MARIN COUNTY
PARKS
PRESERVATION · RECREATION

SAN GERONIMO PROPERTY ACQUISITION

FAQs updated 11/9/2017

Contacts

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1. What is the County seeking to acquire?

The County is seeking to acquire 157 acres in San Geronimo Valley. The property is privately owned, operates as the San Geronimo Golf Course, and is comprised of four legal parcels. See the attached map.

2. Why does the County want to buy this property?

County ownership would preserve San Geronimo Valley's rural character for future generations. Under County ownership the land could forever be open to the public, and the County would be able to pursue potential projects such as recreational opportunities, creek enhancement, and other public uses for the benefit of the residents of Marin and visitors.

3. Is the County rushing too quickly to buy this property?

After six months of negotiations, the nonprofit Trust for Public Land (TPL) entered into an option agreement with the owners that expires in mid-November. The Marin County Board of Supervisors would need to approve a purchase and sale agreement if TPL is to exercise its option. If the County does not enter into an agreement by mid-November, other potential buyers would have a chance to purchase the property, which would prevent the County from acquiring and preserving the property for public use. The owners have indicated that they have back-up offers, which may include private acquisition which may prevent public input on future use of this property. Moving forward quickly prevents these other potential buyers from securing the property.

4. What is the Trust for Public Land and what do they have to gain in this deal?

The Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit organization based in San Francisco with the mission of creating parks and protecting land for people. The organization was founded in 1972 from the protection of Gerbode Valley in the Marin Headlands. It has partnered with Marin communities to complete dozens of park and open space projects, most recently with the development of Canal Community Garden in San Rafael and Rocky Graham Park in Marin City. TPL is a mission-driven charity and offered to buy and hold the golf course so that the public could help determine the future use of the land. TPL plans to sell the property at the same price the organization paid to purchase the property and will not impose restrictions on the County's use of the property. Learn more at tpl.org.

5. Is the price fair?

Yes. The four legal parcels represent the largest block of land in the County that is zoned Recreational Commercial. The negotiated price of $8.85 million is less than the appraised fair market value. An appraisal considers the variety of potential commercial uses that could be developed on a property of this size with this zoning. It is based on estimated market value. The County has commissioned a third-party review of TPL's appraisal by an independent appraiser. This will ensure the price is fair before the Marin County Board of Supervisors votes on the agreement with TPL and before the sale is completed.

6. What is the process for purchasing this type of property?

The San Geronimo property would be purchased in collaboration with TPL. TPL would purchase the property with the intention of selling to the County at the same price. This secures the property while the County goes through a deliberative process that is open to the public and secures the necessary funding. This is a common approach that has been used to purchase some of the most significant treasured public lands in Marin. For example, the Nature Conservancy acted as the nonprofit intermediary when the County purchased Ring Mountain Preserve. TPL was the nonprofit partner supporting the acquisitions of such iconic Marin landscapes as Tennessee Valley and Abbotts Lagoon. The recent acquisitions of Heron Hill and Sky Ranch were also purchased using this approach.

7. What is SPAWN's role in this potential acquisition?

The Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN) is not and has not been a party in the negotiations between TPL and the property owners. SPAWN is not providing funding for the acquisition and would not receive funding from the County if the acquisition is completed. Historically SPAWN has conducted small-scale planning efforts and restoration projects on the golf course property. SPAWN has a pending state grant application and is in line to receive funding for restoration work at Roy's Pools, on the southwest corner of the golf course property. This project pre-dates and is separate from any potential uses or larger property-wide restoration efforts the County would consider and potentially undertake, if the County acquires the property. The County looks forward to engaging with all community stakeholders in an open and public planning and visioning process, including SPAWN and other environmental and salmonid advocacy organizations such as Trout Unlimited, and other community organizations and interested individuals

8. Does the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption for the acquisition exempt any future potential projects on the property from CEQA?

No. Any project considered on the property after the acquisition would have to comply with CEQA.

9. Would the acquisition of the property by the County increase fire danger to the surrounding community?

If the purchase moves forward, ensuring a fire safe environment will be one of the County's highest priorities. Marin County Parks is reviewing fire fuel management strategies with Marin County Fire, including maintaining defensible space around valley communities, vegetation management, and mowing. Any increased risk associated with reducing golf course irrigation would be offset by sound fire fuel management practices. Marin County Parks will continue to engage with Marin County Fire and local stakeholders in efforts to promote fire safety as short- and long-term plans for the site are discussed.

