



*Friends of*  
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## Press Release

**For Immediate Release  
May 7, 2004**

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### Landbanked EBRPD parklands out of public eye are cause for concern

#### *New trail construction at Sycamore Valley Open Space destroys sensitive plant & wildlife habitat*

**Danville, CA** - The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) acquires East Bay lands for the public and categorizes them as “landbanked” (i.e. putting them in inventory until they are ready for public access). While these lands are landbanked it is assumed that the EBRPD will be a trustworthy land steward. Landbanked lands are behind locked gates and the public is forbidden access under threat of citation by district park rangers. As a result the public must trust that the park district will be environmentally responsible with these lands while they are out of the public eye and until the public is finally given access.

The *Sycamore Valley Open Space* (SVOS) is one such landbanked regional park that has been in landbanked status for more than 15 years because the park district asserts that the funds necessary to open this park are not available, in spite of the fact that it will spend nearly \$500,000 this year to renovate a restroom in another one of its parks.

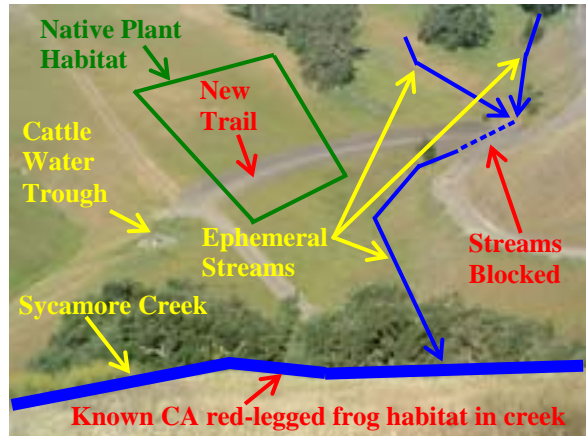
*Friends of Sycamore Valley (FSV)* has found it necessary to closely monitor the SVOS for the last 6 years because the park district has proven that it is not a trustworthy steward of the lands. FSV has documented major damage from cattle grazing at SVOS over the last 6 years.

In recent days FSV’s Director, Greg Schneider discovered that an EBRPD ranger, who days earlier threatened to cite Mr. Schneider for being in the SVOS, directed a trail maintenance contractor to bulldoze a new trail through a sensitive plant and wildlife habitat area.



**California blue-eyed grass**

This photograph shows the location of the new trail which was bulldozed through an ephemeral streambed just upstream from Sycamore Creek, a known California red-legged frog habitat. This graded area is a potential breeding ground for the threatened frog species. The new trail is also going through one of the few remaining areas in the park where FSV has documented native plants. The affected native plant habitat identified in the photograph contains California blue-eyed grass, a native flower. The trail was built up over the ephemeral streambed without any drainage pipe. As a result, the new trail will block upstream flow and during normal winter rains will eventually washout the trail at this location.



As shown in the photograph to the right, the trail was constructed in a manner that caused the damage to native plant habitat to be more extensive than it should have been. An approximate 10-foot width of the native plant area was graded on the upside of the trail for its entire length. These areas will be pulverized by cattle when they return to graze soon. This will eventually cause loss of topsoil from hoof shear, as has occurred in many other locations in the park.



This photograph shows the area as it looked approximately 18 months ago. It is clear the area already had several cattle trails which lead to a nearby cattle water trough. This area has been severely overgrazed for many years and as a result has also experienced heavy erosion damage directly attributable to the impacts of cattle grazing on soil stability.



The *California Environmental Quality Act* requires that an environmental review be undertaken in environmentally sensitive areas to prevent the inadvertent bulldozing of the habitat of threatened species. Such a review was not undertaken by the district in this case and it is not at all clear why this area was bulldozed since the park is not expected to be open to the public in the foreseeable future.

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