

OSA Outlook



SPRING 2016



Helping Urban Populations Overcome Barriers to Enjoying Nature

With the passage of Measure Q in 2014, the Open Space Authority is expanding its reach to achieve greater equity among residents in our jurisdiction. We've undertaken a community assessment project, **Understanding Our Community**, to better understand the people that we serve and identify the existing barriers that people experience in accessing open space. Our ultimate goal is to help overcome these barriers so everyone can benefit from all nature has to offer. Learn more at openspaceauthority.org/urban.

Measure Q provides for an Urban Open Space Program that will include addressing needs of urban communities that currently have limited access to preserves and parks. **Understanding Our Community** will be a guiding force as the Authority designs and implements this Program in concert

We strongly believe
that everyone should
have access to
nature, no matter
where they live.

MARC LANDGRAF
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MANAGER

with diverse community voices and perspectives. Our goal is to ensure that it is relevant and equitable to communities across the jurisdiction.

Access to nature in our cities improves health and quality of life in tangible ways. Parks and preserves offer us relaxation, a chance to restore our spirits and provide special places to play, think and dream. Nearby

parks and trails provide opportunities for exercise and healthy lifestyles, trees in urban neighborhoods keep us cool and improve air quality and community gardens provide affordable, nutrient-rich, fresh fruits and vegetables for our table. The Authority's Urban Open Space Program will help neighborhoods create the kinds of outdoor spaces and programs that they envision for their own communities. *Related article on page 2.*



Natural & Human Communities – Part of the Same Web

What do human communities have in common with natural communities of plants, trees, animals, and aquatic species? In short – everything! We all are part of our planet's amazing biodiversity – the sheer variety of species and life forms inhabiting the earth. Each life is part of the interconnected web upon which we all depend. By taking care of the web – whether it be mountains, foothills, farmland, grassy meadows, oceans and streams with fish or a sky full of birds – we are caring for ourselves as well as the whole of the planet. The web of life is not to be confused with the Internet – in Nature, you'll always be connected.





Urban Open Space Program

Lend Your Voice!

The Open Space Authority is currently gathering community input to inform the Urban Open Space Program and would like to learn from residents about what is needed and how this Program can help improve neighborhoods.

The Authority is working with cities, the county, schools and community-based organizations to help improve quality of life for urban residents by:

- protecting natural resources such as creeks and wildlife
- providing access to nature through parks and trails
- creating urban farms and community gardens
- engaging children and youth through nature education

We want to hear your ideas about trails, parks and preserves and how you and your family would like to spend time outdoors in your neighborhood. Please plan to attend one of these free community meetings to share your ideas. If you are unable to attend, visit www.openspaceauthority.org/urban to learn more about our community programs and complete our survey to share your ideas. We want to hear from you!

COMMUNITY MEETINGS SCHEDULE

March 23, 6-8pm, Gunderson High School, Room C2, 622 Gaundabert Ln, San Jose

April 4, 6- 8pm, Morgan Hill Cultural and Community Center, 17000 Monterey St, Morgan Hill

April 11, 6-8pm, Campbell Community Center, 1 W. Campbell Ave., Campbell

April 13, 7-9pm, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 2020 E San Antonio St, San Jose. *Note: This meeting will have Spanish translation.*

April 19, 6-8pm, Berryessa Community Center, 3050 Berryessa Rd, San Jose

April 26, 6-8pm, Benson Center, Williman Room, 500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara

May 2, 6-8pm, Tully Branch Library, 880 Tully Rd, San Jose. *Note: This meeting will be conducted in English and Vietnamese.*

Top: Ulistac Natural Area. Partially funded by the Urban Open Space Program.
Right: Akoma Drumming at Martial Cottle County Park. Partially funded by Urban Open Space Program.