10. How would this purchase be funded?

To finance this acquisition, the County will use a combination of County general funds, Marin County Parks Measure A funds, and funds raised from other sources. The County estimates $2.5 million of the purchase price will come from Measure A funds and $1.41 million from County general funds. Measure A funding derives from the 2012 Marin Parks, Open Space and Farmland Preservation tax monies designated by law for permanent preservation of public open space, community separators, wildlife corridors, greenbelts, and habitat. The balance will come from a joint fundraising effort, which will include applying for public and private grants. The most promising sources of public matching grant funds are various state programs funded by the 2014 Proposition 1 water bond. Each grant program is managed by a different state agency. Because most of these grant programs have long lead times between the application date and the final award, and opportunities to apply are limited. County staff have proactively begun submitting some government grant applications as opportunities are announced by the state. Any grant offered to the County from these or other sources must be reviewed and approved by the Marin County Board of Supervisors in open session. The County's ultimate purchase will be contingent on the success of this fundraising effort.

11. How does funding for the acquisition restrict potential uses?

The property is comprised of four parcels. Three primary "Front 9" and "Back 9" parcels would be purchased with Marin County Parks Measure A funds, to leverage state grants that have broad purposes of supporting fisheries restoration and enhancing recreation. The primary factors that may constrain the future uses of this portion of the property exist in documents such as the Countywide Plan, and include items such as extensive stream conservation area setbacks, the confirmed presence of two salmonid species listed as endangered by both state and federal regulatory authorities, and long-term downward trends in the financial viability of golf. These considerations may significantly impact consideration of potential future public uses of these parcels. County staff anticipates considering projects such as restoration of the property's creek and riparian resources and the retention and management of the existing cart paths as a greenbelt, which may be be core components of the future use of these parcels. All consideration of potential uses remain open to community and county-wide input on how these uses are implemented and on the range of other compatible future uses which these portions of the property may serve.

12. If the purchase moves forward, what is the short-term plan for the property?

If a golf operator with a financially feasible proposal for operation can be found, continuing operation as a golf course may be an option in the short term. Otherwise, the property would be maintained in the short term as a greenbelt park with a network of multiuse pathways between Woodacre, San Geronimo, Forest Knolls, and Lagunitas. Marin County Parks would manage weeds and selectively mow the grass to maintain safe recreational use and manage fire risk.

13. Can the County afford to maintain this property in the short-term?

Marin County Parks manages 20,000 acres of parks and open space. Due to economies of scale and a flexible, seasonal workforce, Parks can support the management of this property in the short-term for approximately $140,000 a year.

14. What is the long-term plan for the property?

If the purchase moves forward, the County and Marin County Parks will engage in a series of community outreach events. The community would participate in establishing a high-level vision for the future use of the property. These discussions would consider the preferences of the surrounding communities, and the preservation and recreation legacy of this property as a public land for future generations. Depending on the purchase, robust and focused community planning and visioning workshops could begin as soon as early 2018. Proposed future uses would then need to be approved by the Marin County Board of Supervisors prior to implementation.

15. Is it possible to keep a golf course and restore the creek?

It is unlikely that the layout of the golf course is compatible with effective long-term restoration of the Larsen and San Geronimo creek fisheries and improving water quality in the Lagunitas watershed. Large-scale restoration objectives include returning water used by the golf course back to the watershed, removing culverts from Larson Creek, repairing the riparian canopy cover, and restoring the floodplain.

16. What happens to plans for wastewater recycling on the property?

Just as with discussions about any other possible future projects, potential solutions for wastewater recycling and environmental impact will be subject to environmental review, and in this case, will require new feasibility analysis.

17. What about other community facilities on the property?

During the outreach process, community members will be able to provide input about future uses of facilities such as the clubhouse, the community garden, and other existing and proposed new amenities.

