

20 YEAR IN 21 REVIEW



Nature is for Everyone

MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ANDREA MACKENZIE



2021 began much like 2020 ended – still relentlessly navigating our way through a global health crisis. As science and technology helped advance our suddenly virtual world into a new hybrid way of living, many turned to the outdoors as a responsible and enriching way to rekindle togetherness.

At the Authority's open space preserves, Field Staff welcomed over half a million visitors throughout the year. Staff were thrilled to see more families and young children exploring open spaces and appreciating the wonders of nature. This value - that nature is for everyone - guides us forward as we strengthen partnerships, programs, and planning to preserve nature and better serve the wonderful diversity of visitors and community members.

Through the creation of a JEDIA (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access) Initiative, the Authority leaned in to defining an agencywide commitment to hold ourselves accountable for creating welcoming and safe spaces for community wellbeing, improved quality of life, and to build a climate-smart future that provides natural benefits to all, including those most vulnerable. This work is ongoing as is our commitment to better serving all residents of our jurisdiction.

To help frame the multiple community and regional benefits of protecting natural and working lands, the Authority published Coyote Valley Water Resource Investment Strategy, and Nature-Based Solutions for a Climate Smart Future. These documents outline how a protected and restored Coyote Valley can help supply clean air and water; lessen flood risks for downstream communities during heavy rainfall; create buffers for local neighborhoods against wildfires; provide access to land for diverse farmers to grow and sell locally and sustainably sourced food; and protect connectivity between over 1 million acres of habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains and Diablo Range for wildlife to thrive.

And to put these words into action, the Open Space Authority helped protect 421 acres of natural and working lands in Coyote Valley through the purchase of land in partnership with the Peninsula Open Space Trust, Santa Clara County, State Department of Conservation, and Valley Transportation Authority. Over 50% of Fisher Creek, an important tributary to Coyote Creek, and 61% of the Fisher Creek floodplain are now permanently protected.

The Authority also received \$16 million in combined State funding for the protection of one of the Bay Area's last remaining undeveloped valley floors in North Coyote Valley, in partnership with the California Natural Resources Agency and the office of Assemblymember Ash Kalra. This includes 300 acres of wetland, critical floodplain, and aquifer recharge areas. The Authority also protected sixty acres of prime farmland in Mid Coyote Valley, long held for development, to create a pilot farm that will seed future climate-smart farms and agricultural practices within the Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area.

In this report, you will see that the year ended on a high note, with a series of historic, unprecedented land use policy actions by the City of San José and Santa Clara County that prioritized open space and agricultural protection over future development in Coyote Valley. Thanks to incredible public engagement, these actions are a clear reflection of the community's support for protecting this last-chance landscape. These coordinated, local land use decisions also represent the bold climate leadership that is shaping Coyote Valley into a statewide model for advancing climate goals statewide via nature-based solutions. At the end of 2021, the California Natural Resources Agency introduced a plan in-the-making, to help implement Governor Newsom's executive order to protect 30% of California's lands and waters by 2030.

I invite you to join the Authority in envisioning a Coyote Valley for all through the upcoming Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Planning effort kicking off in early 2022. Throughout this multi-year process, we are excited and honored to learn from our communities, including local Tribal partners, to develop shared solutions to today's conservation challenges for future generations.

With growing momentum to fight this climate crisis, the time to act is now, and we are proud to continue this essential work of connecting people to nature and protecting our natural and working lands for all, forever.

Andrea Mackenzie

YEAR AT A GLANCE

421
new acres



\$23M+

in funding awarded to
the Open Space
Authority



528,000
annual preserve
visitors



85 virtual & in-person
environmental events
+3 international webinars

432 viewers

attended the *Discovering
Coyote Valley* webinar series,
which featured...