MEASURE Q
INVESTING IN NATURE



OPEN SPACE ROUND-UP

Transparency Certificate of Excellence Awarded to Open Space Authority

District Transparency
Certificate of
Excellence Recipient



The Authority recently earned the Transparency Certificate of Excellence from the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF). This award recognizes the Authority's achievement of best practices in community outreach, website content and overall commitment to open and accessible government. "Our goal is to have open two-way communication with the public," said Kellie Guerra, Clerk of the Board. "We work to earn the public trust and create a system of transparency that encourages engagement with the public. Openness serves to strengthen our agency and also promotes efficiency and effectiveness in all of our operations." SDLF is a nonprofit organization formed to promote good governance and best practices among California's special districts.



OSA Recap



Volunteers got their hands dirty while planting native species at Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve. The grasses were carefully cultivated in the Authority's Native Plant Nursery to help restore essential habitats.



Local communities celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day by taking drum and dance lessons from Akoma Arts and Drum. People of all ages joined in the fun at Martial Cottle County Park.

Measure Q Expenditure Oversight Committee Now in Session!

The Open Space Authority is pleased to introduce the distinguished members of the Measure Q Expenditure Oversight Committee (pictured below): **Frank Cancilla, Jeff Micko, Marilyn Rodgers, Chris Kangas, William Kirkpatrick, Susan Skorey, and Hugh Graham.** Lauren Monack, Director of Administration and Finance for the Authority said, "We are excited to

MEASURE Q
INVESTING IN NATURE



move forward with this group of passionate and talented people who will play a central role in the implementation of Measure Q. They will help ensure accountability and transparency, as well as provide independent public oversight for all funds collected and allocated by Measure Q."

Measure Q was overwhelmingly approved by the voters in 2014 and will help to expand protection for the precious open space lands and natural resources in the Santa Clara Valley. The Open Space Authority began receiving Measure Q funds in January 2016.

who
am I
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If you spot me in the spring, I look much different than I do in the fall. (Hint: In the fall, I may have something on my head that weighs as much as 40 pounds). The easiest way to find me is to spy my bright white rump. I'm no lightweight — I weigh between 400 and 700 pounds and I'm not a picky eater either; I eat most types of grass, flowers and some leaves.



Investing in Agriculture: Stemming the Loss of Farmland

Without swift and decisive action, South County could be overtaken by urban sprawl within decades. Santa Clara County has lost over half of its farmland just in the past 30 years to development and half of the remaining 27,000 acres of production farmland could be lost in the next 30 years. The California Strategic Growth Council awarded Santa Clara County in partnership with the Open Space Authority a \$100,000 Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Strategy Grant to create a regional policy framework and plan to protect South County agricultural lands and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This endeavor, the first of its kind in the County, could result in more efficient growth, increase protection for high priority farmland, make the region more competitive for land conservation funding (from cap and trade revenues), and reduce speculation by landowners and farmers that threatens farmland viability on the edge of cities.

A Vision for Coyote Valley:

Agriculture and Agri-Tourism, Climate Resiliency, Water Resources, Wildlife and Healthy Communities

- Local source of fresh fruits and vegetables increases year-round access to healthful food
- Farmland helps store carbon and reduces levels of dangerous greenhouse gases
- Natural filtering and storage provide drinking water for 1.8 million people in the Valley
- Flood plains reduce risk of flooding downstream in dense urban areas such as downtown San Jose
- Wildlife linkages provide safe passage for endangered species between Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range
- Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve offers outstanding recreation just minutes from the urban core and connects thousands of acres of open space lands on both sides of Hwy 101

Farming and Ranching is Alive in Santa Clara County!

According to the Santa Clara County Agricultural Commissioner, the annual economic contribution of the County's agricultural sector is \$1.6 billion. Coyote Valley, the 7,400 acres stretching between South San Jose and Morgan Hill, is arguably the most important agricultural and natural landscape remaining in the South Bay.

Pajaro River Agricultural Preserve

Jake Smith, from the Authority's planning department, recently sat down to discuss local agriculture and the new Pajaro River Agricultural Preserve. Excerpts are below.

