

20 YEAR IN 20 REVIEW



*Increasing Equitable Access to Nature
in a Year of Challenges and Successes*

MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ANDREA MACKENZIE



The Year 2020 brought into sharp focus, the inextricable link between planetary stewardship, climate change, health equity, and social justice (and most recently, even the resilience of our democratic systems). A “collision of crises” has awakened us to the realization that life is fragile, the planet is fragile, democracy is fragile, and everything is connected. The world-renowned primatologist, conservationist and activist Jane Goodall said, “The same disrespect for the natural world that caused COVID-19 is also driving the climate crisis.”

In March 2020, in the midst of a global health emergency and shelter in place orders brought on by COVID-19, the Open Space Authority shifted to operating as a virtual government agency while keeping its open space preserves open as an essential service to the public to increase the resilience of people and communities. This unprecedented pivot required significant teamwork, adaptation, and innovation at all levels of the agency. In 2020, we experienced a tremendous increase in visitation at our open space preserves, with over 635,000 visits, up from 325,000 in 2019 as our open space technicians rose to the challenge of providing an essential public service during COVID-19. Our creative staff started to produce virtual environmental programming and events to ensure all people could have safe access to the benefits of nature while COVID restrictions were in place. And the realization grew that now, more than ever, time spent in nature is essential to the health and well-being of people and communities.

In 2020, the Authority’s conservation work did not take a pause; in fact, the agency invested in the protection of an additional 2,209 acres of open space. The Authority continued to demonstrate its effectiveness at significantly leveraging its existing benefit assessment and parcel tax revenues of \$12 million annually to attract millions of dollars of additional funds by partnering with state and local agencies, non-profit conservation partners and foundations to complete high priority land acquisition, restoration, public access planning, and open space improvement projects. Building on the landmark acquisition of almost 1,000 acres in North Coyote Valley in November 2019, the Authority and its partners worked tirelessly in 2020 to protect additional natural and working lands in the greater Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area, including the 1,861-acre Tilton Ranch and began planning efforts to realize the Coyote Valley conservation vision. Working closely with its public and private conservation and funding partners, the Authority moved closer in 2020 to assembling a seamless network of protected open space and agricultural land connecting Morgan Hill to South San Jose along the Fisher Creek floodplain and providing safe passage for wildlife moving between the Santa Cruz Mountains and Diablo Range.

The Authority and Santa Clara County also approved a \$5 million partnership to purchase and preserve agricultural lands in the Coyote Valley and San Martin areas and acquired (jointly with the CA Department of Conservation) an agricultural conservation easement over the 97-acre Frantoio Grove Olive Orchard in San Martin, north of Gilroy.

In August 2020, the CZU and SCU Lightning Complex Fires burned on both sides of Silicon Valley and were unprecedented in size and intensity. Scientists have warned for years about the potential for such catastrophic events as the effects of climate change take hold. Fire suppression over many decades coupled with climate change effects on temperature and precipitation have created tinderbox conditions in the state and region’s wildland areas. To mitigate the most serious effects of intense climate-induced fires, we must work together going forward to deter development in the wildland-urban interface and implement adaptive approaches to managing fire in our forests, woodlands, and grasslands that buffer our suburban and urban areas.

And finally, a silver lining of 2020 saw the overwhelming approval of Measure T on the November 2020 ballot, which passed with 81% of the vote, one of the highest passage rates of countywide parks and open space measures nationally. This mandate made clear just how much Santa Clara County voters value protecting open space and having access to it, even (and especially) during a global pandemic and economic recession. With the generous support of voters, Measure T will provide ongoing funding for protecting open space, wildlife habitat, water resources, and local farmland; will support the management and stewardship of over 28,000 acres of open space; and will provide greater opportunities for equitable access to nature for all.

In light of the serious crises that 2020 threw at us, we at the Authority are dedicated to being part of innovative nature-based solutions to some of the most consequential challenges of our time. Only by working together thoughtfully, inclusively, and with a long-term planning horizon can we ensure current and future generations will inherit a livable planet. The time for action is now.