16

expert speakers



22 volunteer land
steward events

to clean up open
space and
restore native
habitat



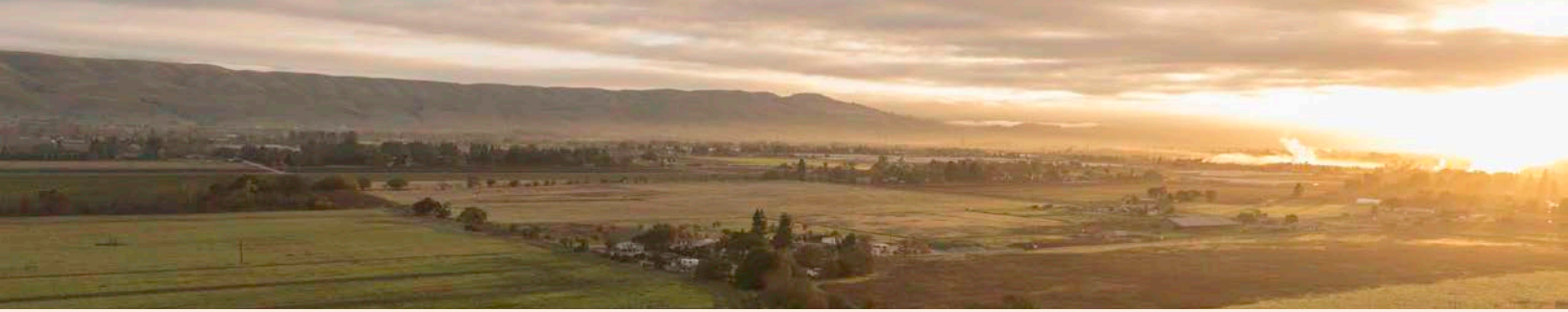
3,339 hours
of service provided by
volunteers



to restore open space and
connect people to nature

INITIATIVES





Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan

The preliminary phases of the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan are underway thanks to Open Space Authority staff and partners over the last year. This multi-year planning effort will create a vision and roadmap for restoring and managing Coyote Valley's conserved lands so they can serve as a vital connection of people and place and support a vibrant ecosystem for generations to come. Coyote Valley offers a rare opportunity to connect over one million acres of core habitat in the surrounding mountains, creating a landscape linkage that allows species to disperse, migrate, and shift ranges in response to climate change. North Coyote Valley contains the largest remaining undeveloped floodplain (or low-lying land next to a creek or river) within San José, providing essential flood risk reduction, clean water supply, and water quality benefits. With California's prolonged droughts and more frequent flooding and wildfires, protecting and restoring Coyote Valley's natural areas is the smartest long-term investment we can make together for the health and sustainability of our region, especially in the face of a changing climate.

In September 2021, the Authority hosted a three-part educational webinar series, *Discovering Coyote Valley*, to tell the story of this last-chance landscape and raise awareness about the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan for these protected lands. Recordings and transcripts of the webinar series are available on the Authority's website.

Input from our diverse communities is critical for the Authority and our partners to determine the future of this landscape, and a robust community engagement strategy for the Master Plan will build upon the Authority's recently updated *Understanding Our Community* reports. This strategy will include dedicated efforts to listen and learn from community members to better understand the unique experiences and needs of residents, and how Coyote Valley's conserved lands can help meet those needs.

The upcoming year will be another big one for Coyote Valley. "Our master plan consultant team, SWCA Environmental Consulting & Engineering, Inc., has been selected, and we have been awarded \$350,000 in funding from the California State Wildlife Conservation Board to support the planning process. We're looking forward to really rolling up our sleeves and diving into planning the future of the valley's over 1,400 acres of conserved lands," said Nick Perry, Coyote Valley Project Manager at the Authority. "We'll be hosting multiple opportunities for the community to engage in the planning process, so we encourage everyone interested to sign up for our mailing list for future announcements."

The Authority also continues developing partnerships with local Indigenous Peoples whose traditional territories span these unceded lands, to engage them in the planning process and make space for Indigenous voices in the conservation, management, and protection of these lands.

During this ongoing planning process, the Authority will continue identifying key connectivity, biodiversity, and resource conservation opportunities, as well as funding to expand efforts to conserve Coyote Valley's natural and working lands.

Expanded access to nature

In 2021, the Authority continued building upon efforts to provide the community with access to Santa Clara Valley's treasured open spaces. Coyote Valley, Sierra Vista, and Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserves all remained open to the public, as they did throughout the whole pandemic, serving over 528,000 visitors, over 60% higher than pre-pandemic numbers. We also noticed more families visiting preserves (compared to pre-pandemic), and we're so glad people are increasingly recognizing the joy that comes from being in nature with family members.