Why focus on farmland? According to Plan Bay Area, Santa Clara County's population is projected to grow by 400,000 people by 2035. Planning for how development will support this growth is just one side of the equation. The OSA is also working to conserve the landscapes our population depends on. Conserving local agriculture is a big part of that work because of the important role farmland plays in feeding us, absorbing greenhouse gases, and preventing floods.

How do you know what to preserve? Through the Authority's conservation vision report, the *Santa Clara Valley Greenprint*, we have identified agricultural



areas in Santa Clara County that offer significant conservation benefits. Many of these areas were subsequently adopted as Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) through Plan Bay Area (abag.ca.gov/priority), including Coyote Valley and Area "660" in Gilroy (south of Leavesley Rd., near Llagas Creek). PCA-designated areas are eligible for grant funding to protect or invest in these areas' resources. We're fortunate to qualify for funding from this program to help implement the *Valley Greenprint*.

Tell us about Pajaro River Agricultural Preserve.

The Pajaro River Agricultural Preserve is a 180-acre farm that borders both Llagas Creek and the Pajaro River and is surrounded by a growing network of protected lands. The Authority currently leases the preserve to Mike Chuck of C&F Farms, who's growing an array of vegetables. He's farming and getting familiar with the qualities of the land while we're developing a restoration and management plan for the Preserve.

What are the benefits of the Preserve? The Authority hopes the Preserve will demonstrate how we can balance agricultural production with ecological restoration. The Preserve is part of the Soap Lake Floodplain, which allows streams to fan out over farmland rather than cause flooding in urban areas downstream. We're planning to improve the stream's ability to flood portions of the property while restoring habitat for sensitive species and



migratory birds. It also closes gaps in the DeAnza Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail. So, in addition to local food production, flood protection, and habitat restoration, the Pajaro River Agricultural Preserve will also provide a new area for people to enjoy outdoor recreation, including hiking and birdwatching.



"If agriculture is to survive in South County, an innovative regional framework is needed to demonstrate that conserving farmland from development is a critically important climate change strategy. The time is now to align plans, programs, policies and investment affecting undeveloped agricultural lands to sustain the Valley's natural environment, support the local agricultural economy, and increase climate resiliency and adaptation in Silicon Valley."

ANDREA MACKENZIE
GENERAL MANAGER, SANTA CLARA
VALLEY OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY



Take a Walk on the Wildflower Side



This spring, California's most spectacular wildflowers will be on display at the newly-protected Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve. Although the preserve is not yet open to the public, the Authority will host over twenty docent-led wildflower hikes.

You'll see an amazingly beautiful wildflower display, and may even be greeted by the flutter of Bay checkerspot butterflies. Thanks to cattle who trim back non-native tall grasses, the wildflowers and butterflies on Coyote Ridge thrive. From masses of delicate Cream Cups to sunny yellow Johnny Jump-Ups to the clean lines of Blue-Eyed Grass to the aptly-named Most Beautiful Jewel Flower, there's an amazing diversity of flowers on the ridge.

The endangered Bay checkerspot is adapted specifically to the diverse mix of native flowers that grow on Coyote Ridge's serpentine soils. For endangered species, specialization can be a real problem. Over time, the Bay checkerspot's range and habitat has been fragmented beyond recognition by rapid development taking place all over the Bay Area. Climate change further threatens their delicate hold on existence. For the Bay checkerspot, Coyote Ridge is one of their last oases.

ANSWER: I am a Tule elk, the smallest elk in North America. Males grow a new rack of antlers, which are made of bone, each year. The antlers reach their full size in the fall for mating season. After the Gold Rush, Tule elk were nearly extinct in California. A rancher who lived near Bakersfield in the late 1800s saved a herd he found on his land. Then, in the 1970s, the state of California enacted laws to protect the elk and expand their range. A herd was established on Mount Hamilton and their descendants can now be found on the Coyote Ridge property. There are now about 5,100 Tule elk statewide.



