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**Open Space Authority and SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Education)
to Support Sustainable Farming and Specialty Crops in Coyote Valley**

San Jose, CA – January 28, 2014 – Five years ago, the Coyote Valley, one of the last large swaths of agricultural land in the region, seemed destined to be plowed under and paved over for more housing. Today, there is a viable option to choose a very different future for the Valley that would include protected open space, public trails and recreation, and expanded farming to serve demand for locally grown vegetables, fruits, and ethnic specialty produce.

This alternative vision emerges from a partnership between the Open Space Authority and the nonprofit organization, Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE). The proposal could save significant portions of the 7,500-acre Valley from development and foster increased agricultural viability for current farmers as well as a new generation of farmers growing high-demand and high-value crops.

An ironic hero in this story was the Great Recession. As the economy sank and new construction came virtually to a halt, the long-planned development of technology campuses combined with medium-density housing in Coyote Valley failed to materialize. In fact, all development in Coyote Valley's "urban reserve" has been placed on hold until after 2040 under *Envision – San Jose 2040 General Plan*. In 2010, the Authority saw its opportunity to protect acreage at a reasonable price and purchased 348 acres on the Valley's western edge for preservation. Champions of open space and agricultural heritage began to discuss ideas for a different future for the Valley, building on and supporting its rural and agricultural traditions.

The Authority approved a management plan for the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve earlier this year for resource conservation and stewardship, and development of multi-use trails and other recreation amenities. The partnership with SAGE to promote local-serving agriculture that also enhances conservation of natural resources on nearby Valley parcels was a natural fit.

SAGE develops urban edge Agricultural Parks and agricultural resource areas, in the Greater Bay Area and beyond, that support local food systems. SAGE applied for and in September, won a State Dept. of Food and Agriculture grant for \$252,000 to help revitalize diversified specialty crop agriculture in the Coyote Valley.

"The Open Space Authority is excited to work with SAGE to help revitalize the rich agricultural heritage of the Coyote Valley and contribute to local community health," said Authority General Manager Andrea Mackenzie. "The Coyote Valley helps maintain the region's clean air and fresh drinking

water, offers families great outdoor recreation opportunities, and, through this partnership, will support local production of healthy crops such as fruits and vegetables for local consumption.”

For its part, SAGE started by convening an Advisory Committee for the Coyote Valley Agricultural Enterprise and Conservation program (COVAEC), a collaboration of technical experts and local stakeholders that will guide the activities of the CDFA grant. These activities include offering workshops and technical assistance to current growers and growers new to Coyote Valley who want to increase production of specialty crops and adoption of sustainable farming practices. The effort will also link with and build on existing agri-tourism initiatives and local marketing campaigns.

Pending additional funding, SAGE is seeking to create a 40-acre demonstration and education farm that will showcase on-farm natural resource conservation approaches, trial new crops, including U-pick crops, and eventually offer 1-5 acre plots for start-up farmers. The long-term vision is for the creation of a permanent agricultural resource area that will help support livelihoods for farmers and be prized by nearby urban residents for its fresh food and educational opportunities.

“We want to see family farmers making a better living and we think growing for local markets and using more sustainable practices can help them do so,” explained Sibella Kraus, President of SAGE. “We also want to support people who want to start farming - young people, immigrants and scaling-up urban gardeners - and help them succeed.”

During the first three years, the Authority and SAGE will work to leverage the grant funding to raise more public and philanthropic funding to be invested in farmland protection and a new type of diversified, sustainable agriculture in the Coyote Valley.

The State’s Specialty Crop Block Grant program funds activities that enhance competitiveness of specialty crops, which are defined as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops including floriculture. Awards are monitored to ensure they are used for the intended purposes.

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Founded in 1993, the Open Space Authority connects people to nature by protecting open spaces, natural areas, and working farms and ranches for future generations. Learn more about the Open Space Authority at www.openspaceauthority.org

Founded in 2001, SAGE is an entrepreneurial nonprofit that seeks to ensure that multifunctional agriculture – agriculture that provides food and other community benefits – is a key element of regional sustainability planning and that it is implemented on the ground in the San Francisco Bay Area and other regions. Learn more about SAGE at www.sagecenter.org