

THINGS TO DO • News

Hundreds of acres, miles of trails open in park overlooking Coyote Valley

Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch County Park added land 2½ times the size of Golden Gate Park



Cows graze along the Coyote Ridge Trail on the way to the new Ojo de Agua trail at Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch County Park during a tour for The Mercury News in San Martin, Calif., on Monday, May 5, 2025. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)



By **LUIS MELECIO-ZAMBRANO** | lemeleciozambrano@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

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Under an uninterrupted azure blue sky, the wind blew shimmering waves into a sea of grass speckled by islands of gnarled Valley Oak trees that spread sprawling shadows across rolling hills. Monday, the sweeping vista served as a dramatic backdrop to celebrate a long-awaited milestone — improved public access to its beauty.

“(This addition) is a true representation of the department’s mission to protect, provide and preserve parklands for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations,” said Joe Aguilera, Acting Director of Santa Clara County Parks, framed by the natural vista.



Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department Senior Park Ranger Will Bick shows off a new gate at the Ojo de Agua trail at Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch County Park during a tour for The Mercury News in San Martin, Calif., on Monday, May 5, 2025. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)

The park — called Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch County Park — stretches along the mountains east of Gilroy to the north to the outskirts of San Martin, features camping, fishing and boating on the namesake Coyote Lake, and miles of scenic trails that wind through rolling hills and woodlands.

The addition brings the total acres of the park from 5,216 to 8007 acres and adds six miles to the more than 33 miles of trails in the park.

The new trails wind through rolling hills, past herds of cattle that graze placidly on the tall grass, and offer panoramic views of the southern reaches of Silicon Valley bordered by the hazy silhouette of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Cresting over the ridge is a woodland valley with deep-green oaks stretching over miles of mountainside

Along with the cattle, the land hosts deer, mountain lions, foxes, and occasionally Bald Eagle nests. For those more adventurous types – tarantula migrations happen in the late summer.

The opening represents the next step in a decades-long process to expand the region’s park system and keep lands open to the public and protected from sprawl.

The expanse was once two ranches owned by a businessman, Manou Mobedshahi, who fled the Iranian Revolution and became a successful hotelier in the Bay Area. In 2016, he sold the ranches, called Coyote Highlands and Coyote Canyon to the County for \$25.1 million so that it could be preserved.

(The land’s colorful history includes a daughter of George Eastman — the founder of the photographic film empire then known as Eastman Kodak Co. — and a vaudeville performer famous for his birdcalls.)

Now, nearly a decade later, much of that land is now open to the public, with plans to develop further trails and public access in the future.

The additional trails also add another piece to an ongoing project called the Bay Area Ridge Trail, a plan that aims to create 550 miles of uninterrupted trails winding through the nine Bay Area counties. Currently, the system has around 400 miles of trail in segments spread across the region.



A trail marker for the Coyote Ridge Trail with the new Ojo de Agua trail listed at Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch County Park during a tour for The Mercury News in San Martin, Calif., on Monday, May 5, 2025. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)

