



Wild Cherry Canyon

A Jewel of the California Coast

Photo: Studio 101 West/Dennis Swanson

“IT IS THE KIND OF PLACE YOU WISH YOU COULD SPEND ALL your time – 180-degree views of the Pacific and rolling green hills. On the property it feels like you’re miles away from urban life and its hassles – you smell the grasses and the ocean, you hear the wind through the grand old oaks, and you see acres and acres of unspoiled landscape.”

– Kara Blakeslee, Wild Cherry Canyon Project Director*

Wild Cherry Canyon is a spectacular stretch of undeveloped yet unprotected coastal property along California’s Central Coast. Comprising approximately 2,400 acres, its scenic views stretch over 180 degrees, from the hills of the San Luis Range to sweeping vistas of the Pacific Ocean across San Luis Bay. Avila Beach, Olde Port Beach, and the San Luis Pier are among the sites visible from the property, as well as the rugged woodland hills and rocky outcroppings of the interior of the property. Recognized as one of California’s outstanding conservation areas, it lies within San Luis Obispo County, northwest of the town of Avila Beach and within the region known as the Irish Hills.

The American Land Conservancy is working with numerous partners and supporters to protect the Wild Cherry Canyon property.* The appraised purchase price is \$24 million. ALC plans to acquire and subsequently transfer the property to the state to be added to California’s state park system. Without this cooperative effort, the land would be a prime target for development. As one of the few properties in the Irish Hills directly accessible by road, it could easily accommodate stunning rural home sites – a powerful attraction to developers, especially as California’s population pressures and land values increase.

The preservation value of Wild Cherry Canyon is increased by its adjacency to the pristine and undeveloped Hibberd Preserve, owned by the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County. The 1,600-acre preserve will be transferred to the state as well, making the new park unit a full 4,000 acres. The area is surrounded by some 60,000 acres of additional protected lands that act as a buffer to help protect the wildlife habitat and natural resources of the area.

Those natural resources not only add to the beauty of the property, but are important to numerous plant and animal species. Coastal bluffs, terraces, and inland areas support coastal scrub, coast live oak woodlands, wildflower fields, and maritime chaparral. Within the property, the watersheds of Wild Cherry Canyon, upper Harford Canyon Creek, the headwaters of Rattlesnakes Canyon Creek, and the eastern half of the Upper Pecho Creek support aquatic species, including threatened California red-legged frogs, and riparian forests that are prime habitat for neotropical migratory birds.

Managed by California State Parks, Wild Cherry Canyon would also provide multiple recreation opportunities to visitors. One of the most exciting possibilities is a 15- to 20-mile extension of the California Coastal Trail, stretching from the existing boundaries of Montaña de Oro State Park to Avila Beach. Hiking trails, camping areas, and other amenities could also be developed.

Please visit www.alcnet.org for more information about ALC’s efforts to protect Wild Cherry Canyon and find out how you can support this exciting conservation opportunity.

* Project was formerly known as Avila Ranch



Photo: ©Stockphoto.com/Neta Degany

GET OUTSIDE!

Wild Cherry Canyon is surrounded by an array of recreational opportunities. The property overlooks the town of Avila Beach and the tranquil waters of Olde Port Beach. This protected cove provides great access for beach activities and boating. Sea kayaking is available for all skill levels, and wildlife watchers can find sea otters, harbor seals, and sea lions. Bikers, hikers, and runners can enjoy the Bob Jones City to the Sea Bike Trail, which starts on the north end of the Avila Beach townsite and winds through the woods along San Luis Obispo Creek.

Just north of Avila Beach lies Montaña de Oro State Park, one of California’s largest state parks. This park includes over 8,000 acres of rugged cliffs, secluded sandy beaches, canyons, and hills, including 1,347-foot Valencia Peak. Here hikers, bikers, and equestrians can enjoy the park’s many trails. Facilities include both drive-in and hike-in campsites, as well as day use areas.

Check out www.slostateparks.com/thingstodo for more outdoor activities on the California Central Coast.

