition 84.

One of the key players in protecting the region's critical resources in the next five years will be the Tri-Valley Conservancy (TVC). While there are several other groups working hard to protect the region's resources, no other group is solely focused on the Tri-Valley Region.

The Conservancy's Conservation Plan (please refer to Exhibit A) identifies areas that are critical for protection. The purpose of this Implementation Plan is to recommend specific projects and/or actions within those areas that are both feasible and will help mobilize the larger community. Implementation Plan projects were chosen based on the following factors: 1) their potential to protect abundant and diverse resources in the most highly threatened areas, 2) their potential to provide corridors between public and/or privately protected lands, and 3) their likelihood to build the momentum of public support necessary to achieve the long-term goals of the Plan.

In recent years TVC has considered how its role will evolve over time as the three major cities, Livermore, Dublin and Pleasanton, fully build out within their spheres of influence. TVC's early mission was focused primarily on protecting the valuable vineyard lands south of Livermore. With growing urbanization pressures it realized that the entire region needed a strong, community-based land trust. It therefore expanded its mission to include protection of agricultural lands, habitat lands, scenic lands, and to allow for opportunities for public recreation, including provision of new regional trails and wildlife corridors, throughout the Tri-Valley.

One of TVC's challenges is the general public's perception that the Conservancy already has plenty of conservation funding through the Ruby Hills mitigation program. The reality is that these funds are restricted for use in the South Livermore Valley Area Plan only. Prices for conservation easements have risen more than three times from TVC's first acquisition in 1996. The challenge to the Conservancy, especially in its expanded role, will be to convince its supporters that it now must raise funds from other sources, including traditional fundraising campaigns, as well as obtaining grants from government agencies and private foundations.

Implementation Plan Description

To ensure success, the Implementation Plan recommends a limited number of projects within Conservation Priority Areas, rather than recommending numerous projects spread throughout all priority areas. Although the focus is limited, it is not meant to preclude worthy projects in other priority areas as good opportunities arise. The Conservation Priority Areas include the following (please refer to Exhibit A):

- Altamont Hills
- North Livermore
- South Livermore
- South Pleasanton

At the end of five years, projects and actions will be evaluated based on how effectively they met the goals and objectives of the Plan. At that time (2012), short-term objectives and strategies will be reevaluated, and a second three to five year implementation plan should be prepared and adopted.

The Implementation Plan considers many feasibility issues, such as available funding sources, project costs and the ability of TVC and its partners to carry out the projects.

Projects may be undertaken in solo, in partnership, or by leading a coalition that will work together to complete the objective.

All of the Implementation Plan acquisition projects (fee title and easement) are based on landowner willingness to participate. Estimated budgets for acquisition projects provided below are preliminary, and are based on assumptions of value derived from a limited number of prior sales in the area. Actual appraised values may vary widely from the estimated values provided in this report due to the specific qualities and limitations of each property appraised. In addition, the main funding source for acquisition of easements in the South Livermore Valley Area Plan, generated by the Ruby Hills development, will soon be exhausted.

The Plan looks at alternative funding sources, such as the Department of Conservation's *California Farmland Conservancy Program*, and Natural Resource Conservation Service's *Farm and Ranchland Protection Program*. However, despite these programs and the recent passage of the Proposition 84 park bond act, it is likely that future funding sources for agricultural protection will become increasingly scarce, and competition for these funds will be high. Therefore, to achieve the conservation objectives of this Plan, it will be important for TVC and its partners to look at a number of financing options, including assistance from willing landowners in the form of donated value, private foundation funds and locally-generated mitigation funds.

In the descriptions that follow, we have tried to identify how many hours of staff time may be needed for each project. These numbers are best guesses, and the Conservancy may need to hire additional staff or consulting resources to manage, implement, and monitor each project. In addition, it may be that partner agencies can provide some funding and/or personnel resources as well.

**Prepare a Comprehensive Resource Conservation Plan for North Livermore,
including Potential Trail/Wildlife Corridors to Mount Diablo**

Conservation Priority Area: North Livermore – Doolan Canyon and Collier Canyon

Resources at Stake: Habitats of Rare and Endangered Species (Red-legged frog, Tiger Salamander, Burrowing Owl, Golden Eagle, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Birds Beak); Wildlife Corridors (Deer, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Amphibians), Scenic Lands, Potential Regional Trail Corridors between Tri-Valley Region and Mount Diablo, Agricultural lands.

