



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Visioning Process for Taylor Mountain Regional Park to Begin

District funds master-planning process in partnership with County's Regional Parks

SANTA ROSA, Calif.—The community will soon have an opportunity to provide input on how best the 1,100-acre Taylor Mountain property can serve its recreational needs. Today, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, acting as the District's Board of Directors, approved a \$437,638 contract with RRM Design Group to develop a master plan for the creation of the Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve in southeast Santa Rosa.

The purpose of the master plan is to develop a framework for the eventual park's use and development, taking into consideration the property's location, protection of its natural resources, and needs of the community. The process will begin this summer and is estimated to take approximately two years to complete.

"Taylor Mountain will become one of the most accessible open space parks in Sonoma County," said Shirlee Zane, Third District Supervisor. "In partnership with the community and the recreational user groups, we will create a multi-use park that will serve as an urban respite and gathering place for the neighborhood."

The District invested \$20,555,000 to acquire four contiguous properties that comprise the park and open space land for its scenic and natural resources, and recreational potential. The most recent acquisition was the 823-acre Taylor Mountain Ranch that the District purchased in 2005. The 1,200-foot high Taylor Mountain has a rich cultural and agricultural history, having once boasted a mineral hot spring that was eventually shut-off by the 1906 earthquake and a hotel and resort.

"The eventual development of Taylor Mountain as a park and open space preserve symbolizes our County's commitment to protecting land for people," said Bill Keene, General Manager of the District. "It is our goal to make this prominent land accessible to everyone."

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The District is contracting with Regional Parks to manage the park-planning process and to assist with the management of the property during the planning phase. The District will retain a conservation easement over the property once it is transferred to Regional Parks.

“We are delighted to be able to begin planning this park with the community,” said Mary Burns, Director of Regional Parks. “Once the vision is developed into a plan, we will work together with the District to add another gem to our county parks system.”

In partnership with Regional Parks and LandPaths, the District developed an interim public access program that provides the community the opportunity to enjoy the property during the park-planning process. To provide a safe and enjoyable experience for park visitors, the District invested approximately \$200,000 in improvements including parking and access gates which were completed in January.

The District will contract with LandPaths, a non-profit organization, to assist with community outreach to ensure robust and comprehensive public participation. Currently, LandPaths facilitates the District's interim public access program for Taylor Mountain, provides outings on the property, manages a volunteer patrol program, and is developing an environmental education program with the District for schools proximate to the property.

“Building on the success of the Bayer Farm Park project in nearby Roseland, we are very optimistic that a true spectrum of our community will engage with both the master plan process and the eventual county park on Taylor Mountain,” said Craig Anderson, Executive Director of LandPaths. “We are honored to work in such a creative public-private partnership, especially given the unbridled enthusiasm from the community— both neighbors and county residents from afar.”

Since the start of the interim access program, nearly 1,000 people have received permits to access Taylor Mountain. Permits are issued after a one-hour orientation of the property is attended. The orientations are offered in both English and Spanish. For more information, please go to www.landpaths.org or call 707.524.9318.

About the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District permanently protects the diverse **agricultural, natural resource** and **scenic open space** lands of Sonoma County for future generations. Since 1990, the District has protected more than 83,000 acres. Agricultural and open space lands have been protected through a 1/4-cent sales tax approved by voters in 1990 and reauthorized in 2006. For more information, please visit www.sonomaopenspace.org