Andrea MacKenzie

YEAR AT A GLANCE

635,000
annual preserve
visitors



*nearly doubling last year's
visitation*

\$1.1M awarded to
16 community
projects

*as part of the
Urban Grant Program,*



*leveraging an estimated
\$1.1M in matching funds*

81% of voters
approved Measure T



*placing it among the
top 10 conservation
tax measures
nationwide in the
past 30 years*

28,000 acres
of open space and working
lands now protected &
managed



\$2.4M of Authority
funds

used to leverage

\$37M

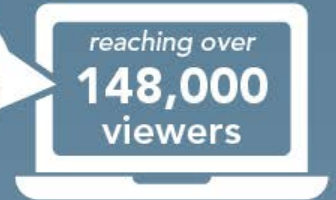
*for restoration &
resilience of open space*



83 virtual nature
programs



*reaching over
148,000
viewers*



2,209 new acres
protected

in and adjacent to

Coyote Valley



800+ hours

*of work provided by
Trail Master volunteers
to ensure preserve safety & access*



INITIATIVES



Equitable Access to Nature

This year has been a time of unprecedented change and transition in our nation as society faces a multitude of profound dangers -- some new to us, and some as old as our nation itself. From the horrific acts of violence and racial injustice we witnessed earlier this year that galvanized the public, to the broad threats to safety borne from the global pandemic and climate crises, we have seen vivid examples of the inequities deeply rooted in our society and the tragedy that inevitably results.

Whether it is police brutality, climate change threat, or COVID-19 vulnerability, people of color are at the greatest risk and pay the greatest price. It is our responsibility, as an agency dedicated to protecting nature and connecting our community to it, to ensure we do so equitably and that everyone in our vast jurisdiction has access to the open spaces we manage, and the benefits nature provides.

In August of this year, we released Phase II of our Understanding Our Community report, which has helped illuminate the ways in which the Authority and community organizations can focus nature-based investments to help those most in need. The second phase of the report expanded on what we learned from the initial release in 2016, to identify "Deep Engagement Communities," the communities that stand to benefit the most from improved access to nature. This data will be used to better guide the Authority's efforts to optimize the benefits that nature access can provide. One such effort, with the support of Measure Q funding, has been the continued investment in nature through the Urban Grant Program. You can learn more about the over \$1 million in grants awarded in 2020 below. Established in 2016, and informed by the Understanding Our Community reports, the grant program was designed to empower community organizations by providing them with the funding they need to support the communities in which they operate.

Further, access to nature has been especially valuable in navigating the COVID-19 restrictions. Since the pandemic began, it has been the Authority's top priority to keep our preserves safe and open to the public to get outside and combat the many negative results of the social isolation most are experiencing. This year, the visitation to our preserves nearly doubled, growing from 325,000 to 635,000. Supporting this unprecedented demand was certainly challenging, however we persevered with the knowledge that our community needed us more than ever before. We also transitioned our event programming, with the help of many community partners, including Richard Tejada from Saved By Nature and artist and naturalist Edward Rooks, to being entirely virtual, improving equitable access to nature by providing our community with the opportunity to experience nature from the safety of one's own home. This programming varied considerably, with events like Lunchtime Tai Chi with Morning Crane Healing Arts Center, bilingual nature walks, a virtual summer camp, a guided nature meditation, and much more. These virtual platforms provided us with the opportunity to extend access to our programming beyond the confines of physical location, scheduling conflicts, and social distancing requirements, as people now could participate in our programs wherever and whenever they pleased. This transition allowed us to provide nature access to a much larger audience and bring it to where it may never have been before. With 83 total programs, 2,000 live participants, and over 144,000 viewers reached through social media, our programming extended far beyond Santa Clara Valley and was more accessible than ever. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, we will continue working to provide equitable access to nature.



Coyote Valley

The protection of Coyote Valley, one of California's and the Open Space Authority's top conservation priorities, has dramatically expanded from the progress made last year. In August, the Authority kicked off a robust community engagement effort that aims to be inclusive of all the communities that can benefit from this landscape. We sent out our Community Engagement Questionnaire to learn more about what makes Coyote Valley special to our residents.