Major Threats: Conversion to Urban and Residential Development

Discussion: TVC does not have the detailed analysis necessary to determine conservation priorities in this region. Conducting this analysis and determining

conservation priorities will ensure the area's long-term conservation success. TVC should develop a strong set of priorities and conservation strategies for the area. A partnership is recommended between County of Alameda, City of Livermore, TVC, EBRPD and Save Mount Diablo to research conservation resources in the North Livermore Area, as well as potential regional trail and wildlife corridors between North Livermore and Mount Diablo, and to develop a comprehensive resource conservation plan for the area.

- Research critical conservation resources and corridors
- Identify key properties for protection
- Research strategies and potential sources for conservation acquisitions.
- Review plan with partners and key stakeholders
- Provide outreach to individuals and groups of landowners

Estimated Project Costs: \$120,000 for Conservation Plan and GIS Maps; \$25,000 for partner review and landowner outreach

Staff Requirements:

- 100 hours for plan management and review
- 250 hours for partner meetings and landowner outreach

Potential Funding Sources: Private foundations and fundraising; State Coastal Conservancy

Acquire Critical Habitat Lands in the Alkali Sink Area North of Livermore
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Conservation Priority Area: North Livermore

Resources at Stake: Rare Plant Community (Alkali Sink) Rare and Endangered Species (Birds Beak); Wildlife Corridors (Deer, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Amphibians)

Major Threats: Conversion to Urban and Residential Development; Deterioration of Habitats by Impacts from Uncontrolled Uses (Dumping of Trash, Dirt Biking, Dogs)

Discussion: TVC's goal is to protect key alkali sink lands and the surrounding watershed area. Based on the Recommended Management Plan for the Springtown Alkali Sink Wetlands and Endangered Plant *Cordylanthus Palmatus* (Birds Beak) as of October 1988 this site was subdivided into three zones (please refer to Exhibit B for a map of these zones). Zone A covers the actual wetland habitat of the alkali scrub plant community where the endangered plant *Cordylanthus* is found. Zone B is a buffer area that consists of saline-sodic soils supporting annual and perennial grasslands, but does not consist of the critical alkali sink scrub vegetation. Zone C is the surrounding watershed lands which drain into the alkali sink area. TVC will pursue two general strategies in these zones. In Zone A and B it will help the City of Livermore purchase parcels in fee. In Zone C it

will work to provide outreach to landowners on conservation easements, consistent with the Action 1 described above. The project will include the following steps:

- Work with the City of Livermore, DF&G and other partners to discuss general strategies for protection, and role of TVC
- Research remaining private ownerships in the identified habitat area
- Meet with the City of Livermore and DFG to discuss program implementation, opportunities for funding and long term management/ stewardship issues on protected properties
- Meet with landowners and determine interest in selling property
- Appraise and acquire properties and eventually re-convey to the city of Livermore with protective easements retained by TVC
- Fund-raising for acquisition, restoration and stewardship; develop a brochure which highlights this project as a TVC/partner initiative; outreach to surrounding neighborhood.

Estimated Acquisition Costs: \$850,000 (85 acres @ \$10,000 per acre)

Estimated Project Costs: \$175,000 acquisition costs (assumes four property acquisitions, appraisal, legal, closing costs and baseline documents); \$15,000 fund raising and outreach costs (brochures, etc.)

Staff Requirements:

- 100 hours for pre-planning research, meetings with partners and landowner outreach;
- 100 hours per transaction (3 transactions); and
- 75 hours post-planning, landowner outreach and partner coordination for easement program in greater watershed.

Potential Funding Sources: County of Alameda, City of Livermore TDC program, Alameda County Altamont Land Fill Open Space Fund, RCD, NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, Coastal Conservancy and private fundraising

**Protect Habitat and Range Lands and Help Partners Establish Regional Trail
Connections through Developing Lands in South Pleasanton**

Conservation Priority Area: South Pleasanton

Resources at Stake: Habitats of Rare and Endangered Species, Wildlife Corridors , Scenic Lands, Potential Regional Trail Corridors between Del Valle and Pleasanton Ridge, Oak Woodlands, Riparian Corridors

Major Threats: Urban and Residential Development, with accompanying Conversion of Oak Woodlands and Riparian Corridors, and Loss of Potential Regional Trail Opportunities.

