



# NEWS RELEASE

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Elise Holland  
Chief of Planning & Resources  
Marin County Parks

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 23, 2011

### MARIN COUNTY PARKS MOVES ONE STEP CLOSER TO MAJOR LAND ACQUISITION IN FOREST KNOLLS

Marin County Civic Center  
3501 Civic Center Drive  
Suite 260  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
415 507 2820 T  
415 473 2495 TTY  
kmjones@co.marincounty.org  
[www.marincountyparks.org](http://www.marincountyparks.org)

**SAN RAFAEL, CA** – On September 22, the California State Coastal Conservancy (Conservancy) approved a \$450,000 grant to the Marin County Open Space District towards the purchase of 22 acres of undeveloped forest and chaparral habitat in Forest Knolls, in the San Geronimo Valley. The Director of Marin County Parks (Parks), Linda Dahl, noted that “without the generous funding provided by the Conservancy, we could not otherwise complete this important land acquisition, which will protect salmon habitat and sensitive natural resources, and provide permanent public access to the Gary Giacomini Open Space Preserve.”

Earlier this year, Marin County Parks (Parks), which includes the Open Space District, entered into a year-long purchase agreement with the landowner for \$650,000. The \$450,000 Conservancy grant will be added to Parks commitment of \$100,000. Parks is working with non-profit partners the Marin Open Space Trust (MOST) and the San Geronimo Valley Planning Group, as well as other community members, to raise the additional \$100,000 necessary to complete this acquisition. Parks has until August 23, 2012, to raise the remaining funds. “This funding offers the local community its chance to fulfill a dream that has existed since development was first proposed over thirty years ago. I’m confident that Valley residents will not let this golden opportunity get away,” said Supervisor Steve Kinsey.

The 22 acre parcel has been the subject of multiple development proposals dating back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1980’s, it was part of Skye Ranch—a proposed gated community of elegant homes above the San Geronimo Valley. In 1995, the Open Space District purchased much of the Skye Ranch property for \$2.1 million with the help of the Marin Community Fund, creating the 1478 acre Gary Giacomini Open Space Preserve. However, the developers retained 115 acres of developable land, including this property, which is bounded on three sides by the preserve and has a maximum development potential of three lots.

The property is highly valuable in that it supports rare plants, including Mt. Tamalpais and Bolinas manzanita, and provides nesting areas for the northern spotted owl. In addition, acquisition of this property would preserve permanent public access to the preserve via the Manzanita Fire Road. The fire road also connects to the San Geronimo Ridge Fire Road, which is a designated segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, and provides links to other public lands, including Marin Municipal Water District, Samuel P. Taylor State Park, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Finally, the acquisition would allow Parks to improve the condition of the fire road, and thereby protect Coho salmon by decreasing erosion and reducing sedimentation into San Geronimo Creek.

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