The feedback we received from this survey will be integrated into our North Coyote Valley Conservation Area master plan, formally launching in 2021. Respondents reflected on their profound appreciation for the beauty and wonder of the valley, as well as their feelings of stewardship and responsibility over the land. "When I drop out of south San Jose from Santa Theresa Blvd. and into Coyote Valley, it is an absolutely stunning view," said one survey respondent. "It nearly takes my breath away."

Despite the numerous obstacles we've faced throughout the year, protected land in Coyote Valley has continued to grow, with two new acquisitions increasing the acreage protected. In August of 2020, the Authority, in partnership with Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and funding from the California State Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board, completed its purchase of a 235-acre parcel in the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area. This property is the last of three key properties comprising the 937-acre portion of the Area, which was acquired in 2019 through an innovative partnership between POST, the Authority, and the City of San Jose. Tilton Ranch, protected through a partnership between the Authority, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, Santa Clara County Parks, and POST, provides a critical open space gateway between Coyote Valley and the Santa Cruz Mountains. This historic 1,861-acre ranch located in Morgan Hill will benefit both human and natural communities.

New legislation passed in 2020 as well that will help protect Coyote Valley and the wildlife inhabiting it. One bill, SB 940, will work to preserve the agricultural integrity of Santa Clara Valley, and support California's climate goals, while helping the City of San Jose address the housing crisis. Another, AB 1788, banned the use of certain rodenticides that have threatened mountain lions in Coyote Valley, as well as a multitude of other wildlife species. Both bills were signed into law by Governor Newsom at the end of September and are a major victory for Coyote Valley. In late October, the City of San Jose's Envision San Jose 2040 Task Force, helping the city update its General Plan, overwhelmingly voted to recommend to the City Council that they should preserve Coyote Valley as open space for wildlife and agricultural use. This vote made clear the strong support in our community for securing Coyote Valley's protection moving forward.

New research and studies have been conducted throughout Coyote Valley as well. Laguna Seca, Santa Clara County's largest freshwater wetland, was permanently protected last year with the Authority's acquisition of the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area. In February, the Authority released a video on the benefits a restored wetland can provide the Santa Clara Valley.



Measure T Overwhelmingly Passed with 81%

On November 3rd, Measure T, the Open Space, Wildlife Habitat, Clean Water, and Increased Public Access Measure, was passed by 81% of voters, securing ongoing dedicated funding for the Open Space Authority to protect open spaces for healthy lands, healthy people, and healthy communities. This vote falls within the top 10 highest passage rates of countywide measures nationwide and echoes the importance and value of these open spaces to our community.

Measure T renews the Authority's Measure Q, an annual \$24 parcel tax passed by voters in 2014. This funding, which generates approximately \$8 million each year, has been integral to the Authority's work. Since the passage of Measure Q in November 2014, the Authority has contributed \$15.2 million to protect 10,346 acres worth a total of over \$154 million, leveraging the Authority's funds by over tenfold. Guided by the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint, the Authority's 30-year strategic plan to preserve the most important open space lands and natural resources remaining in our jurisdiction, the Authority, with the support of Measure Q, has efficiently and effectively invested in high-priority, high-impact projects to improve our quality of life.

Measure T will provide ongoing funding to support the protection of open space, wildlife habitat, water resources, and local farmland; operation and management of the Authority's growing system of open space preserves and support additional and more equitable access to nature for the diverse communities within the Authority's jurisdiction. Some of these projects are already getting underway, such as the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area Master Plan that will include significant public engagement, as well as multiple public access projects, like at Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve and the Blair Ranch at Rancho Cañada Del Oro Open Space Preserve. This funding will also allow us to continue to provide up to 25% of the funding to our Urban Grant Program, and to manage and steward over 28,000 acres of open space to benefit wildlife, our communities, and the planet.

Protecting open spaces and nature is crucial for the numerous benefits it provides, whether it be physical or mental wellbeing for visitors, wildlife habitat and watershed protection, or building resilience to climate change. This year we have seen the necessity of access to nature for the mental health of our community with the widespread isolation experienced due to the pandemic. "Now more than ever, the protection of nature in and near our urban communities is vital for public health. During COVID-19, we've seen a tremendous increase in visitation at our open space preserves," said Andrea Mackenzie, Open Space Authority General Manager. "The voters have made clear that they consider access to parks and open space essential to their physical and mental health." Thanks to the voters, we can continue investing in the wellbeing of our community and work to further improve our ability to protect the natural integrity of the Santa Clara Valley while providing access to nature for future generations.