In addition to continuous preserve access, the Authority offered a variety of events for the community. The year began with mostly virtual events due to COVID-19 limitations, with the most popular being The Secret Life of Squirrels, Let's Go Gardening, and Fantastic Ferns, with a combined total of nearly 500 live participants.

After COVID-19 vaccines became more widely available to the community, the Authority resumed in-person events in the summer to allow more opportunities for our community to physically interact with nature and each other. The first in-person events in June gave participants a slow re-introduction, with indirect educational experiences so as not to overwhelm anyone who may have been leaving their "bubble" for the first time. These were invitations to preserves for World Environment Day and Walk After Work, which involved self-guided experiences to appreciate nature.

In July, the Authority partnered with Saved By Nature, Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center (W.E.R.C.), Valley Water, and Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge to offer educational programs to The Boys and Girls Clubs in Santa Clara County for the entire month. Each organization presented programming one day a week, for four weeks, and the Authority's education staff presented to 85 kids at Alum Rock Park, Ed R. Levin County Park, Alviso Marina County Park, and The Boys and Girls Clubs of America at Lake Cunningham Park.

Partnerships with public agencies, community-based organizations, and non-profits also provided multiple opportunities for collaborative outdoor events at open space preserves. The Authority celebrated Latino Conservation Week in July at North Coyote Valley with partners, Saved By Nature, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Latino Outdoors. For Hispanic Heritage Day, the Authority worked with Saved By Nature at Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve, featuring multiple partner booths, tacos cooked on site for participants, followed by a night hike.

The Authority also began a new partnership with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), including free programming for 43 foster kids and children overcoming trauma.

Moving forward, the events team continues offering a variety of both virtual and in-person programs to provide the community with access to nature in whatever way they are comfortable participating. By December 31, the Authority hosted a total of 85 events and served nearly 5,000 people.



Commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

In 2021, the Authority expanded and refined commitments to Tribal engagement and Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (JEDIA) practices.

Tribal Engagement

Engaging and partnering with local Indigenous Peoples is a top priority as the Authority's network of protected lands grows. The Authority is committed to acknowledging and better understanding the complex and violent history experienced by Indigenous Peoples in the region, the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and governing bodies within California, the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and lands managed by the Authority, the role Indigenous Peoples have played in land stewardship practices for millennia, the role they can play in land stewardship practices in the future, and their centuries-long fight for equal opportunity and access to their sacred lands. To better inform this work, the Authority continues building relationships with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area, whose traditional territories reside within the jurisdiction of the Open Space Authority. "By helping the Tribes connect to the land and sacred spaces, we can support their goal to rediscover and employ traditional ecological and cultural knowledge as contemporary land managers and as effective partners in stewardship and education," said Matt Freeman, Assistant General Manager at the Authority.

In October, the Authority's Board of Directors took action to support the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's federal recognition, and officially recognized November as Native American Heritage Month. In November, the Board also received the Authority's official land acknowledgement, which will be used to show respect, take a step toward undoing stories and practices that erase Indigenous Peoples' history, and to recognize the important role of Indigenous Peoples in the present and future of protected lands.

For more background, read statements from Andrea Mackenzie, General Manager of the Authority, acknowledging Indigenous Peoples Day and Native American Heritage Month, and visit our Tribal Partnerships webpage.

Commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (JEDIA)

The Authority is working on promoting JEDIA practices both internally and externally.

In January 2021, the Authority officially created the JEDIA Ad Hoc Committee, comprised of Board and Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) members, that is dedicated to evaluating and improving how the Authority's work integrates and reflects the values of Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. Staff are currently preparing draft commitments based on the work with the committee throughout 2021. The diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments will be presented to the full Board and CAC in early 2022.

Additionally, during the summer, the Board of Directors officially recognized June as Pride Month to demonstrate commitment to the agency's values of creating welcoming, and inclusive outdoor spaces for all, including the LGBTQIA+ Community.

To promote accessibility, updates were made to the Authority's website to meet plain language writing principles, making information easier to read and understand.

Further, the Authority features recurring Equity Lens updates in its newsletter to maintain transparency and provide opportunities for community feedback.