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am I
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A Tale of Two Docents: Alice Lynch and Kathy Dollard



Alice Lynch and Kathy Dollard are docents extraordinaire and are frequently out on the trails and planning public hikes. They took a few minutes to share their views on being a docent.

Q: What do you most enjoy about being a docent?

Kathy: For me, it's the thrill of bringing people on a property that's not yet open to the public. There's an exciting feeling of discovery. You're on a trail together and – there are no footprints, no bike tracks – it's a timeless feeling.

Alice: Kathy and I both enjoy the exercise, too. We put on some serious miles, but we also stop to enjoy the view. Fortunately, our tour groups love that combination.

Q: What's it like leading groups on Coyote Ridge?

Kathy: Most people speeding by on 101 don't even know Coyote Ridge is there. In spring, there's a Persian carpet of wildflowers you can't see from the road.

Alice: The location never fails to surprise people. You get up onto that ridge and look down into that beautiful valley, and – well, it's like you've left civilization entirely.

Q: What's something most people don't know about Coyote Ridge?

Kathy: It's the only place the Bay checkerspots are thriving. This is it. The whole place is a dramatic demonstration of the effect of weeds. There's a line – weeds on one side, natives on the other. Species diversity and weed management are very abstract concepts, but when people can see the difference it's very instructive.

Alice: It's the cows that are mowing down the weeds. Most people don't know how beneficial cattle grazing can be. The cows are the big reason we have the wildflowers and the Bay checkerspot.

Q: What else should our readers know about this spring's wildflower hikes?

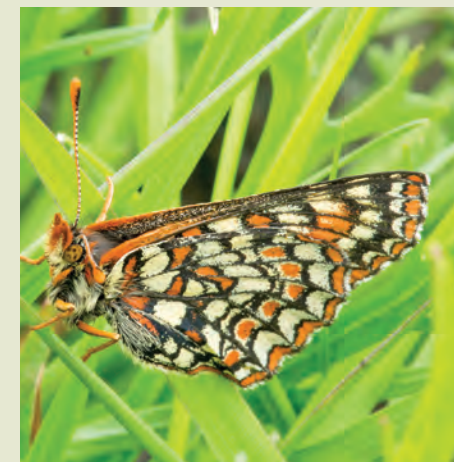
Kathy: Bring water. Wear sunblock.

Alice: Dress in layers. And if you can't make any of the scheduled hikes, you can always request a private tour.

Butterflies and their Bovine Buddies

Nature makes strange bedfellows. The survival of the delicate and endangered Bay checkerspot butterfly is inextricably linked to cows and their grazing of invasive plants that crowd out the butterfly's natural and essential habitat. Justin Fields, fifth-generation South County cattle rancher, grazes 125 head of cattle on the Authority's Coyote Ridge property – home to the Bay checkerspot. Justin says that what looks like weeds to the human eye is high nutrient feed for his cattle and includes wild oats, soft chess, Italian rye and others.


Justin's grazing practices support conservation of sensitive species on the land, "The land dictates how many cattle are on the property," said Justin. The Coyote Ridge grazing lease is one of six leases that comprise some 4,500 acres on the Authority's protected lands. Grazing has proven an effective conservation strategy to manage invasive plants and restore native species while reducing the risk of wildfire on open space lands.



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Coyote Ridgetop Hikes

Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays throughout March and April

This 6.5 mile round trip hike will gain 900 feet in elevation to the top of the ridge for amazing views and tons of wildflowers specific to these hills. You will have chances to see endangered butterflies, possibly burrowing owls, and all kinds of endangered and threatened plants. Learn more and register at coyoteridgewildflowers2016.eventbrite.com.



Starry Nights

Saturday, March 26, 2016
Rancho Cañada del Oro Open Space Preserve

Join our astronomers for a peaceful and cool evening out under the stars. Listen as they share their knowledge of the beautiful night sky! Directions can be found at openspaceauthority.org/trails/pdf/ranchodirections3-15.pdf