

20 YEAR IN 22 REVIEW



NATURE PROVIDES
Investing in Our Collective Future

MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER ANDREA MACKENZIE



We acknowledge that the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority works within lands that were originally stewarded by the Awaswas-, Chochenyo-, Mutsun-, and Thámien-speaking peoples. Today we are honored to partner with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area in our shared work to protect and restore the environment and connect people to land.

We at the Open Space Authority continue to work tirelessly to protect our region's natural and working lands and connect people to the benefits of nature. Open Space welcomes everyone, brings friends and family together, enhances physical and mental wellness, and promotes wonder, curiosity, and empathy amongst both young and old.

In 2022, hundreds of thousands of visitors in the Santa Clara Valley experienced all that nature has to offer at their Open Space Preserves. We hope visitors notice our "Everyone is welcome" signage, reminding that the open spaces we protect and steward are open for all. These beautiful natural lands belong to you, are yours to enjoy, and we ask all visitors to do your part in respecting the land, the wild creatures, and each other.

As our work continues to also bring nature to urban neighborhoods, we aim to remove barriers to access and provide more opportunities for residents to experience nature in their own backyards. The Open Space Authority's Urban Grant Program opened a new grant-making cycle for community-based organizations, schools, cities and the County to create projects and programs that ensure equitable connections to parks, open space, trails and environmental education.

Protected open space lands also offer our communities resilience to an ever-changing climate. With increased risk and severity of wildfire, drought, and flooding events, open space provides a buffer to help communities increase resilience to climate-driven weather events. This critical natural infrastructure also maintains and protects our drinking water supplies and protects biodiversity to support the health and longevity of ecosystems, upon which all life depends. The multiple benefits or ecosystem services that nature provides are exemplified in Coyote Valley, a landscape of statewide significance, which is now gaining international recognition as a model for climate-resilient land management.

In 2022, I had the pleasure of joining a delegation of conservation leaders and elected officials from across California to learn from European colleagues about global climate and biodiversity actions they are prioritizing in the Paris region of France and across the European Union. The California Delegation visited the Plateau de Saclay, a natural and working landscape with striking similarities to Coyote Valley, mirroring its structure and echoing its story – vibrant agricultural lands under growing threat from rapid development and surrounding sprawl. We listened to the stories of farmers, learned from the local advocates, and participated in productive and collaborative dialogues. I returned to the states with a refreshed inspiration for the work that we do and for strengthening our commitment to protecting natural and working lands and advancing nature-based solutions to the linked climate and biodiversity crises.

With continued development pressure and the growing impacts of climate change, it is a challenging time to be a farmer. This makes our work to protect agricultural lands and conserve the agricultural viability as laid out in the Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan, all the more important. One major victory on that front in 2022 was the successful relocation of the beloved Spina Farm Pumpkin Patch in Coyote Valley as they had lost their previous farming lease. The pumpkin patch had a successful inaugural season at the Open Space Authority's Laguna 60 property in mid Coyote Valley. Over one hundred and twenty thousand adults and children enjoyed and learned about the importance of farming and nature in the Coyote Valley during their visit to the pumpkin patch.

The Open Space Authority's successes in 2022 have been 29 years in the making, and we are excited, humbled, and grateful to continue this work during our 30th Anniversary in 2023. I invite you to join us as we open a new open space preserve to the public in 2023 - Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge. The preserve will feature over 5 miles of new public trails that expand the Bay Area Ridge Trail and offer spectacular views of the Santa Clara Valley and protected wildlands of the surrounding Diablo Range. We are working closely with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area to plan for this new preserve opening, interpret its natural and cultural resources, and keep alive the native Chochenyo language in the open space preserve's name.

We are committed to expanding access to nature, through the creation and support of outdoor spaces where everyone is welcome. As we continue engaging with Santa Clara Valley residents to develop a comprehensive master plan for Coyote Valley, we invite your participation in shaping a new, greener, and shared future for this treasured natural and working landscape.

We thank our many partners, as well as the Open Space Authority Board of Directors, Staff, Citizens' Advisory Committee, and all our amazing volunteers for helping the Open Space Authority leave such a significant conservation legacy for our children and grandchildren. With your continued support, there will be many more open space milestones to come.

Andrea Mackenzie

YEAR AT A GLANCE



PROJECTS & INITIATIVES





Public Access

GENERAL PRESERVE UPDATES

Planning continues for public access improvements at Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve and Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve. Both projects will provide additional interpretive and educational amenities and accessibility improvements at existing preserves. At Coyote Valley, Open Space staff have begun tribal consultation to participate during archaeological testing at the site as well as initiated environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for proposed improvements to the Preserve entryway and Heart's Delight Trail. This project is partially funded through a grant from Valley Water. At Rancho Cañada del Oro, the Open Space Authority is initiating permitting through the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. This includes a proposed bridge over Llagas Creek to be constructed as part of a new accessible loop trail and day-use area. This project is partially funded through a grant from the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

MÁYYAN 'OOYÁKMA – COYOTE RIDGE OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

In 2022, the Open Space Authority made strides preparing Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve (Coyote Ridge) for opening in 2023. The agency eagerly works towards opening a new preserve at a time when demand for access to natural areas has never been higher. Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge will offer a unique opportunity for the public to traverse a rare, vibrant serpentine ecosystem. In addition, the preserve will feature a three-mile segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

The serpentine habitat is part of what makes this preserve so special. Nestled in the Diablo Mountain range, Coyote Ridge is known for its critical biodiversity and local populations of rare and endangered species, including the Bay checkerspot butterfly, California red-legged frog, Santa Clara Valley dudleya, and many others.