PROJECTS





LAND ACQUISITIONS

Land Acquisitions

The Authority's momentum of protecting open space in Santa Clara Valley continues. By further expanding the network of conserved lands, the Authority is protecting wildlife, contributing to climate resilience for local communities, supporting the local agricultural economy, and promoting the variety of benefits nature has to offer. This year the Open Space Authority was involved in the protection of 421 acres in and around Coyote Valley, of which 150 acres were purchased directly by the Authority for conservation.

TILTON RANCH COMPLEX

On August 9, the Authority, in partnership with the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), the Valley Habitat Agency, and Santa Clara County Parks, finalized the \$5 million purchase of the historic Tilton Ranch Complex. The 60-acre parcel, which includes residential and operational buildings at the heart of the ranch, expands the protection of this historic and environmentally important property and provides important infrastructure for managing the surrounding conserved lands. The Ranch Complex will continue to support agricultural operations and connect the public to the land through recreational access and agricultural and environmental education on the surrounding lands. Additionally, there will be opportunities to learn about the culture and history of the area. The ranch sits on ancestral lands of numerous Indigenous peoples, including the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, who stewarded the land for millennia and still reside in the region. The Authority will be evaluating opportunities for future use and partnerships.

- Preserved: 60 acres
- Partners: Peninsula Open Space Trust, Valley Habitat Agency, Santa Clara County Parks
- Price: \$5,000,000

FISHER CREEK FLOODPLAIN, MID-COYOTE VALLEY PROPERTIES

In July, the Authority purchased 20 acres located on Palm Avenue in Morgan Hill for \$1.78 million. This property was identified in the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint as having high conservation value, especially since a tributary of Fisher Creek runs along its northern boundary, and it has been classified as "Prime Farmland" by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Further, in September, the Authority purchased 10 additional acres at the entrance of the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve. These critical acquisitions together preserve the scenic values of the Preserve and the Palm Avenue corridor in Mid Coyote Valley and preserve the scenic values of the Preserve and the Palm Avenue corridor and maintain critical momentum as the Authority and our partners implement our conservation vision in Coyote Valley.

- Preserved: 30 acres
- Partners: Peninsula Open Space Trust
- Price: \$1,775,000 and \$1,045,000, respectively

PRIME FARMLANDS – MID COYOTE VALLEY

In late October, the Authority purchased 60 acres of prime farmland at Laguna Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard in Mid-Coyote Valley, expanding the network of protected open space throughout Coyote Valley. This acquisition will provide a unique opportunity to demonstrate regenerative and climate-friendly farming practices in partnership with a future grower who will be selected in Summer 2022.



Preserved: 60 acres

Partners: The State of California Department of Conservation through the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation program (SALC), Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), and Santa Clara County Agricultural Preservation Funding.

Price: \$3,050,000

MANAGED LANDS

In March 2021, POST purchased two properties which span 271 acres across the Coyote Valley floor – a 206-acre property connecting the Authority's Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve with two of POST's properties in Mid-Coyote Valley, and a 65-acre property located just south of the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area. Fisher Creek runs through both properties and provides numerous opportunities to protect and restore habitat conditions for many wildlife species that reside in the valley and utilize the creek as a movement corridor. Shortly after the purchase, the Authority took on management of these properties for POST with the intention of owning the properties in the future, subject to securing funding and approval by the Authority's Board. Management will include a variety of responsibilities, including any necessary clean-ups or restoration, oversight of agricultural operations and leases, monitoring invasive species, and general maintenance of the land.

Encompassing about 4,000 linear feet of Fisher Creek, these properties provide ample opportunities for restoration helping to expand a protected greenbelt for wildlife between the Santa Cruz Mountains and Diablo Range, while protecting important water resources and supporting compatible agriculture, bringing us one step closer to achieving Coyote Valley's conservation goals.

STATE FUNDING SECURED FOR FUTURE LAND ACQUISITION

In September, the Authority received multiple funding awards totaling \$16 million from the State of California to be used for the acquisition of Laguna Seca, which was originally purchased by the Peninsula Open Space Trust in 2019. The California Natural Resources Agency awarded the Authority \$6 million through an Urban Flood Protection Grant, which was given to 26 projects throughout the State dedicated to reducing flood risk and impact. An additional \$10 million was allocated to the Authority by the California Legislature in SB-170, the Budget Act of 2021, which reallocated millions of dollars in funding to climate resilience initiatives.

