

Mark West Creek Regional Park & Preserve General Information & Background

How can I visit Mark West Creek Regional Park & Open Space Preserve?

Mark West Creek Regional Park & Preserve is open for “park preview” days from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month, as conditions allow. There is no cost to attend and no charge for parking, but we ask you to sign up in advance via our activities calendar at SonomaCountyParks.org.

What can I do during the public preview days?

You are invited to hike approximately 7 miles of trails and ranch roads, most of which were developed by the previous landowners. These routes offer an overview of the rugged, natural landscape, which includes Mark West Creek and its tributaries, meadows, oaks, redwoods, firs, and scenic views. Trail difficulty ranges from easy to strenuous. Parks staff and volunteers are on site to help orient you and offer information about the land. Mountain biking, horseback riding and access to the creek are not allowed.

Are drinking water and restrooms available?

Please bring your own water. Some drinking water will be available in coolers at the trailhead, but supply is limited. Portable restrooms and hand-washing stations are at the trailhead.

Can I hike with my dog?

Dogs on leash are welcome for the park preview days. It’s crucial that you keep dogs on leash and on the trails to protect wildlife habitat. Please bring water for your dog and please dispose of pet waste. As we develop the park master plan, we will study the potential to allow dogs when the park opens.

Are there accessible areas for people who use wheelchairs?

Yes, approximately 1 mile of new trail meets proposed federal accessibility standards to the extent possible at this time. This unpaved trail connects the parking area to an existing network of ranch roads and trails, where some sections do not meet accessibility standards. Accessible parking spaces (unpaved but leveled and signed), picnic tables, portable restrooms and hand-washing stations also are available. When arriving, ask staff to direct you to accessible parking.

When will the park be open daily?

Sonoma County Ag + Open Space transferred the nearly 1,200 acres comprising the park and preserve to Regional Parks in late 2018. Regional Parks is embarking on an approximately five-year master planning process to allow for regular public access. That process will determine how the park can be used for recreation and how natural resources are managed. The park can open daily when the master plan is completed.



What is significant about this park and preserve?

Sonoma County sought to conserve this land because of its natural resources, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and potential for outdoor recreation. Although the site is close to Santa Rosa, its natural setting makes it feel worlds away. The landscapes include grasslands, chaparral, forest and riparian areas along Mark West, Porter and Mill Creeks, all of which provide habitat for wildlife like mountain lions, bears and bobcats as well as threatened and endangered species like coho salmon and steelhead trout. The parkland adjoins other conservation areas to form 4,500 acres of continuous protected land in the Mark West Creek corridor.

Who owned the land before it belonged to Regional Parks?

Several families owned this land before willingly selling their parcels to Sonoma County Ag + Open Space for permanent protection as a park and preserve. Ag + Open Space worked with the landowners for over 15 years, investing nearly \$23 million in local tax dollars. The agency purchased the first 340 acres from the Cresta family in 2007, and over the next decade, purchased five more parcels – 737 acres across two parcels from the McCullough family, 47 acres from the Wendle family, and an additional 68 acres across two parcels from the Cresta family.

What features will the park include when it opens to the public?

As Regional Parks prepares a master plan for the park's future uses, planners will study recreation and conservation opportunities and ask for public feedback on possible park amenities. Hiking, biking, horseback riding and environmental education programs are likely future uses.

Did this property burn in the Tubbs Fire?

Yes, much of the park and preserve burned in the October 2017 wildfire. The park preview days provide an opportunity to see how natural landscapes recover from wildfire. Because this landscape is adapted to fire, you will notice coast redwoods, bays and other forest species re-sprouting and continuing to provide habitat for native species. The stream corridors largely avoided damage from the fire.

How is the county paying for the park's development?

Sonoma County Ag + Open Space is providing three years of local sales tax funding to pay for the initial costs of planning, operating and maintaining the park and preserve. Regional Parks will provide longer-term funding for planning, operations, maintenance, and public programs with revenue from Measure M, a 1/8-cent sales tax for parks approved by county voters in 2018.

How can I be involved in park stewardship?

Regional Parks will organize opportunities for volunteers to help with trail building, vegetation management or trail patrols. To learn about future opportunities, email Volunteer Coordinator John Ryan at john.ryan@sonoma-county.org.

Learn More at SonomaCountyParks.org

