

NEWS - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conservationists Remain Hopeful Despite Wild Cherry Canyon Fallout

San Luis Obispo, CA – The Land Conservancy stepped up in 2011 as a local partner to conserve Wild Cherry Canyon by helping raise a management endowment that the state required prior to acquiring the 2400 acre coastal property as an expansion of Montana de Oro State Park. The Land Conservancy also planned to transfer its connecting property, the 1400-acre Hibberd Preserve, as part of the park expansion and as the missing link to join trails between Avila Beach and Los Osos.

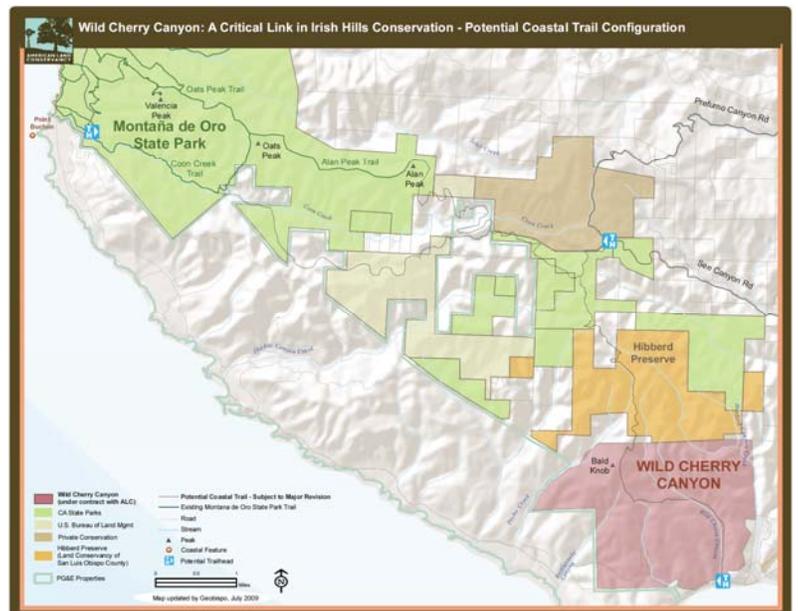
On April 15, project partners announced that the Wild Cherry Canyon lease holders failed to extend the most recent purchase agreement thereby ending the effort to conserve Wild Cherry Canyon as an extension of Montana de Oro State Park.

The American Land Conservancy, a national conservation group, spent nearly a decade working to conserve Wild Cherry Canyon as a part of the California State Parks system. An extremely complex albeit exciting conservation project, the acquisition of Wild Cherry Canyon was laden with a variety of dynamic challenges that ultimately could not be overcome in the necessary timeframe.

“It is important to realize that the effort to protect Wild Cherry Canyon was worth trying for,” noted Kaila Dettman, Executive Director of The Land Conservancy. “As a community, we value dreaming big about ways to improve our quality of life, and we should be proud that we pursued this visionary conservation project.”

The conservation of Wild Cherry Canyon would have increased Montana de Oro State Park by 65% and could have expanded up to 20 miles of coastal trails. The Land Conservancy remains hopeful that State Parks will move forward in acquiring the Hibberd Preserve to expand backcountry trails to new areas in the Irish Hills sometime in the future.

Despite the turn of events, Dettman remains positive about the future of local land conservation. “Every conservation project is a risk, but it is a calculated risk that The Land Conservancy and our members take because of the great rewards reaped from the protected places that benefit people and wildlife forever. Instead of feeling defeated, we can take lessons learned from this and apply them to future projects to help ensure success,” said Dettman.



The Land Conservancy is now contacting every donor who gave money towards the Wild Cherry Canyon endowment. Donors will be given the option to have their charitable contributions refunded or redirected to a similar local conservation project with exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities. The Land Conservancy welcomes questions and constructive comments on its Facebook page, via email to LC@LCSLO.org, or by phone at (805) 544-9096.

The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County is a local nonprofit land trust working to protect and restore special landscapes for the benefit of people and wildlife. The land trust's efforts help protect drinking water sources, prevent poorly planned development, restore wildlife habitat and promote family farmlands and ranches in our region. Since its formation in 1984, The Land Conservancy has led collaborative efforts to permanently protect over 14,000 acres of land in San Luis Obispo County. For more information visit www.LCSLO.org or call (805) 544-9096.

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