Investing in Nature

The Authority has continued its investment in nature in communities through its two active grant programs that, together, have provided a total investment of nearly \$13 million for 74 different projects.

The Urban Grant Program directly supports urban projects to address the needs of the communities in the Authority's jurisdiction. Launched in 2016 and funded by Measure Q, this program was created as part of the Authority's goal to remove barriers to accessing nature in Santa Clara Valley's urban core. It is designed to empower organizations operating on-the-ground in the communities they serve, making them the most effective at creating equitable access to nature.

To date, Urban Grant Program has invested over \$3 million in over 50 projects to green our neighborhoods, seed community gardens, feed families, create parks, and connect children and families to nature through environmental education programs. Divided into Small and Large Grants, the program provides a variety of opportunities for community projects to be supported. The 2020 grant cycle closed this year, with over \$200,000 awarded to the small grant recipients, and \$875,000 awarded to the large grant recipients. One small grant recipient, Sacred Heart Community Service, received nearly \$40,000 for their program, La Mesa Verde, dedicated to promoting food justice and healthy food systems. "We are working to provide equitable access to healthy food in San Jose and cultivate leaders in this mission," said Roberto Gil, a Director at La Mesa Verde. "And the funding from this grant will help us achieve this goal." The Guadalupe River Park Conservancy was one of the large grant recipients for their program, "Outdoor Field Trips," to provide nature access to children in Title 1 schools and special needs groups. "This funding will support our outdoor environmental education programs to allow our youth to experience the benefits of nature and see how resilient it can be - even in the middle of a city," said Jason Su, the Executive Director of the Conservancy. "We are so grateful for what the Authority allows us to do."

The 20% Funding Program, created in 1997, allocates 20% of the Authority's capital funding annually to participating cities and the County of Santa Clara to be used to support urban projects. Eligible projects for grant funding include land acquisitions, environmental restoration, and open space improvements. This year, Sycamore Terrace, an undeveloped plot of land initially acquired to become housing, was preserved as a site for future habitat restoration and recreation. Thanks to the Authority's grant, the City of San Jose was able to transfer the parcel's full appraised value of over \$1.2 million to the Housing Department's Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Asset Fund to be used to create affordable housing in a more suitable place.



PROJECTS



LAND ACQUISITIONS

Land Acquisitions

In 2020, the Authority grew the expanse of open spaces it protects by 2,209 acres.

NORTH COYOTE VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA

The Authority completed the acquisition of 235 acres of the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area in August. Bisected by Fisher Creek, this property is flooded frequently and supports riparian vegetation, oak woodland habitat, and wetlands and marshes. This area also provides a landscape linkage for far-ranging and rare, threatened, and endangered species, allowing them to travel across Coyote Valley between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range.

- Preserved: 235 acres
- Partners: Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), California State Coastal Conservancy, California Wildlife Conservation Board
- Cost: \$16,000,000

TILTON RANCH

The historic 1,861-acre Tilton Ranch was acquired by the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency in partnership with the Authority, Santa Clara County Parks, and POST in early October of this year, significantly expanding the region's network of protected lands. This acquisition was funded, in part, by the Priority Conservation Area Grant the Authority was awarded in 2019 by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to support conservation projects. The property is adjacent to Coyote Valley, one of California's most important conservation areas, and moves us closer to creating a permanent greenbelt between the Cities of San Jose and Morgan Hill.



- Preserved: 1,861 acres
- Partners: Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, Santa Clara County Parks, POST
- Cost: \$18,051,700
- Funders: California Wildlife Conservation Board, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, POST, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, Santa Clara County Parks

FRANTOIO GROVE CONSERVATION EASEMENT

In November, the Authority purchased an Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) that permanently protected a 97-acre property in the San Martin region of Santa Clara County that includes a 30-acre olive grove, known as the Frantoio Grove. This property will now remain productive farmland and is protected from development. The Authority acquired the ACE with a grant from the California Strategic Growth Council, and California Department of Conservation's Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program (SALC), created to support agricultural practices in the state and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by preventing the conversion of farmland into urban development.