“Because of the rare and sensitive species found at this location, we are looking carefully at the balance of recreation and sensitive natural resources,” says Jennifer Hooper, Associate Open Space Planner. Opening and closing hours may fluctuate seasonally based on the needs of the plant and animal residents of Coyote Ridge, giving them more uninterrupted time to carry out critical activities such as feeding. The Authority is in the process of developing an operations plan unique to the Preserve, which will guide seasonal operating hours for the preserve.

“This preserve is unlike any other, so the Open Space Authority must work to ensure that the rare and endangered species found here can survive and thrive,” says Jennifer Hooper. “Coyote Ridge will provide an invaluable opportunity for the public to connect with nature and reap the many benefits it has to offer, all the while respecting the wildlife that call this place home,” Hooper adds.

The Open Space Authority has closely partnered with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area, to develop educational and interpretive content for visitors about the Tribe's history, connection to the area, and culture today.

Over the past year, the Open Space Authority's Planning team met with design and interpretation consultants at Coyote Ridge. They discussed interpretive programming and signage ideas related to the people and organizations of the region, biology, ecology, history, and resilience of the landscape.

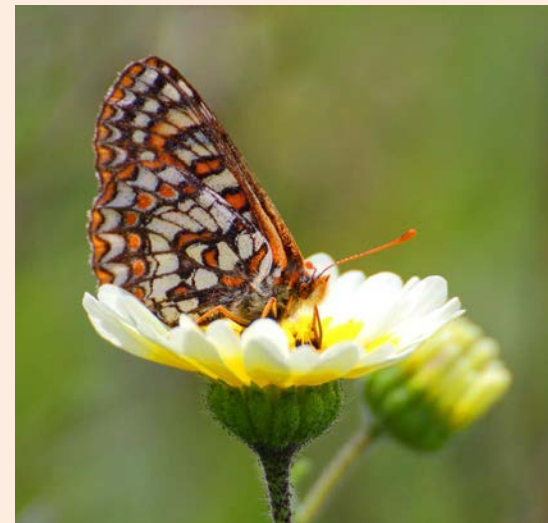
Not long after their first visit, consultants laid out a design for the Knoll Overlook along with custom interpretive features. Located near the Malech Road staging area, this overlook provides an accessible trail and stunning views of Coyote Valley. In addition to amazing sights, visitors will have opportunities to learn about plant and animal species that are endemic to (or only found at) Coyote Ridge, with the rare serpentine soils and habitats.



In March, an interdisciplinary team of Open Space Authority staff held a field visit at Coyote Ridge to discuss long-term coordination. This included conversations about the future management of Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve and how the preserve fits into the larger network of protected lands in the South Bay. "The impact of public access on this sensitive landscape is something we will monitor closely," says Derek Neumann, Field Operations Manager. "The preserve will be managed adaptively so we can implement proactive protections as needed for the unique species found here."

Throughout the planning process, the Authority engaged with the agency's Board of Directors, Citizens Advisory Committee, and Use and Management Committee with frequent public meetings, delivering project updates and providing opportunities for comments and feedback. More recently, the Board approved the award of a construction contract in August. And in September, the Authority officially broke ground on the construction for the preserve, which is anticipated to open to the public in 2023.

Once the project is complete, public access at the preserve will include a parking and gathering area accessible by Malech Road near the Bailey Rd. Exit from Highway 101, a sustainable trail network accessible to people with disabilities, and public amenities at the Malech Road staging area including parking, restrooms, trailhead, and interpretive features and signage. Visitors will be able to climb nearly 1,400 feet in elevation through grasslands up to the ridgeline for sweeping views of Santa Clara Valley and spring wildflower displays. The goals of this project are to protect rare habitat and sensitive species while providing a high-quality experience. A partnership with the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council will provide additional guided access to the preserve.



This project is funded by the Authority's Measure Q; a \$200,000 grant from the Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation; a \$200,000 grant from Plan Bay Area Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Grant Program; and a \$2,520,441 grant from the California State Parks' Recreational Infrastructure Revenue Enhancement Program (RIRE).

