



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Increase in Mountain Lion Sightings at Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve Causes District to Adjust Hours**

Los Altos, CA – As of Saturday, January 15, 2016, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is adjusting the hours of Rancho San Antonio County Park and Open Space Preserve due to a concern for public safety in using the preserve in the dark. The new hours will align with the hours at the District's other preserves open to the public and will be from ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.

Located at 22500 Cristo Rey Drive in Cupertino, the nearly 4,000-acre Rancho San Antonio Open Space and the adjoining 290-acre County Park is a popular destination for residents. The District owns the Open Space Preserve and manages the Santa Clara County Park adjacent to it. The gates to the park used to automatically open at 5 am, and the park and preserve were used by early-morning hikers and runners.

On Tuesday, January 12, there was an early morning encounter (a lion approached two runners in the dark) on the Upper Wildcat Canyon Trail, and that trail has been closed. Although the lion was non-threatening, it was the third instance in which it did not immediately flee, and the first in which it approached visitors.

One action, which is recommended by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, is to change preserve hours so that humans have the benefit of visibility to be aware of their surroundings. Accordingly, beginning Saturday a.m., we are changing Rancho's opening hours to be the same as all the rest of the District's preserves – ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset. The Upper Wildcat Canyon Trail from the Upper High Meadow Trail to the Wildcat Loop Trail will remain closed.

Rangers will be on duty beginning 5 a.m. this weekend to inform early morning darkness visitors why the front gates will be open later than usual and to advise them about safety protocols related to lions.

Signage will be posted at *ALL* entrances to Rancho, and Ranger patrol will be proactive in the early dark hours for any visitors that still decide to enter the preserve.

Early next week we anticipate having more specifics, and hopefully action, from the Department of Fish and Wildlife about next steps regarding the lion, such as a lion hazing program with the goal of making the lion more wary of humans.

As a reminder, more than half of California including most of the undeveloped Santa Clara County is prime mountain lion habitat. Mountain lions are solitary and are most active between dusk, dawn, and nighttime. They generally avoid contact with humans. The District offers the following tips to stay safe in mountain lion country: do not hike, bike, or jog alone, do not be on

the trails at dawn, dusk or night, keep a close watch on small children, and do not wear headphones. If you encounter a mountain lion do not approach it, don't turn your back or run, stand tall, face the animal and make noise, without bending over, pick up small children and if attacked, fight back.

The District asks that the public report all encounters or attacks immediately. If a human is attacked by a mountain lion, call 911. If there is a face-to-face encounter, contact a ranger or call the District office at 650-691-1200 during regular business hours. On weekends or after 5 PM on weekdays, call (650) 903-6395.

[Mountain Lion Fact Sheet](#)