Discussion: A partnership is recommended between TVC, the City of Pleasanton, EBRPD and The Coastal Conservancy together with local neighbors to protect oak woodlands, riparian areas and scenic range lands in the three remaining large parcels in the southern portion of the city of Pleasanton. TVC will hold conservation easements, and assist its partners who will take on the primary role of securing a future trail corridor, which may someday link Del Valle Regional Park with EBPRD lands on Pleasanton Ridge. The program will include the following steps:

- Research critical habitat, range and scenic resources in the area and illustrate these as an overlay on aerial photographs
- With partners, develop a conservation resource plan that depicts critical conservation areas and potential trail corridors; research long-term management of resource lands
- Meet with City and developers to review conservation resource plan, long term funding for management of resources and stewardship of conservation easements
- Draft and transact conservation easements

TVC is currently working with its partners in protecting resources in the area. The conservation resource plan will help TVC and its partners understand the conservation values on the properties, and to designate areas which should be protected over time. Once the various stakeholders determine the final conservation and development areas, as well as the regional trail corridor, TVC will work with its partners to develop a resource management plan. It will also develop conservation easement language and funding needs for long-term easement stewardship, including monitoring and enforcement. Finally, TVC will negotiate elements of the easement with the city and landowners, as well as reimbursement to TVC for costs related to the transaction and development of the management plan.

Estimated Acquisition Costs: None (the easement will be donated to TVC)

Project Costs per property (three properties): \$300,000. Includes development of a resource conservation plan (\$15,000), resource management plan (\$100,000), as well as development of easement language and negotiations with the all parties regarding easement language, long-term management and stewardship needs, and legal and other work related to transactions on these properties.

Staff Requirements:

- 100 hours for pre-planning research, meetings with partners
- 100 hours per transaction
- 50 hours post-planning for establishment of resource management program and initial monitoring

Potential Funding Sources: Developers, City of Pleasanton, EBRPD (trail component)

Purchase conservation easements and help partners establish a regional trail corridor in the South Livermore Valley Area Plan

Conservation Priority Area: South Livermore

Resources at Stake: Prime Farmland Soils, Productive Agricultural Lands (Vineyards, Olives, Pistachios and Cultivated Crops such as Strawberries)

Major Threats: Conversion to Urban and Ranchette Residential Development; as well as Commercial and Industrial Uses

A: Acquire three Conservation Easements in the Tesla Corridor

Description: TVC will continue to work with willing landowners in the South Livermore Valley to purchase agricultural easements, especially in the scenic Tesla Corridor. TVC is already in discussion with two landowners who may be interested in easements, and will continue to provide outreach to all others. TVC's short term goal is to complete three easement transactions, or protect 300 acres, within the next three to five years. As part of this TVC will:

- Contact and meet with landowners to review the easement program
- Appraise and apply for easement acquisition funds from State, Federal and other programs
- Acquire three conservation easements over 300 acres of land.

Estimated Acquisition Costs: \$7.5 million (300 acres subdivided into 20 acre parcels = 15 – 20 acre parcels @ \$500,000 each)

Project Costs: \$180,000 acquisition costs (assumes three property acquisitions, appraisal, legal, baseline and closing costs)

Staff Requirements:

- 48 hours for pre-planning research, meetings with partners and landowner outreach
- 60 hours per transaction (3 transactions)
- 48 hours post-planning

Potential Funding Sources: Mitigation funds from the Ruby Hills development; California Farmland Conservancy Program, Coastal Conservancy, private fundraising and landowner partial donation of value (bargain sale)

B. Assist Partners in Establishing a Trail Corridor between Del Valle and Shadow Cliffs

Description: TVC will work with partners to assess where a trail corridor can be established between Del Valle Regional Park and the Future Chain of Lakes area. Where appropriate, TVC will provide outreach to landowners in the area. Where there are willing sellers, TVC will apply for funding and purchase conservation easements or purchase fee and re-convey to public agencies the property with trail corridors and a conservation easement in place.

Estimated Acquisition Costs: \$1.5 million (3 – 20+ acre parcels (+ or – 75 acres) at \$500,000 for each parcel).