COYOTE VALLEY CONSERVATION AREAS MASTER PLAN (CVCAMP)

In March 2022, Peninsula Open Space Trust acquired an additional 13.5 acres of land between Santa Teresa Boulevard and Fisher Creek. The Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan (CVCAMP) project area now covers over 1,550 acres of protected valley floor land in North and Mid-Coyote Valley. New acquisitions will ultimately be transferred to the Open Space Authority as the public agency responsible for long-term stewardship, management, and public access.

Planning work on the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan is now underway. This innovative, science-based master plan will guide the future of this one-of-a-kind landscape to ensure habitat connectivity, climate resilience, and equitable public access. In early 2022, the Open Space Authority kicked off work with a Coyote Valley consultant team, led by the firm SWCA Environmental Consultants. Site visits, onboarding sessions, and detailed review of the many existing Coyote Valley-related reports and studies were the focus of the team's early work. The culmination of this first phase of work is a report that identifies existing conditions-related assessments and inventories that are needed for planning work to progress. Work on these studies has already begun and over the next several months the team's scientists and planners will be conducting a variety of assessments that will provide critical information for restoration and land use planning/design process in 2023.



The project team also created a community outreach and engagement plan that outlines the Master Plan's engagement goals, toolkit, and timeline. Continuing the ongoing conversations with community members and leaders, the next phases of outreach will focus on presentations introducing the project to local community groups and sharing information on the project at Open Space Authority outreach booths at various community events. More robust public engagement is planned for 2023, including an online survey focused on the Master Plan's goals and a public event in Coyote Valley timed for Earth Day weekend in April. Public workshops focused on preliminary restoration/use scenarios are expected to take place in the latter half of 2023. Those interested are encouraged to sign-up for the project's mailing list to receive updates as outreach event details are finalized and stay updated on opportunities to get involved in planning the future of Coyote Valley's conserved lands.



Urban Grant Program

In 2022, the Open Space Authority opened solicitation for the latest round of the agency's popular Urban Grant Program, which aims to improve the quality of life for urban residents by providing funding to local organizations doing work on the ground.

The grant program is funded by Measure Q and Measure T and works towards the Open Space Authority's larger goal to help urban communities overcome barriers of accessing nature, and to make this access as equitable as possible for present and future generations. From educational programs to food justice and urban greening initiatives, the Open Space Authority diligently works to serve the whole community so that all people can enjoy the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of nature. And in 2022, the program saw some changes to better provide this access and support.

There is \$1.5M available this grant cycle in two new categories of projects: Capital and Programs, each with their own set of guidelines to make the application process easier, by saving organizations' time reading through guidelines that don't apply to them, while increasing clarity and conciseness of the guidelines that do apply to them. There are separate staff review teams for the two types of projects, making the scoring and staff recommendations to the Board of Directors more equitable. Additionally, the program has more funding available for grantees, a pre-application for eligibility to save organizations' time, a requirement for each project to benefit historically underserved communities, and much more.

Since 2016, this program has awarded 54 grants totaling almost \$3.9M. "We are so grateful for the grant we received from the Open Space Authority's Urban Grant Program. 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 Authority continues to actively pursue funding opportunities in order to leverage the agency's financial resources. In 2023, Authority managed \$25M in active grants, including two new grants awards:

- \$510K from the Department of Water Resources' Floodplain Management, Protection, and Risk Awareness Grant Program
- \$1.245M from the Department of Conservation's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program



Public Education

In 2022, the Open Space Authority continued working to provide the community with access to nature through educational in-person and virtual events, offering a variety of opportunities for people of all ages and ability to enjoy the outdoor spaces of the Santa Clara Valley, and connect with one another through experiences in nature.

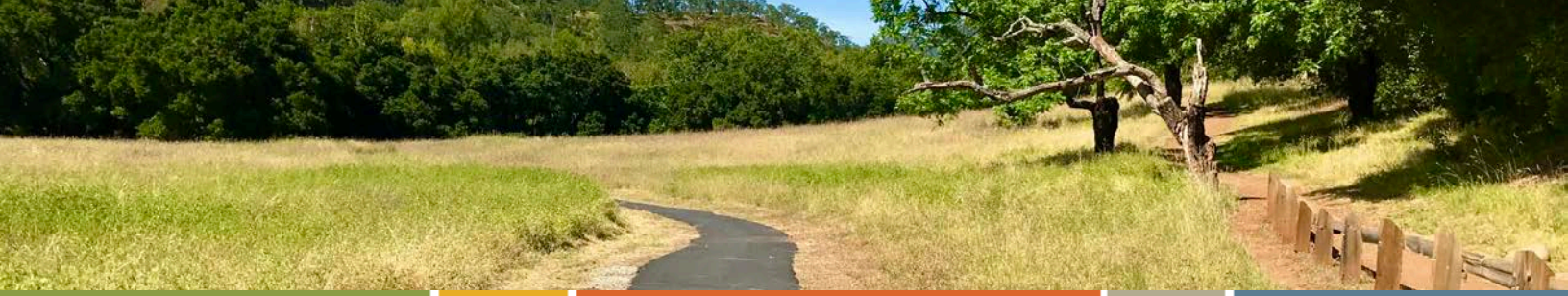
Throughout the year, the Volunteer and Education team hosted a variety of new events and brought back some much beloved ones. Some of the new events included an Earth Day celebration at Spreckels Hill, several guided hikes at San José's Alum Rock Park in honor of the park's 150th anniversary, and a summer school program with a San Martin elementary school.