The SALC program is also supported with funds from California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities. The transaction also leverages funding allocated to the Authority by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) recently approved by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors for the purchase of agricultural easements. This purchase supports the State's, County's, and Authority's larger goal to protect local agriculture per the Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan. This SALC-funded agricultural conservation easement is the first of its kind in Santa Clara County, and effectively integrates both business interests and ecological benefits. "I've been here for years, and seen efforts like this made in the past, and now it's finally done in a way that makes sense for the landowner," said Jeff Martin, owner of Frantoio Grove. "This program feels exactly like what I've been waiting for – it opened a door that I could walk into."

Preserved: 97 acres

Partners: California Strategic Growth Council, California Department of Conservation, and Santa Clara County

Cost: \$3,965,000

In December of this year, the Authority also received an additional SALC grant of \$1.8 million, with funding from California Climate Investments, for an upcoming purchase of 60 acres of prime farmland in Coyote Valley. The acquisition will be finalized in 2021.



HEALING THE LAND

Healing the land

In addition to the Authority's mission to conserve and protect open spaces in the Santa Clara Valley, it also consistently engages in efforts to restore land that has been changed or has deteriorated with years of neglect or development prior to its protection by the Authority. This year, although there were many challenges, the effort continued.

PAJARO RIVER AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

In September, the Authority began its planning of the Pajaro River Habitat Restoration project to help protect the Pajaro Valley's integrity as a critical wildlife linkage between the Diablo and Santa Cruz mountain ranges. This project was funded with grants from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Restoration work will include enhancing the floodplains to improve water quality and create opportunities for habitat downstream, conducting research on the riparian ecosystem, and expanding the riparian corridor.

- Partners: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, Point Blue Conservation Science
- Cost: \$379,394 grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and \$210,412 grant from the California department of Fish and Wildlife

Another project was kicked off in February of this year at the Authority's Pajaro River Agricultural Preserve as part of a five-year effort to improve water quality in the Pajaro watershed. The Authority, with around \$38,000 of funding from the U.S. EPA through the Santa Cruz Resource Conservation District, partnered with the non-profit Point Blue Conservation Science to host 72 third graders from Gilroy's Rucker Elementary School that helped plant a variety of native and climate-resilient species along the riverbank. Native hedgerows like the one planted by the students have over a dozen benefits, like improving water quality, attracting pollinators, providing wildlife habitat, serving as windbreaks, providing erosion protection and weed control, and more.

- Partner: Point Blue Conservation Science, U.S. EPA, Santa Cruz Resource Conservation District
- Cost: \$38,000 from U.S. EPA and the Santa Cruz Resource Conservation District



FISHER'S BEND

Fisher's Bend is another site where the Open Space Authority is partnering to complete restoration work. The Fisher Creek Restoration Project began this June and was created to restore critical riparian habitat along Fisher Creek, which flows through Coyote Valley before its confluence with Coyote Creek. These creek beds have long been neglected and polluted yet are crucial to the movement of a multitude of species. The project, made possible by a grant from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, kicked off with the restoration team from the San Jose Conservation Corps clearing invasive species and trash from the creek. Planting efforts led by Point Blue and Go Native, to plant over 1,300 native plants will provide the wildlife and habitat with a variety of benefits. These species will offer natural covers for animals travelling through the corridor, flowers to attract pollinators to the Creek, and a multitude of hardy species to help increase biodiversity and climate resilience.



- Partners: POST, Point Blue Conservation Science, Go Native, Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Cost: \$440,000 grant from the Regional Water Quality Control Board

In tandem with the restoration work being done by the Authority, there has been a consistent, dedicated effort in pest and resource management across the preserves. Threats to each location vary dramatically, while some are shared across the jurisdiction, so much of the work this year has involved mapping invasive plants on all the properties managed by the Authority, identifying the invasive species present, and tracking the work and treatments being done on the land. Often involving hand-pulling plants from the ground, a fruitful and collaborative effort by staff and volunteers have minimized the spread of species like stinkwort, one of the most aggressive invasive species throughout the Authority's preserves.

