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# Coyote Valley preserve south of San Jose will be easier to access




by [Lorraine Gabbert](#) August 12, 2024



Lucas Shellhammer, planning, design and construction manager for Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, said the improvements will help bring more people to engage with nature in Coyote Valley. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

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With a multimillion-dollar funding infusion, Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve will become more accessible to those with disabilities through enhanced amenities 

As part of a \$1.4 million public access improvement plan, the Heart's Delight Trail will be resurfaced with concrete, asphalt or decomposed granite to make it more navigable for people with disabilities, including wheelchairs, or families with strollers. Graphic, interpretive signs will connect visitors with the history of [Coyote Valley](#) and its role in conservation.

The project is being funded by \$800,000 in federal money through Congressman Jimmy Panetta's efforts, \$200,000 from Valley Water's Safe, Clean Water Project D3 Trails Grant program and \$400,000 from Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority's Measure Q. The improvements are slated to begin in 2025 and will be completed by 2026.


Anne Ferguson, founder and executive director of Bay Area Older Adults, welcomes the trail improvements. She said getting out in nature, being physical, learning and socializing keeps older adults healthy. Ferguson urges further safety considerations such as trail edging for people who are visually impaired, interpretive signs with voice recordings and additional shade.

"We understand the challenges our clients face in finding safe and accessible trails," she told San José Spotlight. "They're enabling people to feel comfortable going there and to walk safely by stabilizing the trail."

A new shade structure and benches will replace existing picnic tables in the entry area, providing a place for people to gather and participate in educational programming. Along the trail, picnic tables under a towering oak tree will be replaced with more accessible tables and benches.

[Coyote Valley](#), which provides crucial natural infrastructure for public health and wildlife, should be available for everyone, Andrea Mackenzie, general manager of Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, said at a news conference.

"Access to nature is not always easy or equitable," she said. "The funding that the Open Space Authority has received here represents an opportunity to connect more of our community members to nature. Feeling safe, comfortable and welcome in [open space](#) is an essential prerequisite to people caring about nature."

The 348-acre [Coyote Valley](#) Open Space Preserve includes sweeping hills dotted with serpentine rocks and blanketed with wildflowers in springtime. The grassland meadows are adorned with California bay and oak trees. The preserve, which provides vital wildlife connectivity between the Santa Cruz and Diablo Mountain ranges, is home to coyotes, bobcats, deer, rabbits, ground squirrels, yellow-billed magpies, golden eagles and red-tailed hawks. 

Lucas Shellhammer, planning, design and construction manager for [Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority](#), appreciates the respite the preserve provides. He said the improvements will help bring more school groups, young people and families to engage in nature.

“They’ll love and protect these places forever because of that,” he told San José Spotlight. “This is about connecting people that will invest in open spaces like this that have innate value... from wildlife connectivity to clean water, clean air and mental health benefits.”

*Contact Lorraine Gabbert at [lorrainegabbertsjspotlight@gmail.com](mailto:lorrainegabbertsjspotlight@gmail.com).*