Partnerships with public agencies, community-based organizations, and non-profits also provided multiple opportunities for collaborative outdoor events at open space preserves and offered a wide range of opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors. These partners included the San Jose Astronomical Association, San José State University, California Native Plant Society, Committee for Green Foothills, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Alum Rock Park (City of San José Parks), Environmental Volunteers, BioBlitz Club, and more.

The events team also continued offering virtual programs in 2022 – eight, to be exact– which saw a total of 407 attendees. The most notable events of the year were Starry Nights, Binocular Stargazing, the Earth Day Celebration, and Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge and Diablo Foothills Open Access.

In total, the team offered 72 programs with over 2,000 attendees, not including those who attended wildflower open access days at Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge. The eight virtual programs offered saw over 400 attendees.





Initiatives Taking Us Forward

INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE EXCHANGE STUDY TOUR

In July, the Open Space Authority and the California Delegation, in partnership with Terre et Cité, headed to France and Belgium to exchange and inspire ideas about ways to address climate change and serve local communities both in and around Coyote Valley and France's Plateau de Saclay.

The Plateau de Saclay, (adjacent to what is known as the European Silicon Valley) is a multi-benefit landscape just south of Paris, France, with many similarities to Coyote Valley -- perhaps the most notable of which is increasing development pressure as surrounding development sprawls toward it.

Farmers on this landscape founded Terre et Cité in 2001, and in 2018, the partnership with the Open Space Authority was born.

During the tour, General Manager Andrea Mackenzie and External Affairs Manager Marc Landgraf and the California delegation met with members of the European Commission, European Parliament, French National Senate, local farmers, and prominent university researchers who are working on global climate change, biodiversity, and agriculture.

They compared the two landscapes, and valuable insights emerged regarding successful climate-smart land use, general land use, conservation, and agricultural practices, policies, and initiatives. This offered invaluable perspective into lessons learned, and where gaps remain, the challenges of protecting a peri-urban landscape, and how leaders can accelerate our climate actions globally by working more closely together locally.

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Open Space Authority continues to build on the agency's commitment to the principles of Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (JEDIA). In 2022, the Board of Directors approved and adopted our JEDIA statement and commitments.

The Authority values Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access in our work to preserve the natural environment, support agriculture, and connect people to nature:

- We have Accessible, Collaborative, and Accountable processes to engage the diverse communities we serve in our programs, projects, careers, and governance opportunities.
- We have Respect for the land and all people in our community.
- We are Inclusive and acknowledge current and historic land stewards.
- We Empower future generations of conservation leaders.
- We invite everyone to join and connect to nature with us.

The Open Space Authority is working to realize this commitment throughout the agency's departments and programs. In early 2022, the Open Space Authority installed welcome signage in all three preserves to help all visitors feel welcome and promote mutual respect of one another.

To increase awareness of employment opportunities and invite a larger audience to explore careers in open space, the Open Space Authority continuously posts open positions on a variety of job boards, and in 2022, began distributing to three additional job boards that reflect the diversity of our community.

As part of the effort to increase accessibility, the Open Space Authority is increasing offerings of translated content, including pertinent informational articles and how-to guides, and regularly sending translated materials to Spanish- and Vietnamese- speaking media outlets. Additionally, in 2022 the Open Space Authority hired translation contracting services to scale the ability to translate content in the coming years.

Further, Board of Directors and Citizen's Advisory Committee meetings will remain hybrid, with closed captioning available.

The Authority reconfigured an internal staff working group that convenes on an ongoing basis and will be identifying other tangible projects and priorities to advance the JEDIA commitments in the coming years.

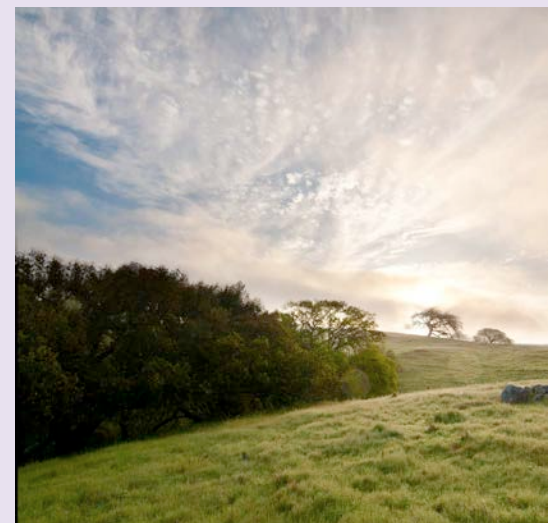
POLICY INITIATIVES

Last year was historic for climate policy in the United States, and in California specifically.

