



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Parks, Open Spaces, and Cultural Services

Subject: Approve Name for New South County Park

Meeting Date: June 10, 2025

Formal Title: Approve Valle del Pájaro as the name for the new South County Park at 188 Whiting Road, as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission

Recommended Actions

Approve Valle del Pájaro as the name for the new South County Park at 188 Whiting Road, as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Executive Summary

The Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services Department (Parks) is working to open and activate the new South County Park located at 188 Whiting Road. As part of this effort, a naming committee and Park Project team were formed to narrow down the options of what the new park should be named. The options were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission on May 12, 2025 with the recommendation of Valle del Pájaro County Park.

Discussion

On August 22, 2023, the Board approved the acquisition of a new 38.5-acre park in South County located at 188 Whiting Road. As part of opening and activation, the naming of the park is one of the key milestones.

Parks created a process for this effort that would be reflective of the current residents' values while recognizing the indigenous peoples existence and culture as well. It provided a structure for collaboration between the community and stakeholder engagement which led to the recommendation of the name presented today.

A naming committee was established to guide the naming process of the new South County Park. This committee included: community partners, key stakeholders, and County Parks staff. The committee's role was to establish naming criteria, support community engagement efforts, and evaluate name options based on defined values and priorities.

Simultaneously, Parks initiated a project based on the 2024 Parks Strategic Plan Goals, led by County Park Friends, to ensure that young adults, particularly from underrepresented communities, were engaged in shaping the identity of the park while helping them to develop leadership skills.

Through this process a training program was developed as part of the park project which aimed to prepare youth to administer community surveys; help them to engage stakeholders; provide support to the naming committee with input; and allow them to participate directly with name selections. Through this effort, the youth participants identified the following top priorities for the park name: community empowerment, peaceful or serene tone, connection to the natural environment and Spanish language representation.

The naming committee defined evaluation criteria focusing on local geography and natural features; historical and cultural relevance; community values; and inclusivity. Drawing from youth input, stakeholder contributions, and community feedback, a broad list of names was generated. This list was refined using the established criteria resulting in a shortlist of six finalists' names. The six names were presented to students in grades K-8 at Alianza Elementary school. From there, students engaged in learning about the park, provided feedback, and expressed enthusiasm for the naming process.

From the student feedback and stakeholder evaluation, the top three names were presented to the Parks Commission. The name Valle Del Pájaro was selected by the Parks Commission and is now recommended for final approval by the Board of Supervisors.

Parks requests the Board approve the name Valle Del Pájaro for the new South County Park, reflecting the community's voice, cultural heritage, and the natural environment of the area.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact from the recommended action.

Strategic Initiatives

Equity Framework - County Facilities & Infrastructure, Plans, Policies & Budgets,
Communications & Education, Community Voices & Partnership
Operational Plan - Sustainable Environment, Operational Excellence
Climate Action - Natural & Working Lands, Wildfire Prevention

Submitted By:

Jeff Gaffney, Director of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.