18. Does the County have the capacity to effectively manage and operate the property into perpetuity?

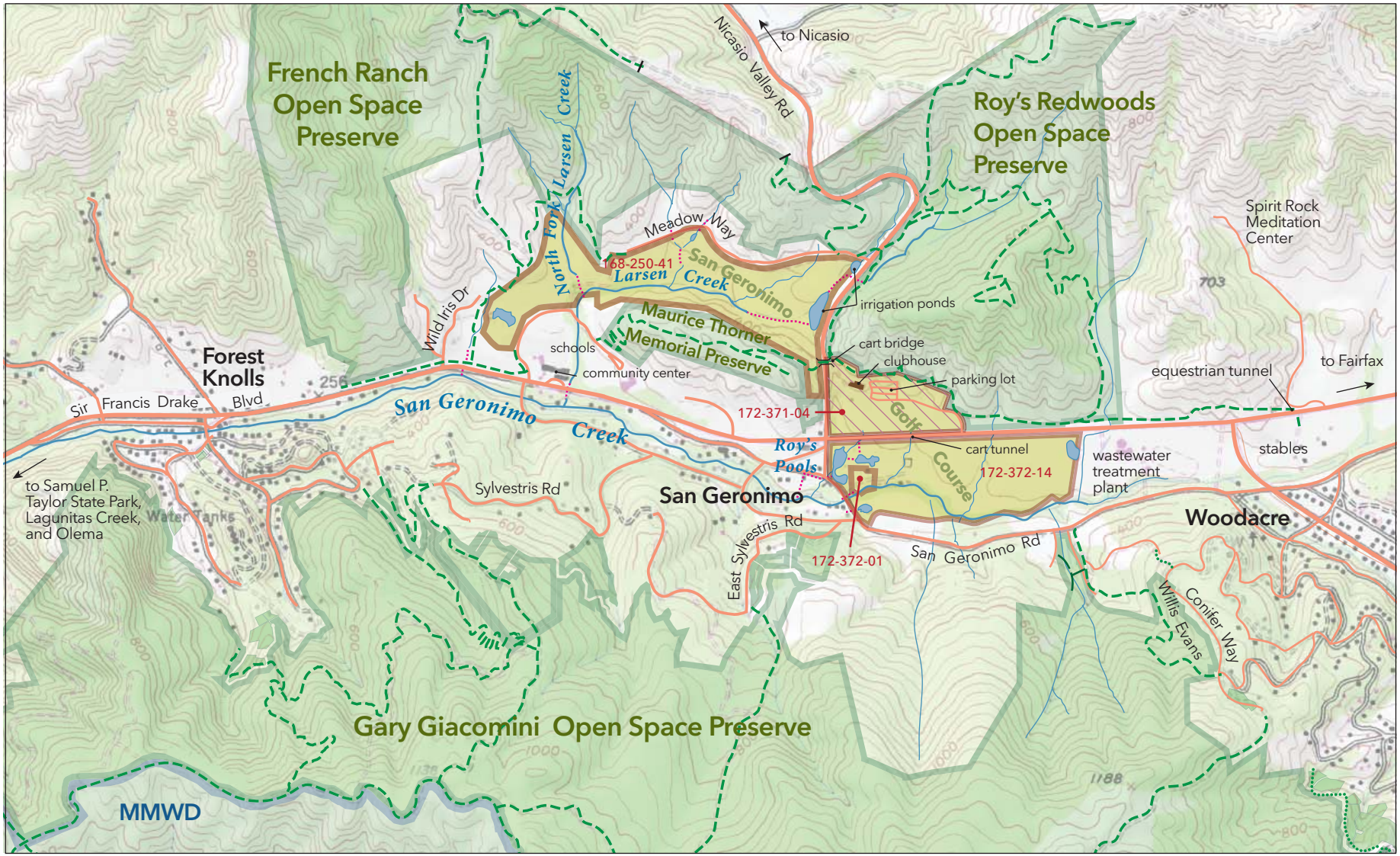
The property could be managed on a turnkey basis with little increase in staffing. As with other projects, longer-term restoration and community facility improvements would proceed in stages based on Marin County Board of Supervisors approvals and the availability of funding.

19. When is the next public hearing on the potential purchase?

On Tuesday, November 14, 2017, the Marin County Board of Supervisors will review and act on a sale agreement. At this hearing the Board will decide whether to move forward with a land purchase agreement (including a timeline and other contingencies), or to not purchase the land at all. This Board meeting will include several other agenda items. Hearing on the property acquisition will begin no earlier than 2:15 p.m. in Suite 330 of Marin County Civic Center.

