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Town council approves \$250K contribution to JMLT for Harvey Ranch acquisition

By Vera Kochan



Magnificent views surrounding Harvey Ranch Photo courtesy JMLT

Hoping to preserve a 143-acre section of the Harvey Ranch in Moraga and create a 15,500-acre natural area by connecting the three protected landscapes of Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, San Leandro Watershed and Painted Rock Preserve (which includes Carr Ranch, Buckhorn Creek, and Rocky Ridge), the John Muir Land Trust has been tasked by property owner Charlene Harvey to help her fulfill a dream to preserve the location against development.

No stranger to launching land preservation campaigns, JMLT Executive Director Linus Eukel was happy to take up the mantle and fulfill Harvey's vision. The Save Harvey Ranch Campaign is hoping to raise \$4 million by the Dec. 31 deadline. What's at stake is the loss of a sizable acreage of untouched land that could be a gateway to pristine wilderness; a new staging area with trailheads and trail connections; convenient access to the entire East Bay; quick access to amazing views and

pathways; an enhanced buffer for wildlife; a protected view shed; and the preservation of land surrounding Saint Mary's College.

With the deadline to raise the \$4 million by year's end looming, the town council unanimously approved a \$250,000 contribution for the purchase of Harvey Ranch open space and an escrow instructions agreement with JMLT for the release of funds during its Sept. 14 meeting. This payment will come from Fund 100 - One-Time Developer Fees (Palos Colorados) and is included in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Adopted Budget.

There is every expectation that JMLT's purchase of Harvey Ranch will prove successful. However, in the event that JMLT fails to provide a satisfactory Proof of Purchase to the town, or if JMLT informs the town and escrow holder that the purchase of Harvey Ranch will not be completed, the escrow holder will return the contribution to the town.

Although the escrow term is through Dec. 31, escrow may be extended for an additional three months, through March 31, 2023, by mutual agreement of the parties concerned via a written notice to that effect.

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<u>back</u>

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