President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, the country's strongest climate policy to date, dedicated \$369 billion to tackle climate change, supporting climate justice, investing in clean energy, a School Electrification Program, funding for affordable housing and transportation, and incentives for the reduction of air pollution, including over \$19 billion to the United States Department of Agriculture to support climate-smart agriculture.

Further, the state of California has committed a total of \$54 billion towards climate investments over the next five years. This includes over \$1 billion towards Nature-Based Solutions and \$8 billion to Climate-Resilient Communities.

While there is still much to be done to mitigate and prevent the worsening impacts of climate change, these policies are major steps toward climate resilience, and are likely to help the Authority implement the agency's mission to the benefit of its constituents.





Land Stewardship

The Open Space Authority's land stewardship efforts expanded in 2022, building on the agency's expertise 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 Open Space Authority is advancing the restoration of important wetland and riparian corridors and supporting critical biodiversity through the vibrant ecosystems of the Santa Clara Valley.

In August, the Open Space Authority developed a new Natural Resources Department and hired Aaron Hébert as the first Natural Resources Manager, building upon the agency's efforts to maintain and support the rich ecology of the lands the Open Space Authority manages.

The Natural Resources Department and the Field Operations Department continue making progress on a variety of long-term restoration and stewardship projects.

RESTORATION IN COYOTE VALLEY

Fisher Creek Riparian Habitat Restoration Project

The Open Space Authority made strides in the ongoing Fisher Creek Riparian Restoration project. Fisher's Bend, a section of Fisher Creek located in Coyote Valley, is a wildlife corridor with critical riparian habitat (or habitat alongside a river). Over the years, the neglected land slowly degraded until Peninsula Open Space Trust purchased it in 2017 (and it will be transferred to the Open Space Authority in the future). The Fisher Creek Riparian Restoration project, spread across different properties and supported with multiple funding sources, began in 2020 with the goal of restoring riparian habitat and to creating a buffer between Fisher Creek and agricultural operations.

In 2022, the Open Space Authority and Point Blue Conservation Science went out to Fisher's Bend as part of Point Blue's Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW) program, continuing their critical partnership. Together, they welcomed roughly 70 second graders from Bradley Elementary School to plant over 150 native plants along the critical riparian corridor.

The project will involve planting more than 1,500 native plants in the area to provide a variety of benefits, both for wildlife and to increase the climate resilience of the area. Some of the plants will provide more cover along the creek, as studies have shown that animals like bobcats prefer traveling through areas with sufficient cover to keep them hidden.

After the plantings earlier in the year, field staff have been regularly monitoring and maintaining the area and preparing it for the upcoming years of the project, which will include installation of interpretive signage, additional school plantings, and monitoring and management.

In addition, the Fisher Creek Riparian Habitat Restoration Project continues further south on Palm Avenue on a 93-acre property in Mid-Coyote Valley, acquired by the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) in 2020 and upstream of Fisher Creek. In 2022, the Authority installed new fencing and a water tank, laying the groundwork for future restoration work.

For the next phase, beginning in 2023, the Authority will work with Point Blue's STRAW program to plant oak trees for acorns, plant willow tree from cuttings, and tie it in with an upcoming monarch butterfly habitat restoration project (see below).

- FUNDER: \$150,000 from Bonneville Environmental Foundation; \$440,000 from Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) from the Regional Water Quality Control Board of the San Francisco Bay Region, \$250,000/\$247,360 from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)

Monarch Habitat Restoration Project

The Natural Resource Department also kicked off a Monarch Habitat Restoration Project on the same 93-acre Palm Avenue property. In 2022, field staff installed a wildlife-friendly fence to protect the creek from cattle and a new irrigation system to support future riparian and monarch-friendly plantings.