San Geronimo Golf Course Acquisition

San Geronimo Valley, Marin County, CA



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TPL San Geronimo 8/30/17 v6

MARIN COUNTY PARKS
OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Legend

- Creek Parcels
- Clubhouse Parcel
- Parks and Open Space
- Watershed Lands
- 168-250-41 APN Parcel Numbers
- Roads
- Trails
- Streams
- Culverts
- Ponds

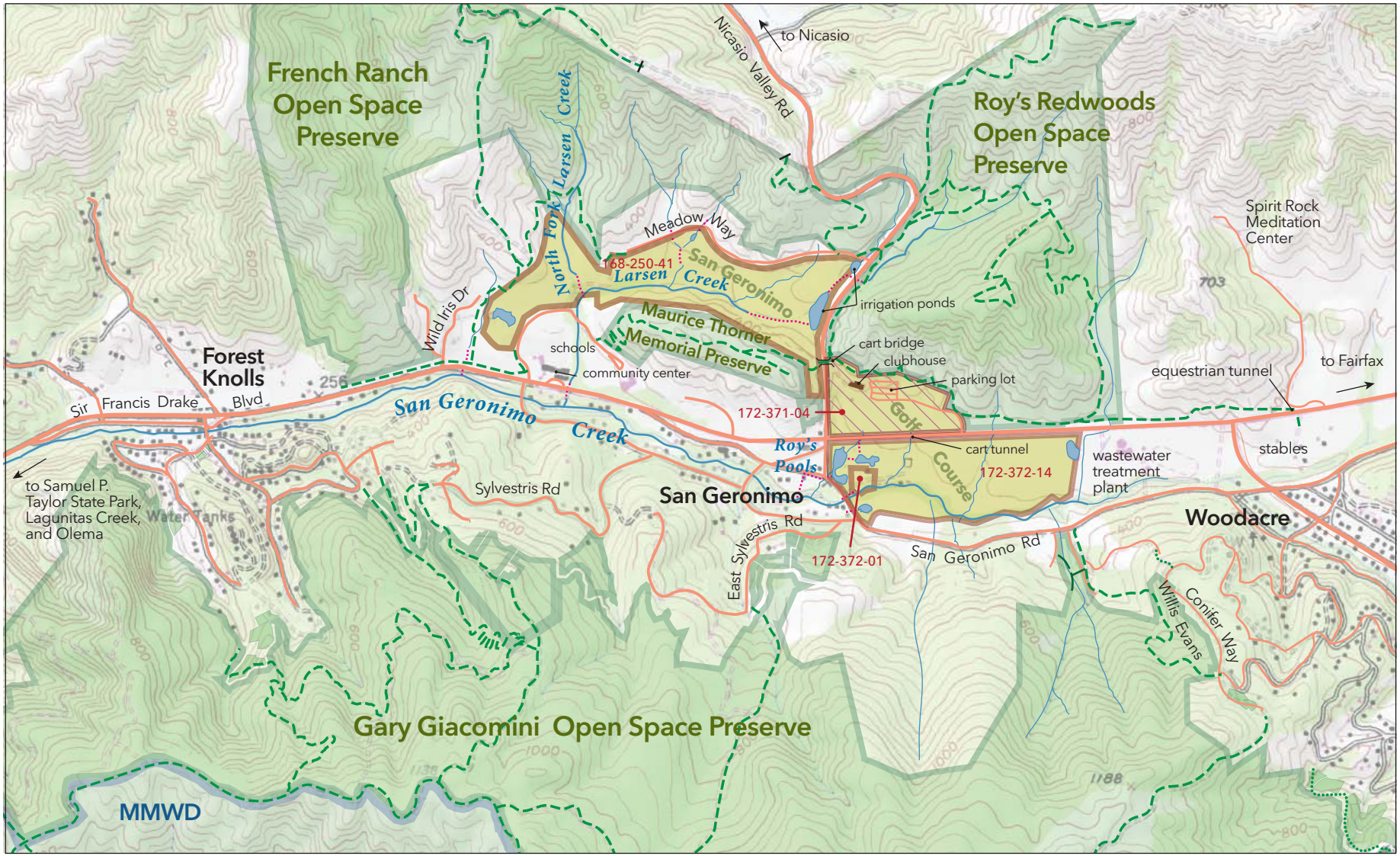
0 .5 1 mile

0 .5 1 kilometer

Portion of USGS San Geronimo quadrangle with 40-foot contours.
Trails from Marin County Open Space District and Pease Press maps.
Parcel boundaries from Marin County GIS

San Geronimo Golf Course Acquisition

San Geronimo Valley, Marin County, CA



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