With its resourcefulness and diligence, the Authority was able to continue a high standard of maintenance work throughout the pandemic, while also accounting for the extraordinary demand at the preserves when visits nearly doubled. While demand for the Field Team's attention and expertise was so high, we utilized volunteers and administrative staff to help supplement their work. In this effort, we leveraged the Authority's Volunteer Program, which adapted conventional roles to have volunteers work in groups no larger than six people to allow for social distancing.



The SCU Complex fires that shocked the state in August also created another challenge for the Authority's land management duties. While we were spared much of the incredible destruction that took place throughout the region, our Diablo Foothills preserve was burned completely over. There are a variety of ecological benefits that fires provide to the land, however they also create an opportunity for invasive species to grow as the soil is broken down. In response to this, much of the effort in the months following the fires was dedicated to containing the spread of these species by spreading straw and combatting erosion to support the soil, and reinstalling cattle fencing.

Volunteers are involved in other aspects of land management as well, like through our Trail Masters program. The year-long course includes six classroom sessions on the technical aspects of preserve operations including topics like the creation, maintenance, and repair of natural trail structures. Trainees also complete more than a dozen hands-on workdays incorporating peer-to-peer learning and instruction in the field with our Open Space Technicians. Graduates of the program continue supporting trail maintenance and fieldwork alongside Authority staff.

"I have learned so much, from tending to and creating trails, from volunteering as trail patrol and trail steward. There is one word that comes to mind and sums up my time spent with this program: Pride. It gives me so much pride to work with such awesome people, people who love the outdoors and the trails as much as I do. The learning never stops and being able to give back to the preservation of our outdoor world is very fulfilling."

– Natalia Anderson, Volunteer Trail Master

Trail Master volunteers are active in our preserves on average two to three days a month assisting staff in all levels of preserve maintenance and operations. The Authority kept this program active through 2020 using safety protocols, user-safe guidelines for tool sanitation, and limiting the number of people in any work site. The Authority will offer the training program again in December of 2021 and community members looking for a deeper knowledge of parks and natural resource management are invited to participate in this program.



We also work to support and heal the lands of Santa Clara Valley with our community members and partners. Tanya Diamond, wildlife ecologist and co-principal of Pathways for Wildlife has made strides in supporting our wildlife studies to restore critical habitat. In February of this year, she and her partners at Peninsula Open Space Trust captured a video of a coyote and a badger playing in the Santa Cruz Mountains that drew widespread attention to the area. She has spent much of her career working to support landscape linkages for wildlife, one of the features of Coyote Valley that makes it so important.

We worked with Anna Pascual, as well, to support the community and its wildlife. She is working on wildlife rehabilitation in Morgan Hill at the Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center. In the spring of this year, she worked with the Authority to provide the public with two virtual wildlife education programs about local wildlife and nocturnal animals.

EXPANDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS TO NATURE

Expanded Public Access

COYOTE VALLEY OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

At Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve, the Authority will expand access to nature by improving trail surfacing and creating day use areas and interpretive stations across the Heart's Delight Trail, that look out over the beautiful North Meadow. We began the concept design phase through a \$200,000 grant from Valley Water to develop these accessible improvements. This will allow people with differing mobility capacities to experience a deeper connection to nature within this area of the preserve, providing a peaceful respite from urbanization.



COYOTE RIDGE OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

The Authority advanced the environmental review and design process for public access improvements at Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve. Creating more opportunities for people to connect to nature, Coyote Ridge will provide a unique experience for learning about the region's most sensitive habitats, seeing amazing wildflower displays and spectacular views, hiking new trails, and participating in nature and culture-based education, all within 10 miles of downtown San Jose. We kicked off the next phase of design that will allow us to open the preserve, with construction currently planned for 2022. This project will also open new segments of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, as part of our partnership with the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council.