This funding will go toward the purchase from POST of the 376-acre Laguna Seca property, which comprises one of the Bay Area's last remaining undeveloped valley floors, including 300 acres of wetland, critical floodplain, and aquifer recharge areas. The Authority plans to implement landscape level wetland and riparian habitat restoration projects in Coyote Valley to reduce the likelihood of severe downstream flooding in San José. This can help protect the City's most disadvantaged communities from repeated displacement and property damage due to flooding.

HEALING THE LAND

Healing the land

Restoration work continued in earnest throughout 2021, to restore habitat, protect wildlife, promote climate resilience, and support the region's watersheds. With a diversity of funding sources, both public and private, the Authority is advancing restoration of important wetland and riparian corridors in the North and Mid Coyote Valley.

FISHER CREEK RIPARIAN HABITAT RESTORATION

This year, the Authority continued work on the Fisher's Bend Riparian Restoration project, which began in 2020 with the goal of restoring riparian habitat and expanding the riparian buffer along Fisher Creek to protect the water from agricultural pollution and runoff. This restoration involves planting habitat for birds, butterflies, and other insects, providing cover for animals as they move along Fisher Creek, creating greater diversity of vegetation along the creek, expanding the agricultural buffer next to the creek, and removing invasive species and trash.

This work will continue through the winter, with an additional planned 600 plantings.

Funding: \$440,000 from the Regional Water Quality Control Board

SPRECKLES WETLAND ENHANCEMENT

In summer 2021, the Authority began the Spreckles Wetland Enhancement project to restore the wetland at the base of Spreckles Hill near the corner of Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard in North Coyote Valley. Years ago, a culvert was installed to drain the wetland so that the property could be developed. Now permanently protected, and to maintain water in the wetland, the Authority will install a feature that will manage the draining of the culvert to allow water to stay in the wetland. Enhancement through naturally changing the hydrology of this wetland will allow these lands to provide better habitat for native wildlife and migratory birds and reduce invasive plants.

Additionally, this restoration project will include removal of rusty, non-functional fencing and invasive species, and installing new fences to protect the water quality of the wetland from cattle used for conservation grazing.

Funding: \$172,000 from the Bonneville Foundation



PAJARO RIVER RIPARIAN HABITAT RESTORATION

The Authority is working with Valley Habitat Agency and Point Blue Conservation Science to restore a three-quarter mile stretch of the Pajaro River. Phase I is beginning with approximately 200 plants being planted in the winter of 2021. The team is currently in the planning and design stages for Phase II, with the goal of widening the stream bank to substantially enhance the floodplain. In addition to reducing flooding impacts to downstream communities, these efforts will also provide bird and pollinator habitat and cover for species moving through this critical wildlife corridor.



Funding: \$210,000 from Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and \$380,000 from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

COYOTE RIDGE GRAZING IMPROVEMENTS FOR SERPENTINE HABITAT

This project is designed to improve habitat on Coyote Ridge by improving grazing infrastructure throughout the preserve. The Authority will enhance movement of wildlife by removing old fencing and replacing it with safe, wildlife-friendly fencing and will work to distribute cattle along Coyote Ridge by upgrading the water infrastructure. Distributing grazing cattle will reduce growth of invasive species and allow native plants to flourish, thereby enhancing serpentine habitat that the Bay checkerspot butterfly and other species rely on.

Funding: \$938,000 grant from Central Valley Project administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and US Bureau of Reclamation (USBOR)

CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG RESTORATION PROJECT

The Authority is in the early stages of planning its California Red-Legged Frog Restoration Project, with permitting and design work underway. The California red-legged frog is federally listed under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species throughout its range in California and require high-quality ponds in which to breed. The goal of this project is to protect and create red-legged frog habitat in Rancho Canada del Oro. There is currently one pond on the preserve that supports breeding, but it is in danger of failing. The restoration work will enhance two ponds around it to provide additional habitat, as well as support climate resilience.

