



November 5, 2017

To: Marin County Board of Supervisors
From: San Geronimo Valley Planning Group
Re: San Geronimo Golf Course Purchase

RECOMMENDATION: PURCHASE THE GOLF COURSE!

The Planning Group is very excited that the Board of Supervisors has a second chance to purchase the golf course. This unique opportunity to preserve and protect land in and around existing open space, while developing opportunities for expanded community uses cannot be undervalued. It will also improve the health and resilience of both our natural and built communities leaving an extraordinary legacy for future generations. And to have a partner like Trust for Public Land, whose goals are not only to protect and restore natural areas and create parks for people but who can move monies much faster than the county, is critical.

ABOUT THE SGV PLANNING GROUP

We are the only environmental group in the Valley that meets monthly and welcomes non-members to its meetings. Our main goals established in 1977 and approved by the Board of Supervisors have not changed. They are:

1. Preserve and enhance the Valley's natural resources and rural setting.
2. Assure that the type and amount of growth will be consistent with maintaining the Valley's rural character and promotes a balance of environmental quality with sustainable community services and facilities. .

Because of these long held goals and ongoing active supporters and advocates we have preserved unique and diverse ecosystems from San Geronimo Creek and its tributaries that is the home to spawning salmon, to the uplands and ridges that enclose our Valley.

Since 2003 the Valley has had many partnerships protecting and restoring the environment using public grants and county funding. The National Marine Fisheries Service and regional agencies have named the Lagunitas watershed as a critical resource for salmon. As a result almost \$4 million in grants and county funds have poured into numerous restoration projects implemented by the Dept of Public Works and Marin Parks.

The SGV has more funded studies than any creek in Marin County. The Salmon Enhancement Plan is particularly notable in this regard along with studies by MMWD, Marin Parks and a supplementary study just being completed. Additional studies would be redundant and wasteful.

ABOUT THE PROPOSAL TO PURCHASE THE GOLF COURSE

Here are some of the exceptional benefits:

- Larsen Creek would be restored from where the protected spawning area at Laguntas School ends to the headwaters in Roy's Redwoods. The purchase would provide an opportunity to restore a gradient of valley floor habitat from creek floodplains through seasonal wetlands and grasslands.
- Restoration would include removal of an underground pipe the creek flows through, thereby daylighting the creek and removing the two ponds that impound Larsen Creek water for spraying the Back Nine greens.
- Larsen Creek would become a functional stream that would allow salmon and steelhead trout to once again access their historic habitat (home!) in Roy's Redwoods.
- Use of herbicides and fertilizer would be discontinued leaving unpolluted, healthy water for fish, wildlife and humans.
- Existing golf course pathways currently used by golf carts would become part of a new trail system that would benefit elders, the disabled, families with toddlers and students.
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- The effects of herbicides and fertilizers will be eliminated.
- Water consumption, dramatically increased due to the drought, will be eliminated.
- Using data from the Marin Wildlife Picture Index, Marin Parks and other partners could restore critical wildlife movement corridors between Valley stream/wetland habitats and the driver hill slopes and ridgelines.
- One Tam has made Roy's Redwoods a top priority for restoration considerations. This purchase would allow up to 20 scientists and environmentalists to consider restoration of the entire creek from the headwaters to where Larsen joins San Geronimo Creek.
- Existing golf course pathways currently used by golf carts would become part of a new trail system that would benefit elders, the disabled, families with toddlers and students.
- Existing trails on French Ranch, Roy's Redwoods, Thompson -Thorner and the Marietta Larsen Preserve would be connected thereby removing elders, kids, hikers, bikers and equestrians from the dangers of car traffic on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and San Geronimo Valley Drive.

ABOUT RETAINING THE GOLF COURSE

Research, has shown that golf courses are not viable businesses. 800 golf courses were closed over a 10 year period. 189 courses were closed in the Bay Area. User ship is waning. Almost 80% of golfers are men. It is difficult to justify the county paying tax dollars to support a dying business.

If Marin County does not purchase the property and allows it to be sold to private interests, it may be creating more problems both environmentally and administratively than public ownership. For years, the status of coho salmon has been a major issue involving studies and lawsuits. Public ownership of much of the watershed would resolve many of those issues. Private ownership would perpetuate them, probably with another round of costly lawsuits. Any recreational commercial changes to the property would require approval from all the relevant County departments and also result in bitter, divisive community contention and lawsuits.

Sincerely,
Brian Staley
SGV Planning Group chair

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