Project Costs: \$140,000 acquisition costs (assumes two property acquisitions, appraisal, legal, baseline and closing costs); \$20,000 fund raising and outreach costs

Staff requirements:

- 48 hours for pre-planning research, meetings with partners and landowner outreach
- 80 hours per transaction and partner meetings (2 transactions)
- 72 hours post-planning

Potential Funding Sources: City of Livermore, Ruby Hills Mitigation Program, Coastal Conservancy, LARPD, EBRPD and private fundraising

C. Work with County and Stakeholders to Fortify and Clarify South Livermore Valley Area Plan

Description: The South Livermore Valley Area Plan is now thirteen years old. TVC will meet with its partners and stakeholders (Alameda County, City of Livermore, and City of Pleasanton, landowners) to review the current status of the plan and determine whether there is a need to revise any elements of the plan in order to ensure the long-term protection and viability of agricultural resources in the Valley.

Estimated Costs: \$45,000 (\$20,000 legal and \$25,000 staff time) if a revision to the plan is deemed necessary and appropriate

Staff Requirements:

- 48 hours for pre-planning research, meetings with partners

- 120 hours for negotiations with stakeholders and meeting
- 72 hours post-planning, landowner outreach and partner coordination

Potential Funding Sources: County, Stakeholders, and Private fundraising

<p>Provide Outreach to Owners of Working Ranches and Help Partners Establish Brushy Peak to Del Valle Trail in Altamont Foothills</p>
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Conservation Priority Area: Altamont Hills

Resources at Stake: Habitats of Rare and Endangered Species (Red-legged frog, Tiger Salamander, Burrowing Owl, Golden Eagle, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Wildlife Corridors (Deer, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Amphibians), Scenic Lands, Potential Regional Trail Corridors between Mount Diablo and Del Valle Regional Park, Wind Energy Production

Major Threats: Conversion to Urban and Residential Development, as well as Commercial and Industrial Uses; Impacts of Wind Energy Production on Raptor Species, Loss of Potential Trail Corridor

Discussion: A partnership is recommended between TVC, the City of Livermore, NRCS, RCD and EBRPD and local neighbors to protect large working ranches, and to eventually secure a regional trail corridor between Brushy Peak and the Del Valle Regional Park, largely along the South Bay Aqueduct. Over time this area may serve as an agricultural and scenic buffer to the city of Livermore. TVC will assist its partners who will take on the primary role of securing a future trail corridor, which may someday link Mount Diablo and public lands south of Livermore.

The program will include the following steps:

- Research private ownerships and resources in the area, potential sources of funding and likely trail corridor
- Meet with Livermore and EBRPD to discuss strategies for protecting lands in the area and establishing the corridor
- Meet with landowners and determine interest in selling conservation easements and other mechanisms for protecting their lands

TVC will research ownership patterns in the area, including size of parcels and quality of agricultural and other conservation values. TVC will also research potential funding sources, and meet with its partners to discuss key lands for protect and overall strategy. TVC will meet with its RCD and NRCS partners to discuss long term management issues and potential programs for restoration. Finally, TVC will provide outreach to landowners in the area. Where there are willing sellers, TVC will apply for funding and purchase

conservation easements, or purchase fee and resell the property with a conservation easement in place.

Project Costs: \$15,500 (research, meetings with partners, landowner outreach)

Staff Requirements:

- 150 hours research, meetings and outreach

Potential Funding Sources (for Conservation Easements): City of Livermore, NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, Coastal Conservancy, private fundraising and landowner partial donation of value (bargain sale)

Summary of Projects/Actions:

Number	Project/Action	Estimated Budget
1	Prepare a Comprehensive Resource Conservation Plan for North Livermore, including Potential Trail/Wildlife Corridors to Mount Diablo	\$145,000
2	Acquire Critical Habitat Lands in the Alkali Sink Area North of Livermore	\$1,040,000
3	Protect Habitat and Range Lands and Help Partners Establish Regional Trail Connections through Developing Lands in South Pleasanton	\$900,000
4	Purchase conservation easements and help partners establish a regional trail corridor in the South Livermore Valley Area Plan:	
	(A) Acquire three Conservation Easements in the Tesla Corridor	\$7,680,000
	(B) Assist Partners in Establishing a Trail Corridor between Del Valle and Shadow Cliffs	\$4,100,000
	(C) Work with County and Stakeholders to Fortify and Clarify South Livermore Valley Area Plan	\$45,000
5	Provide Outreach to Owners of Working Ranches and Help Partners Establish Brushy Peak to Del Valle Trail in Altamont Foothills	\$15,500
Total		\$13,925,500