

Media Release

Immediate

Release

Contacts: Seth Adams 925 947-3535, cell 925 381-0905
Director of Land Programs, Save Mount Diablo

Ron Brown 925 947-3535, cell 925 683-5665
Executive Director, Save Mount Diablo

Greg Nelson 415-561-7427
Communications Officer, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

Photos & Graphics: Please contact [Beryl Anderson](mailto:banderson@SaveMountDiablo.org), Save Mount Diablo's Communications Coordinator, with your request at banderson@SaveMountDiablo.org or (925) 947-3535.

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Save Mount Diablo announces \$756,100 grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and purchase of 320 Acres near Mount Diablo State Park. The foundation grant is the largest in the organization's history.

(Walnut Creek) The holidays came early for Save Mount Diablo (SMD), a San Francisco East Bay Land Trust formed in 1971 and celebrating its 36th Anniversary this month.

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation granted the organization \$756,100 to complete its 320 acre Irish Canyon purchase, near the city of Clayton. The property's purchase price was \$1.344 million.

The grant not only completed the purchase of the property, it includes funds for urgently needed stewardship that will lay the groundwork for long-term creek and oak woodland restoration, and at the same time the grant is meant to encourage the organization to speed up its preservation efforts in the Marsh Creek-Morgan Territory region northeast of Mt. Diablo.



“This grant will help Save Mount Diablo to permanently protect the 320 acre Irish Canyon parcel, part of the Black Diamond Mines/Mt. Diablo Open Space Corridor in Contra Costa County,” said Helen Kim, Chief Program Officer for the San Francisco Bay Area Program of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, “This is an important acquisition because it supports a landscape-level strategic effort to protect open space surrounding Mt. Diablo.”

“The San Francisco Bay Area is renowned for its beautiful landscapes,” said Kim, “however, during the next 30 years an estimated 400,000 acres of open space are at risk from suburban development. The Foundation seeks to protect the Bay Area’s unique and irreplaceable lands for future generations by making grants for land acquisition and conservation easements. Save Mount Diablo’s Irish Canyon project is an excellent example of our efforts.”

“This is the largest foundation grant Save Mount Diablo has ever received. We’re really pleased by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation’s confidence in our efforts,” said Ron Brown, SMD’s Executive Director, “and are taking seriously the incentive they’ve provided to increase the speed of our work. The same day that we closed escrow on Irish Canyon, we also purchased another small property east of Mt. Diablo, nine acres which we’re calling Marsh Creek-I. We were able to make this second land deal in less than three weeks.”

Irish Canyon

The mile-wide 320 acre Irish Canyon property is within the Marsh Creek-Morgan Territory region, near the city of Clayton. It drops from Keller Ridge across Irish Creek toward Kreiger Peak, including ridges, side canyons and tributary creeks.

The sublimely beautiful property includes broad views to Suisun Bay, Mt. Diablo and the San Francisco peninsula, interesting history related to the nearby historic Mt. Diablo Coal Field, and varied habitats supporting a wide array of wildlife. 297 species have been recorded including a number of rare or threatened species such as the California red-legged frog. A nearby former stage coach road to the coal mines is now a public trail.

Irish Canyon's strategic location will help link five nearby preserves in wildlife and recreational corridors, and buffer the Marsh Creek-Morgan Territory region. The parcel is a half mile from Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve and City of Clayton Open Space, and less than a mile from SMD's Chaparral Spring property, East Bay Regional Park District's Clayton Ranch landbank and Mt. Diablo State Park.

The property had been threatened by ranchette development before the organization secured an option a year ago.

Although the deal allowed two years to complete the purchase, the grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation allowed SMD to complete the purchase a year early, and to concentrate efforts on other threatened parcels, such as Marsh Creek-I.

Save Mount Diablo will begin restoration efforts on the property in the spring.

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, established in 2000, seeks to advance environmental conservation and cutting-edge scientific research around the world and improve the quality of life in the San Francisco Bay Area. For more information, visit www.moore.org

Save Mount Diablo is a non-profit 501(c)(3) conservation organization, which has been preserving lands on and around Mount Diablo and educating the public to the mountain's natural values since 1971. Preserved lands have increased from 6,788 acres to more than 90,000. Save Mount Diablo continues to raise funds to preserve the remainder of the mountain. For more information, contact: Save Mount Diablo, telephone: (925) 947-3535, 1901 Olympic Blvd., Ste. 220, Walnut Creek, CA 94596; www.savemountdiablo.org

