

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - LAND USE  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 07, 2025**

**MINUTE ORDER NO. 4**

**SUBJECT: NOTICED PUBLIC HEARING:  
SANTA YSABEL COUNTY PRESERVE - APPROVE ACQUISITION OF  
APPROXIMATELY 540 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE PRESERVE FROM PALO  
VERDE LAND DEVELOPMENT, LP, A CALIFORNIA LIMITED  
PARTNERSHIP, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION ([4/9/2025] - SET  
HEARING; [5/7/2025] - HOLD HEARING) (DISTRICT: 5)**

**OVERVIEW**

On April 9, 2025 (02) the Board of Supervisors Set a Hearing for May 7, 2025.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) enhances the quality of life in San Diego County by providing exceptional parks and recreation experiences and preserving significant natural resources. A core aspect of DPR's conservation program is acquiring open space lands that support sensitive species and habitats. DPR has identified approximately 540 acres to expand the existing Santa Ysabel County Preserve and contribute towards DPR's goal of acquiring 500 acres of land per year. If acquired, the existing approximately 6,900-acre Santa Ysabel County Preserve would be expanded to approximately 7,440 acres, conserving chamise chaparral, Engelmann oak woodland, and grassland habitat to help protect sensitive species, including mountain lion, mule deer, Stephen's kangaroo rat, and Engelmann oak.

This acquisition enhances conservation under the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) set by federal and state requirements for special-status species conservation. It also supports multiple County of San Diego (County) sustainability goals, habitat and biodiversity, biological connectivity, greenhouse gas reductions, and benefits water and air quality. Additionally, conservation of the property provides flood control benefits and protection of water quality.

The County entered into an Option Agreement with Palo Verde Land Development, LP (Seller), a California limited partnership for the purchase of approximately 540 acres identified as Assessor's Parcel Numbers 248-010-05, 246-090-11, 248-010-06, and 248-090-10 (Property) for the appraised value of \$5,115,000 (\$9,500±/acre). The Property is subject to Agricultural Land Conservation Contract AP 81-08 made and entered into as of April 30, 1973, as amended by that First Amendment to Land Conservation Contract made and entered into as of January 26, 1982.

Today's request is for the County Board of Supervisors (Board) to set a hearing on April 9, 2025, to consider approval of the purchase of the Property, and to direct the Clerk of the Board to provide public notice of the hearing. If the Board approves this request, then on May 7, 2025, after making the necessary findings, the Board will be asked to authorize the Director, Department of General Services, to purchase the Property from the Seller for the appraised value of \$5,115,000. The total one-time County cost, including property acquisition, staff time, and initial stewardship, is \$5,754,500. Funds for one-time costs are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 Operational Plan of the MSCP Acquisition Fund. The annual costs to manage the Property are \$185,948, including ongoing stewardship, fire abatement, and supervision of the Preserve. These ongoing costs are included in the FY 2025-26 CAO Recommended Operational Plan for the Department of Parks and Recreation.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find that the proposed acquisition of real property identified as APNs 248-010-05, 246-090-11, 248-010-06, and 248-090-10 are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15301, 15311, 15313, 15316, and 15325 of the State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Find that the acquisition of real property identified as APNs 48-010-05, 246-090-11, 248-010-06, and 248-090-10 is not based primarily on a consideration of the lower cost of acquiring land in an agricultural preserve and there is no other land within or outside the agricultural preserve that would have provided an acceptable substitute for the property being acquired.
3. Authorize the Director, DGS, or designee, to exercise the option to purchase real property identified as APNs 248-010-05, 246-090-11, 248-010-06, and 248-090-10 from Palo Verde Land Development, LP, a California limited partnership for the appraised value of \$5,115,000.
4. Authorize the Director, DGS, or designee, to execute all documents, including escrow documents, necessary to complete the purchase of real property identified as APNs 248-010-05, 246-090-11, 248-010-06, and 248-090-10.

### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Department of Parks and Recreation Conservation Program's acquisition of properties with high-quality habitat is anticipated to result in positive public health impacts by improving water and air quality for all residents. The acquisition of the Property is within the Santa Ysabel and Julian community areas and will contribute acreage to multiple sustainability efforts, including expanding the draft North County Multiple Species Conservation Plan preserve area by approximately 540 acres and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 680 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, equivalent to taking 160 cars off the road per year. The acquisition of conservation land reduces emissions that would have occurred if the land were developed and prevents the loss of critical habitat.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The proposed acquisition supports multiple County of San Diego (County) Sustainability Goals. Acquisition of the approximately 540-acre property supports County Sustainability Goal No. 3 and the County's Climate Action Plan by contributing to greenhouse gas reductions by approximately 680 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year through preservation of open space. The proposed acquisition site supports County Sustainability Goal No. 4 by expanding opportunities for community members to access outdoor recreation and nature and County Sustainability Goal No. 6 by expanding open space adjacent to native ecosystems and habitats.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 Operational Plan in the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Acquisition Fund. If approved on May 7, 2025, this request will result in total one-time project costs for the Property of \$5,754,500 in FY 2024-25, which includes \$5,115,000 for property acquisition; \$150,000 staff time and appraisal reports to complete the transaction; \$10,000 for closing and title costs; and \$479,500 in one-time land improvement costs (including \$430,000 for comprehensively updating the existing Santa Ysabel County Preserve Resource Management Plan and initial species monitoring, and \$49,500 to conduct initial stewardship that features signage, access control, and vegetation management, land surveying, and other supplies and

services and ongoing management). The funding source is available prior year General Fund fund balance (\$5,754,500) in the MSCP Acquisition Fund.

There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years in FY 2024-25.

Total annual ongoing costs for assessments, monitoring, operations, and management of the Property are estimated at \$185,948, itemized as follows: approximately \$15,000 for adaptive management and biological monitoring, \$72,450 for annual total operating costs for managing the site, and the salary and benefit costs of \$98,498 for existing staff. Ongoing costs and funding sources are included in the FY 2025-26 CAO Recommended Operational Plan in the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). The funding source is existing General Purpose Revenue in DPR. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

#### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

#### **ACTION:**

ON MOTION of Supervisor Lawson-Remer, seconded by Supervisor Montgomery Steppe, the Board of Supervisors closed the Hearing and took action as recommended.

AYES: Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

ABSENT: (District 1 Seat Vacant)

State of California)

County of San Diego)

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



**Signed**

**by** Andrew Potter