

# About the Founding of the Open Space Authority

By Rod Diridon Sr, Former Santa Clara County Supervisor

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It really began in the late 1960s with several of us: Dan McCorquodale, Susan Wilson, Wally and Mary Stegner, Josephine and Frank Duvenick, the Varians and many more working for an independent, county wide open space authority.

We wanted to protect all of the open space that was left. We had to compromise with the then Board of Supervisors for a Parks Charter Fund fund measure with the county in charge of the program.

Our concept was always to ring the urbanized area with permanently protected open space through which service could not be extended thereby protecting the land further out. We'd never have enough funding to buy all of the open space but using the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), more distant lands could be protected from urbanization pressures based on the lack of urban services.

With the help of the early 1970s environmental awakening, by the late 1970s the Board was pro open space but funding was scarce and creating the full encircling buffer zone was difficult. Over the years we did expand the park's holdings from about 800 acres in 1970 to over 43,000 acres when I retired. Term limits were adopted for the Board of Supervisors in 1992 and I thought I'd lost the opportunity to help implement our permanent protection scheme.

Susan Wilson and I were the parks liaison supervisors for much of that time, with Dianne McKenna assuming that role in the 1990s. She and I were concerned that, as we all aged out, a new board would go back to the old development-oriented ways. So, with the great leadership of the Committee for Green Foothills, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women and others we were able to resurrect the old County Open Space District concept and it passed!

That board, staff and supporters have proven how right it was to continue to fight for independent control of the open space efforts.

The Open Space Authority has become the focus for environmental action in our valley.

**In Memory of Rod Diridon Sr.**  
**Feb 1939 - April 2026**