- FUNDER: \$250,000 to POST from Tides Foundation

Spreckels Wetland Cleanup and Enhancement Project

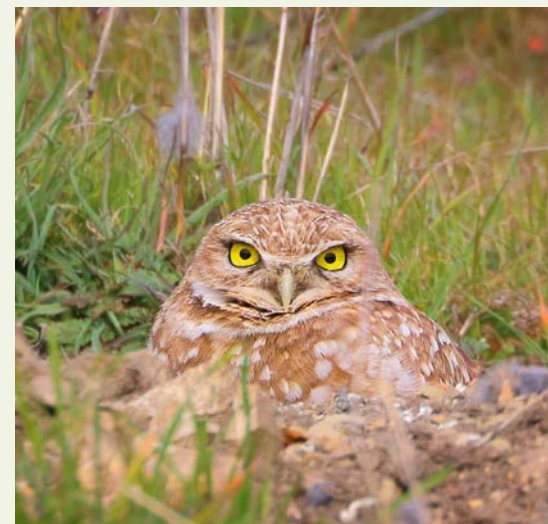
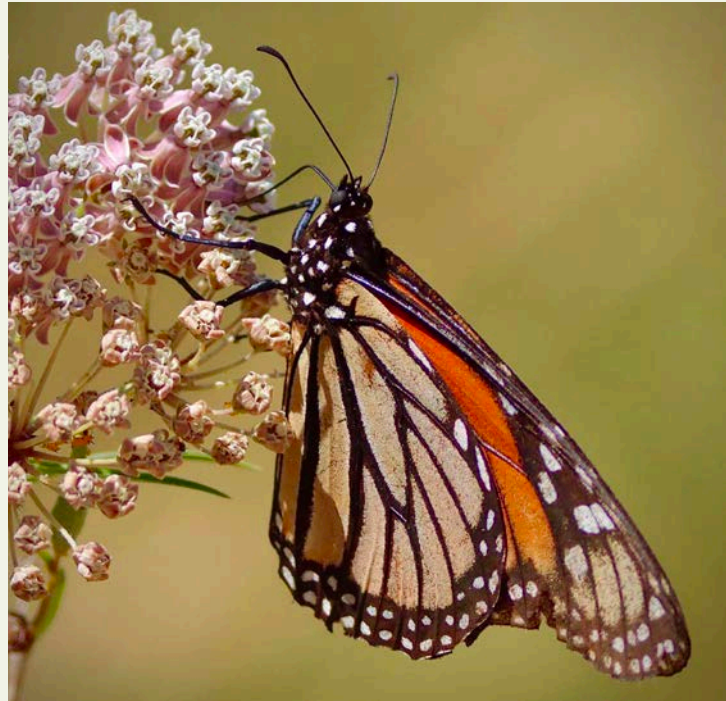
The Open Space Authority continued work on the Spreckels Wetland Cleanup and Enhancement Project, which began in 2021. Many years ago, a culvert was installed in the large wetland below Spreckels Hill to drain the water from the wetland into Fisher Creek. The goal of this project is to modify the culvert opening to allow more water to stay in the wetland during dry conditions, helping to restore ecosystem services such as groundwater recharge, flood buffer, improving habitat for wildlife such as migratory birds, providing more consistent moisture, and helping to remove invasive species that outcompete native plants and limit wetland productivity and vegetation growth. It also involves removing litter scattered throughout this important habitat site. Last year involved planning and permitting for the restoration work in 2023, as well as a cultural resource assessment.

- FUNDER: \$172,000 from Bonneville Environmental Foundation

Burrowing Owl Reserve

In November of 2022, the Open Space Authority, in partnership with the Peninsula Open Space Trust and the Valley Habitat Agency (VHA), established a 100-acre burrowing owl preserve in Coyote Valley, where VHA will be introducing more breeding burrowing owls to the habitat. They plan to introduce the owls to the landscape next year. Dave Tharp, the Authority's Equipment Mechanics Operator, worked with Talon Environmental to install artificial nest boxes to help give the relocated owls the best start: as the land recovers from agricultural use, ground squirrel activity will establish a network of burrows that previously would get tilled under every year, and these burrows will provide habitat for more owls.

- FUNDER: Valley Habitat Agency (VHA)



RESTORATION AT MÁYYAN 'OOYÁKMA – COYOTE RIDGE

Wildlife Friendly Fencing

With the goal of enhancing wildlife movement, preventing fence-related injury, and improving conservation grazing management throughout the landscape, the Open Space Authority removed almost seven miles of five-strand barbed wire and chain link fencing and installed over eight miles of wildlife-friendly fencing in 2022.

Wildlife-friendly fences have a smooth top and bottom, unlike barbed wire, which can harm wildlife that try to pass over the top or underneath. The bottom of the fence is also higher off the ground, unlike chain link, which is completely impermeable and prevents the crossing of wildlife

altogether. This contains cattle, while supporting deer, coyote, bobcats, mountain lions, and other animals that depend on their ability to travel around to find food, water, and shelter.

“At Coyote Ridge, specifically, cattle grazing is an important part of maintaining and restoration Bay checkerspot butterfly habitat, as well as the health of serpentine and endemic species,” Hébert notes. “We are using fencing to optimize these efforts in a minimally invasive way.”

Well Installation

In 2022 the Open Space Authority also installed a well at Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge to help with the long-term management of the landscape. A natural pond is nestled in Coyote Ridge, which supports a variety of native plant and animal species. To preserve the habitat this pond provides, the Open Space Authority installed a well as an alternate water source for cattle on the property. This well will help the Open Space Authority maintain sustainable conservation grazing practices to manage land and reduce fire risk, while supporting the unique and vibrant ecosystem at Coyote Ridge.

- FUNDER: \$1M from US Bureau of Reclamation and US Fish and Wildlife Service (for grazing) all.”

RESTORATION AT SIERRA VISTA

In 2022, the Open Space Authority continued restoration of the Furtado Barn Restoration Area at Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve by installing 1,400 plants donated by the Xerces Society.