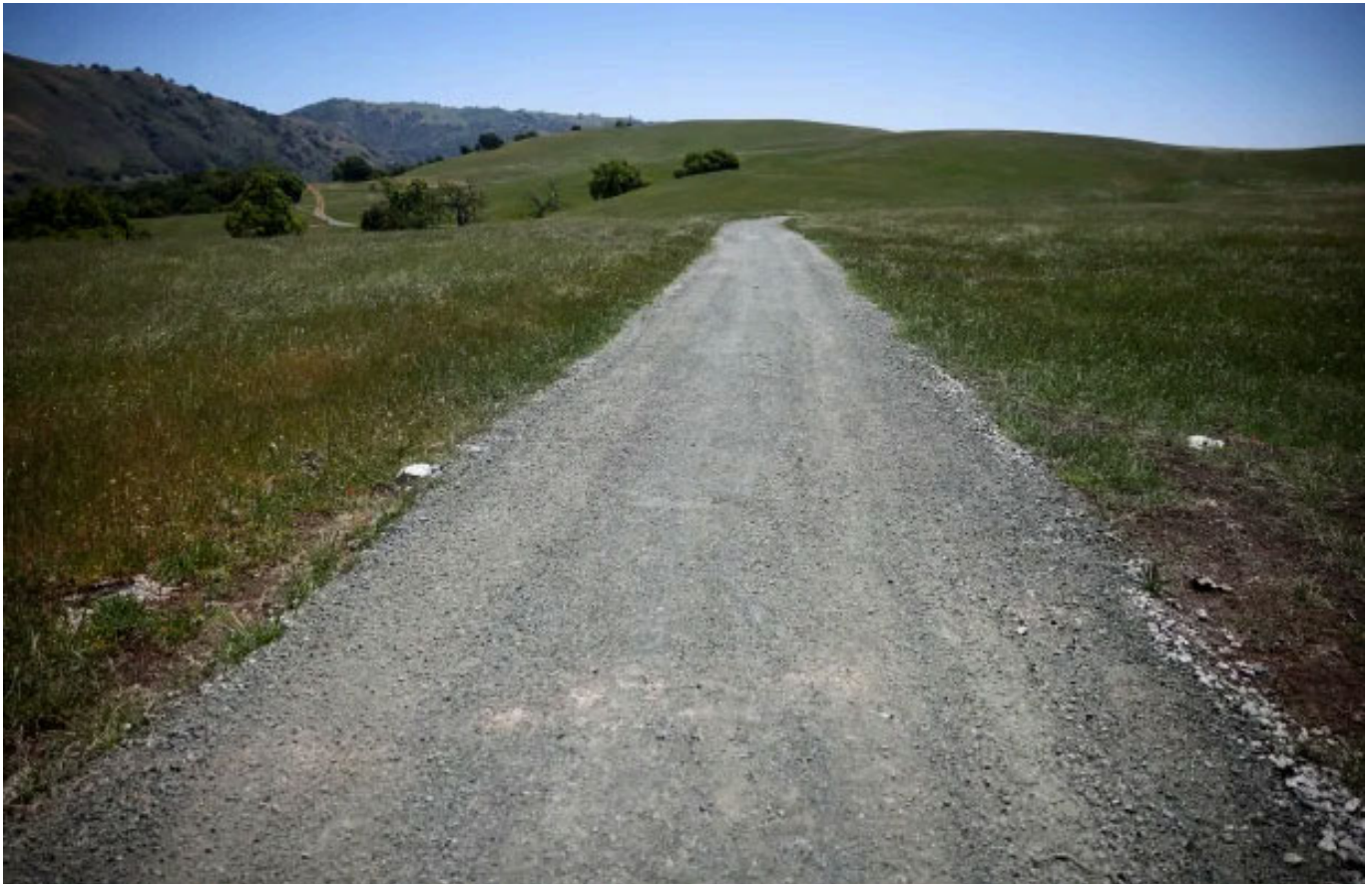
The terrain connects Coyote Lake Harvey Bear Ranch to the lands bordering Henry Coe State Park, as trails are further developed, this will give continuous access to tens of thousands of acres of public lands and grant a gateway to places that once took days of hiking to access.

As he navigated a truck through the newly opened trail on Monday, Senior Park Ranger Will Bick gazed at the lands, highlighting what he calls the “green ocean” — knee-high grass etched with trails, spreading over miles of hillside. While noting that only a few miles lower, crowds bustle at the entrance, here, he said, it feels like there is no one for miles around. “You can find that peace and tranquility here.”

Paul Rogers contributed reporting.



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The new Ojo de Agua trail at Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch County Park during a tour for The Mercury News in San Martin, Calif., on Monday, May 5, 2025. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)

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Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department Senior Park Ranger Will Bick drives at Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch County Park during a tour for The Mercury News in San Martin, Calif., on Monday, May 5, 2025. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)



Santa Clara County Parks Department Acting Director Joe Aguilera, center left, and Santa Clara County Supervisor Sylvia Arenas, center right, cut a ribbon in celebration of a new 2,741 acre property at Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch County Park in San Martin, Calif., on Monday, May 5, 2025. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)