Funding: \$476,000 from Valley Water



FURTADO BARN RESTORATION – SIERRA VISTA OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

With the Furtado Barn Riparian Restoration Project, the Authority aims to restore the riparian zone that runs behind the Furtado Barn and orchard at Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve by replacing invasive weeds with native grasses and forbs that can support native insects, birds and other wildlife. Volunteers this year have reduced the buildup of dead weed stalks, invasive mustards, thistles, and poison hemlock and have replanted these areas with native grass and riparian seed mix, enhancing the productivity and diversity of this riparian ecosystem. This work would not be possible without our enthusiastic Land Stewards volunteers and the Authority looks forward to more projects with them in early 2022.

Funding: Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Volunteer Program is a highly valuable part of the Authority's land management and restoration operations. The Land Steward Program, which operates within the larger Volunteer Program, accomplished 21 different field projects this year, in which they removed 8 tons of trash from the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area, 2800 ft of hazardous fence line, and 11 acres of invasive stinkwort weeds on Spreckles Hill.

The Volunteer Trail Patrol and Trail Masters contribute over 1,000 hours annually to keep guests safe and the trails they love in great shape. Trail Patrol volunteers are active nearly every day of the year reporting on trail conditions and sharing their knowledge of the preserves with the public. Their presence in our preserves helps open the door for both new and experienced trail users, connecting even more visitors to the Authority's mission and values. Likewise, Volunteer Trail Masters are working on trail tread, weed eating trail corridors, and brushing back vegetative growth to maintain trails that serve all of our users.

"I was so incredibly thankful for the access to trails and still being able to contribute to the community by doing trail patrol trainings, assisting with the influx of newbies who had discovered Authority properties and teaching trail etiquette. I am still incredibly grateful for this space and organization and the sanity and peace it brought me during the height of the pandemic!"

– Kimberly Nielsen, on her time as a volunteer during the pandemic



FUELS MANAGEMENT PLAN

In 2021, the Authority kicked off development of its Fuels Management Plan to identify wildfire risk on open space lands as well as developed criteria for how to prioritize vegetation management and treatments. The Authority hired a consultant, began developing policy that will guide the management work, and is conducting detailed mapping to help assess fire risk and priorities. Once this is complete, the Authority will develop a prioritized list of fuel treatments for managed and protected lands, potentially including prescribed burns, cattle grazing, mowing along structures, installing fuel breaks along roads, and more.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Authority made strides in the development of its Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program this year. The Authority's Board of Directors approved the IPM Policy, Guidance Manual, and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Report on September 23, reflecting its larger goal to use its resources efficiently and effectively. The pest management team has begun focusing more on early detection and rapid response of invasive species to eradicate them before they're bigger and more expensive to treat. Additionally, the team is streamlining their mapping procedure, monitoring treatment locations, leveraging resources with the assistance of volunteers, and increasing collaboration with other agencies.





EXPANDED PUBLIC ACCESS

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 along the Heart's Delight Trail, that look out over the beautiful North Meadow. We began the site analysis reports and 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 is making great progress towards completing permitting and construction 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 José. Project construction is planned to begin in 2022. This project will also open new segments of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, in 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 environmental analysis, design, and engineering documentation for the day use and interpretive areas and have completed resource assessments and preliminary bridge design. Construction of this project is currently planned for 2023.





GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good Governance

NEW MEMBERS

The Authority's Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) welcomed four new members, appointed by the Board of Directors, to help provide additional avenues for community feedback and communication. New members include Robert Sippel, representing District 3, Raymond Mueller, representing District 6, Lani Wong-Bassett, serving at-large, and Mera Burton, serving at-large. The CAC now has 15 seats, eight of which are at-large. Authority Staff, Board, and CAC members look forward to serving the public alongside these new voices.



TRANSPARENCY CERTIFICATE

The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority continues to receive the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence by the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF) in recognition of outstanding efforts to promote transparency and good governance. The first awards were received in 2016, 2018, and again in June 2021. To receive the award, several essential requirements must be met, including conducting ethics training for all board members, properly conducting open and public meetings, and filing financial transactions and compensation reports to the State Controller in a timely manner.