Staff from every department of the Open Space Authority, as well as dozens of volunteers (see more below), participated in 5 events hosted by the Natural Resources Department to install the donated plants, which will be irrigated for the next year until they have fully established themselves, as transplanting can be stressful for them.

The Natural Resources Department dispersed native plant seeds to create an even gradient of native plants, promoting the habitat's biodiversity and more robustly supporting the species relying on this ecosystem.

In addition, to better protect the plants, field staff will install deer fencing to protect the plants until they are large enough to withstand deer browsing.

- FUNDER: 1400 Plants from Xerces Society; Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority



FUELS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

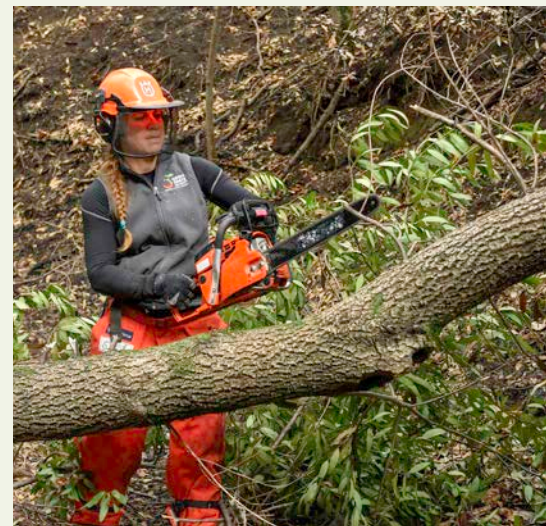
While wildfires can be harmful for ecosystems, it hasn't always been this way, and fire can be beneficial. For millennia, many Indigenous Peoples have used controlled burns as a form of land management. Smaller, cooler, controlled fires have a myriad of benefits for landscapes. Fire removes dead plant matter, controls the growth of invasive species, provides native species access to sunlight, and nourishes the soil.

Though California ecosystems are adapted to fire, the frequency and heat at which modern wildfires burn surpasses native adaptations. Fires that burn as hot as they have been change the composition of local flora and put the natural ecosystem at risk. Minimizing the intensity of these fires and lowering the frequency of these high-intensity burns, is critical to protect local landscapes and nearby communities. In 2022, the Open Space Authority continued the Fuels Management Program to do the agency's part managing wildfire risk.

This program assesses fire fuel risk (or areas that may start or spread wildfire) on Authority-managed lands, as well as the areas where management and fuel reduction must be prioritized. Fire fuel reduction involves a variety of approaches including strategic conservation grazing, invasive species management, and promotion of healthy native biodiversity.

"It's about creating wildfire resiliency in our landscapes for the benefit of habitats and people," says Hébert. "We have a variety of goals – fuel reduction, native species promotion, and habitat restoration. The key to the integrated approach is finding the overlap of where we can meet them all."

In 2022, the Open Space Authority worked diligently to identify areas at highest risk of wildfire. These areas can be determined in multiple ways – areas where open space transitions into developed land are particularly at risk, in addition to locations with a buildup of dead plant matter, or with plants that burn easily. With the help of a GIS mapping firm, the Open Space Authority can map past ignition sources, burn areas, and vegetation communities to extrapolate areas of highest risk using data-informed models. This can also determine areas that need the most protection (where fire can cause the most damage to people and natural resources), and then identify projects in such areas that reduce fuel load. The Open Space Authority is not alone among land managers navigating the challenges of a drying climate and increased wildfire risk. Groups like the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network and the Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council have created their own tools and collaborative frameworks to address the challenge of this regional problem at a regional level. The Open Space Authority works with these groups and others to integrate into local, County, and State efforts to manage wildfire.



INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

The Open Space Authority uses the Integrated Pest Management framework to guide how the agency manages pests to limit the risks and impacts to our preserve visitors, staff, and the lands and facilities.

The comprehensive approach of this program involves correctly identifying the species, monitoring and assessing where the pests are located and how abundant they are, setting thresholds for targeted control, assessing site conditions to identify appropriate control treatments, using the least harmful suite of control methods, and preventing pest problems by detecting new occurrences early and treating them quickly.



In 2022, the Open Space Authority expanded mapping and tracking capacity by increasing the use of CalFlora and has been leveraging the help of volunteers to control invasive species populations. The agency also began piloting the Early Detection, Rapid Response program to address invasive plants when the populations remain small to improve the likelihood of successfully eradicating unwanted plants and using cost-effective treatments.

Currently, the pilot Early Detection, Rapid Response list includes approximately 18 top priority species that are new to the region or under surveillance for introduction to the area. These species are true early detection targets which will likely be eradication targets, if found during on the ground surveys. Some may prove more common than anticipated, in which case control or containment efforts can be considered. David Mauk, Natural Resource Technician, is focusing on places of the highest risk -- preserves open to the public, conservation areas with extensive road systems, regions with high natural resource value/critical habitat, and areas with lots of Open Space Authority activity.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Volunteer program plays a critical role the Open Space Authority's model of land stewardship. Land Stewards made great strides in 2022 in tackling priorities for invasive species removal, through maintenance and clean-up projects and through restorative plantings. By the end of 2022, their efforts contributed over 800 hours of labor towards over 30 different projects!

