



Help Protect The Marks Ranch!

The Marks Ranch is a 797-acre local treasure wedged between Toro Park and the Las Palmas Ranch subdivision. The newly formed group, Citizens to Save Marks Ranch (CSMR) is leading citizens in the fight to keep the current quasi-public land use designation, so that the property does not become part of the sprawling Las Palmas Ranch

subdivision. Marit Evans, CSMR spokesperson and former Monterey County Planning Commissioner, says: "This property should become part of Toro Park, which currently turns away visitors on most every three-day weekend due to overcrowding. With so many new developments along highway 68, the residents of the Toro area and the City of Salinas need increased recreational space. The Marks Ranch provides the perfect opportunity to increase the size of Toro Park."

The current land use designation for the Marks Ranch does not allow residential development. Last fall, the Fletcher Company, which has an option to purchase the property, notified the County of its desire to build 275 houses on the Marks Ranch. In a letter to the County, Michael Fletcher said that he and his company "would like the entire (Marks Ranch) property to be considered as Residential within the scope of the updated General Plan." Marit Evans says: "The county planning staff and the Board of Supervisors will hear from us loud and clear: **THE COUNTY MUST NOT CHANGE THE GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION OF THE MARKS RANCH TO STIMULATE MORE SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT!**"

The Marks family gave the Ranch to St. John's College, but the land was specifically restricted for use as an educational campus. Areas not built on for educational purposes were to be left in their natural state. Subsequent court proceedings have clouded the original intention. The Marks family also donated much of the property that is today Toro Park. Ed De Mars, retired Monterey County Planning Director, worked with Herman Marks to preserve the Ranch and create Toro Park. De Mars says, "We wouldn't have Toro Park if it wasn't for Herman Marks. Herman worked hard to get the cooperation of the other owners to lock up all the land needed for the Park. Herman would be rolling in his grave if he knew what was going on with the Marks Ranch."

CSMR needs volunteers to collect signatures for an advisory petition to the Monterey County Supervisors, urging them to **SAVE MARKS RANCH!** If you can help, contact Chris Fitz at LandWatch Monterey County, 422-9390, cfitz@mclw.org.