CLIMATE RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIPS

Climate Resilience Partnerships

The Open Space Authority proudly works with and depends on a variety of local partners to better serve the public and protect the highest priority lands. Growing momentum towards taking action on collective climate-related priorities and values reflects the synergies among many partners throughout the Bay Area – cities, counties, individual landowners, non-profits – and with the State of California, resulting in great strides in the protection of natural and working lands as climate-smart infrastructure. Only with such dedicated partners, and strong leadership, can we effectively support the community and protect the cherished open spaces the Santa Clara Valley has to offer. This year, the Authority's partners made a variety of groundbreaking accomplishments that promise a more sustainable and resilient future.



FARMLAND MAPPING

In early 2021, Santa Clara County's Board of Supervisors voted to adopt new farmland definitions, nearly doubling the amount of land in the County that is recognized as important farmland in the State's biennial important farmland inventory. In mid-2021, the new definition was successfully implemented and thousands more acres of farmland are now reflected on official state maps. Landowners within these newly designated farmland areas now qualify for financial incentive programs and grants that support the conservation of farmland and the long-term viability of agriculture in the County.

INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS

The Open Space Authority continues partnering with Terre et Cité, a nonprofit organization that works to protect an agricultural valley just south of Paris near the European Silicon Valley that is similar to our own Coyote Valley. In 2021, Open Space Authority General Manager Andrea Mackenzie joined global thought leaders in three international webinars discussing the importance of agricultural and natural open spaces in preserving biodiversity and building resilience to climate change for nearby urban communities. The series compared research and public policies across the globe, in an effort to learn from each other's successes as we pursue global climate challenges and nature-based solutions.

CLIMATE SMART SJ TECHNICAL REPORT

In September, the City of San José finalized the Natural and Working Lands Element Technical Report that lays out the benefits the City's Natural and Working Lands will have in mitigating and preparing for climate change, through methods such as land preservation and restoration, urban forestry, and carbon farming. This report establishes the City as a leader in incorporating nature-based solutions into the City's Climate Smart San José initiative, an ambitious climate action plan designed to reduce San José's greenhouse gas emissions and promote resilience to climate change. In conjunction with this initiative, the City of San José set an ambitious target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

SAN JOSÉ GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENTS IN COYOTE VALLEY

On November 16, the San José City Council made a historic decision to change the General Plan land use designation in North Coyote Valley from industrial to open space and agriculture and removed the Urban Reserve designation from Mid Coyote Valley. This unanimously approved series of land-use changes was guided by the recommendations of City staff and the General Plan Task Force to protect the bulk of North and Mid-Coyote Valley from major developments that would threaten this critical last-chance landscape. The decision signals a dramatic shift in the way open spaces are valued and understood, and it illustrates the community's understanding of the importance of protecting open space lands in Coyote Valley as natural infrastructure.



SANTA CLARA COUNTY GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENTS IN COYOTE VALLEY

On December 14, the County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve General Plan and zoning amendments that protect agricultural resources in Mid and South Coyote Valley through development restrictions and voluntary conservation incentives. Together with the actions taken by the City of San Jose the prior month, these coordinated steps represent bold landmark decisions that prioritize community and regional climate benefits over development of our natural and working lands. These actions are unprecedented in the State, and we expect, will serve as a model for preserving natural infrastructure statewide.

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.

Board of Directors

District 1 – Alex Kennett
District 2 – Mike Flaughner
District 3 – Helen Chapman
District 4 – Dorsey Moore
District 5 – Vicki Alexander
District 6 – Mike Potter
District 7 – Calvin Gill

Citizens' Advisory Committee

District 2 - Frank Cancilla
District 3 - Robert Sippel
District 4 - Garnetta Annable
District 5 - Loren Lewis
District 6 - Raymond Mueller
District 7 - Raj Bhanot
At Large - Justin Fields
At Large - Daniel J. Kenney
At Large - Lani Wong-Bassett
At Large - Kathy Sutherland
At Large - Steve Mink
At Large - Mera Burton
At Large - Peter Pham

Photo Credits: David Mauk; Cait Hutnik; Ron Horii; Jennifer Hooper; Stephen Joseph; Garden to Table Silicon Valley; Nick Perry; Mark Hehir; Annamarie Pilon, Kat Hill; Derek Neumann