RANCHO CAÑADA DEL ORO OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

At our much loved Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve, we are taking the first step to providing access to more areas of the preserve through the development of a bridge across Llagas Creek. This is adjacent to the loop trail off the existing parking area at Casa Loma Road and will connect to a new day use area, in a beautiful meadow, adjacent to the creek. Small gathering areas for learning and resting as well as a short loop trail will provide a quiet, accessible space. This area will also become the gateway for future trails to the backcountry portion of the preserve, the former Blair Ranch. We advanced this project's design for the day use and interpretive areas and have completed resource assessments and preliminary bridge design. Construction of this project is currently planned for 2022.





GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good Governance

The Authority remains committed to providing transparency and encouraging active participation from the public, including attendance at committee and Board meetings.

Our Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) is made up of community members representing their districts to be an additional avenue for public input. This year we honor CAC member Jan Hintermeister who resigned after 18 years of dedicated service on the committee. Throughout his time at the Authority, he represented District 3 and served as an advocate for native species preservation and urban habitat restoration, and contributed to the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint, as well as numerous planning and capital improvement projects. His engagement and leadership as a CAC member resonated with the Authority consistently during his years of service and will continue to do so as a docent.

This year, we also welcome two new members to the CAC: District 1 Representative, Tyler Flippo, and District 2 Representative, Frank Cancilla, who will help represent the diverse communities in the Authority's jurisdiction and assist us with authentic public engagement.

This election cycle saw renewed commitments for some of our Board of Directors, and some changes among it as well. Both Alex Kennett and Dorsey Moore were re-elected this November, extending their time with the Authority for an additional four years. This year we honored the service of Sequoia Hall who, after serving on the Board for 16 years, has retired. We are grateful for his years of dedication to the Authority and its mission, and we are excited to welcome Helen Chapman, our newly elected Board member, in his place. As a longtime resident of District 3, she has consistently been involved in land conservation work and served on the Coyote Valley Task Force for seven years. She looks forward to continuing her effort to preserve nature for future generations.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND FIRE RESILIENCE

Climate Resilience and Fire Resilience

Following another record-breaking year of wildfires across California and the entire west coast, including the SCU Complex fire, the second largest in state history, and CZU Complex fire, which together burned nearly 500,000 acres, the Authority's work to preserve open space in the wildland-urban interface is more essential than ever. Well-managed open spaces support wildlife and people by increasing our resilience to climate change and being better prepared for larger and more intense fires as the climate warms. The fires in the Bay Area and across the West highlighted the roles open space plays in times of danger and the need to protect these spaces as buffers to surrounding communities.



As part of the Authority's goal to improve climate resilience of the Santa Clara Valley, we are working with the City of San Jose for the second phase of Climate Smart San Jose, a Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save water, and create a stronger, healthier community. The Authority is helping the city gather data on the potential carbon benefits of protecting and enhancing natural working landscapes in the city.

The Authority is also working to promote sustainable agriculture through the continued application of the Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan in partnership with Santa Clara County. The Agricultural Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in early 2018, was designed to protect local farmland from development and support our vibrant local food economy by utilizing expertise and funding from regional partnerships, mapping agricultural lands optimal for conservation, and engaging the public in these efforts.

One notable implementation of the Agricultural Plan this year was a Memorandum of Understanding with the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors that allocated \$5 million to the Open Space Authority for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements in the Coyote Valley and San Martin regions. Some of this allocation contributed to the October 2020 purchase of the Frantoio Grove Conservation Easement.

FINANCIALS & RECOGNITION

FINANCIALS

INVESTING IN NATURE

The Open Space Authority is primarily funded by a benefit assessment and an annual \$24 parcel tax, with additional funding from grants and gifts. Financial reports and audits are released after the close of each fiscal year, and are available on our website: www.openspaceauthority.org.

RECOGNITION

Our shared successes this year were thanks to the support of our many partners and donors. We'd like to thank these agencies, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and individuals for their support this year. Collaborations, donations, and volunteer time all leverage public funds to help us protect and restore open space for the community to appreciate and enjoy.

To view our current partnerships, please visit our website: www.openspaceauthority.org.

Photo Credits: Cassie Kifer, David Mauk, Derek Neumann, Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, Matt Chesebrough, Alex Roa, Teddy Miller