Volunteers removed nearly 4,000 square feet of invasive species from the Furtado Barn Restoration Area, transforming the landscape and leading the way to the introduction of beneficial native pollinator plants, thanks also to a grant from the Xerces Society. "I cannot wait to see how this place will continue to transform with more care from our staff and volunteer community," says Kat Hill, Volunteer Program Coordinator at the Open Space Authority.



Trail patrol volunteers completed over 230 different patrols, on bike, foot and horse, in our three main preserves-- welcoming visitors to our preserves, reporting trail conditions and wildlife and supporting Field Operations. Thank you also to motivated Trail Masters who facilitated volunteer trainings for trail patrol throughout the year!

Community Engagement is also an important part of the Volunteer Program. In 2022, the Open Space Authority received a number of invitations to share our agency's work, resources, and passion with an energized public at community events. After a nearly 2.5 year absence, the team was happy to be back in these event spaces connecting with the public. A key to this success was overwhelming support from volunteers to represent the Open Space Authority at a myriad of community events.

Preserve Stewards, who help field staff during busy spring hours and provide support for large-scale events, contributed over 600 hours towards facilitating public enjoyment of our preserves. This included Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge and Diablo Foothills Open Access and Earth Week. They also served the public with information booths in staging areas and engaged preserve visitors during the Open Space Authority's one-way trails survey.

"The story that ties all of our public engagement efforts together is the positive and capable response of our volunteers," says Gavin Comstock, Volunteer Program Administrator. "We are proud of the opportunities we can offer the public through diverse educational programming and stewardship projects. And the responsivity and support of our volunteers is an incredible tool to help us open the gate for as many interested people to join us as possible."





Agriculture

Purchasing, protecting, and restoring working farms and ranches is all part of the Open Space Authority's work to support the County's Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Plan and help combat climate change. The Agricultural Plan serves as a roadmap to protect the multiple benefits that farmlands and working lands provide, including groundwater recharge, flood management, food production, climate mitigation, biodiversity protection, and much more. And legislation in late 2021 provided an invaluable opportunity for the Open Space Authority to continue momentum in protecting natural and working lands.

In December of 2021, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to strengthen protections for Coyote Valley's natural and working lands. Amendments to the County's General Plan, zoning ordinance, and zoning map will protect important resources in Mid- and South Coyote Valley to safeguard local food production and climate benefits.

SPINA FARMS

In 2022, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority entered a three-year lease with Spina Farms Pumpkin Patch to reopen at a new location at Laguna Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard in Coyote Valley. This pumpkin patch has long represented equitable access to nature and agriculture, especially with free admission and parking during weekdays.

Laguna 60, 60 acres of prime farmlands where the festivities took place, was permanently protected by the Open Space Authority in October 2021. The popular pumpkin patch opened between September 26 through October 31, with a variety of offerings for youth, families, and others looking for fall fun in the South Bay. With over 120,000 total visitors from the weekends alone, the patch was a shining success!

"These experiences could spark a life-long interest in agriculture, and it's important for people to learn about the many benefits local farmers and farmlands provide," says Gary Tognetti, Partner, Spina Farms Pumpkin Patch. "What better way for families to connect with nature, learn about agriculture, and see where our food comes from?"



PAJARO RIVER AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

The Open Space Authority's progress at the Pajaro River Agricultural Preserve continued. This storied landscape features two major creek systems – Pajaro River and Llagas Creek -- on the region's borders. Since 2017, the Open Space Authority has worked to restore the landscape that is now active farmland.

The north side of the property is a USDA Certified organic farming operation, and the south side is currently being converted from conventional to organic. Restoration is now well underway for the south side of the property. The first phase of the restoration began in 2021, with plantings of native riparian plants. And last year, the work continued.

In 2022, the Natural Resource Department worked on phase two of the restoration, for which they designed the floodplain improvements and worked on permits for the project. With similar goals as the Fisher Creek Riparian Restoration Project, the team is planning to improve the floodplain – and reduce flood risk for downstream communities - by pulling the banks back and creating and improving the habitat for the native species that depend on this landscape. Additional riparian plantings were conducted at the end of 2022 and will continue into early 2023.

The team also started early conceptual design for the final phase of the project – enhancing the confluence between Pajaro River and Llagas Creek by expanding the riparian buffer zone and creating a gradient of native plants from the trees along the creek to the agricultural field.

- FUNDER: \$380,000 to Point Blue from Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC); \$210,000 to VHA from California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).



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

This important work is made possible through partnership with the following agencies, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and individuals and their support over the past year. Collaborations, donations, grants, 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.

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