



green footnotes

Fifty Years of Preserving Open Space

by Alice Kaufman and Julie Hutcheson

When Committee for Green Foothills first organized 50 years ago, the concept of preserving open space was a new one. Most people felt that land was there to be developed—and in the post-WWII era of endless suburbs and the love affair with the automobile, development meant sprawling growth stretching as far as the eye could see. It was up to activists like the founders of CGF to stand in the way of turning the Peninsula into a giant megalopolis, just as other environmentalists fought to save San Francisco Bay and enact protective legislation such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts.

One of CGF's earliest attempts to stop urban sprawl was against the Master Plan for San Mateo County that envisioned a lattice of freeways crisscrossing the entire Peninsula. A new Coast Freeway was to be built in place of two-lane Highway 1, and a Willow Freeway from the Dumbarton Bridge, over the top of Skyline Ridge, straight down to San Gregorio, was to connect the peaceful coastside with the busy Bayside communities. Meanwhile, a new Bayfront Freeway was planned out in the Bay, east of San Francisco Airport, with the wetlands in between 101 and the new freeway to be filled in and developed. It took dedicated lobbying and advocacy on the part of many environmentalists to halt these plans. When we hike a trail along Skyline, or gaze at the ocean from a secluded beach on the coast, and say to ourselves, "It's hard to believe we're only a few miles from San Francisco," we are enjoying the legacy of those activists who fought so hard to save the natural beauty of this area.

Throughout the years, CGF has tirelessly worked to curtail unwise development and preserve undisturbed land. In 1969, the Army Corps of Engineers proposed damming Pescadero Creek and drowning redwood forests in a reservoir that would provide water to the future large population that the planned network of freeways would bring to Pescadero. CGF, along with other environmental groups, raised such an outcry that the proposal

was defeated. In Palo Alto, CGF helped to create the Baylands Preserve, the largest tract of undisturbed marshland in the Bay. And in 1972, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District was created through a CGF-inspired initiative with a charter to acquire lands for protection as open space.

Some areas in particular have required decades of persistent advocacy to realize positive long-term results. Edgewood Park in Redwood City and the Devil's Slide bypass are two such examples. Both entailed over two decades of diligent work on CGF's part to help protect these areas from unnecessary development. Now, Edgewood Park is a natural preserve permanently protected from development and soon, the stretch along Highway 1 known as Devil's Slide will become a pathway reserved for hikers and bicyclists.

Southern Santa Clara County is another area that has required our long-term diligence. Ensuring that the remaining fertile farmlands in the vicinities of San Jose, Morgan Hill, and Gilroy continue to be part of the agricultural landscape is a priority for CGF. Working with the various stakeholders, we seek not only to maintain the open space and agricultural lands that distinguish these cities from those in Silicon Valley, but also to attain widespread agreement on their indispensable value as either a natural resource or a food source.

Preliminary success has already occurred in the Coyote Valley area in the southern part of San Jose where prime farmland and a vital wildlife corridor between the Diablo Range and the Santa Cruz Mountains are fundamental features of the landscape. Attempts to replace these features with industry and housing, the latest via the Coyote Valley Specific Plan and the Coyote Valley Research Park, were abated because of our efforts. And recently, our advocacy, along with that of others, led to a new policy recognizing and protecting critical wildlife linkages in mid-Coyote Valley.

Continued on Page 3



COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS

We are a grassroots 501c3 nonprofit organization working to establish and maintain land use policies that protect the environment throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties.

Our mission is to protect the open spaces, farmlands, and natural resources of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties through advocacy, education, and grassroots action.

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Greetings from the Executive Director

by Cynthia D'Agosta

I find myself saying “whew” a lot these days as we celebrate our 50th year here at CGF. A lot of life happens in fifty years and Committee for Green Foothills has seen and done our share. As the saying goes, “Fifty is not old—for a tree”; and I'd add, “nor for CGF.” The way we look at it is, we're celebrating being half a century young! Indeed, celebration and change is in the air. As our dear friend Mary Davey would have said, “It's ‘partee’ time, wonderful people!” Please come join in the celebration and consider introducing a friend to CGF this year. Take a look at the events calendar—you'll see we've doubled up on our usual number of events. You can sign up for educational tours that are always informative and fun and hikes that are gorgeous and inspirational. Note also the location for CGF's birthday party this year, Runnymede Sculpture Farm, couldn't be more spectacular. We'll see you there!

In this edition of *GreenFootnotes* we touch a bit on historic challenges and victories, a bit on current events, and we look ahead to what's on the horizon. From our humble and inspired beginnings and every year since, CGF has been led by highly motivated and strongly visionary Board Presidents. Upholding this tradition is our current President, Margaret MacNiven, whose charming words on page three demonstrate her exemplary leadership as well as her passion for CGF's mission.

Lennie's article looks back at the environmental fights taking place in San Mateo County in the early days of our organization, and the ensuing changes brought about by these and other efforts in both the County and the state as a whole. We are reminded that CGF was at the forefront of many initiatives at that time as it is now, often with Lennie leading the charge.

Alice Kaufman and Julie Hutcheson provide both a nostalgic account of, and a forward thinking approach to, what our Advocates are watching and fighting. All of these stories demonstrate that although progress is made over time, our vigilance must be constant.

You'll see we've kicked off the second half of the CGF century with some changes—not to our mission or vision, of course—but to our organization's “look and feel.” You'll notice the new colors and style of *GreenFootnotes*, a change based on the look of our new website (launching by summer). We'll be revving up our social media strategy later in the year as well. When you visit the current website (in transition) you'll see upgrades on our donation page, event sign-up page, and elsewhere. What hasn't changed is our unwavering dedication to protecting open space.

We'll also be moving our offices downstairs at the Peninsula Conservation Center. We will have an open house in late spring—please plan to come and see our new space and chat with CGF staff.

According to *Business Week*, the average life expectancy of a multinational corporation is between 40 and 50 years. CGF is doing quite well—by that or any measure! 



Past and present CGF Directors on the Stegner hike. From left to right, bottom row: Jeff Segall, Betsy Bechtel, Pete LaTourrette, Lennie Roberts, Vice President Matt Burrows. Top row: Tom Jordan, Sue LaTourrette, Nancy Arbuckle, and President Margaret MacNiven.

Continued from Page 1

Despite CGF's many remarkable gains over the past half-century, our work to protect the open space and natural resources in both counties continues. The rural lands of the San Mateo County coast are continually at risk and even the highly built-out Bayside areas are subject to irresponsible development plans. The Cargill Saltworks proposal to build a mini-city of 30,000 people on the Redwood City salt ponds seems to harken back to the days of 50 years ago, when CGF founders were among those who protested the filling in of the Bay. And in Santa Clara County, the Southeast Quadrant of Morgan Hill—containing much of the last remaining prime agricultural land within the city's sphere of influence—is proposed for annexation and development.

In the face of constant pressure, we search for opportunities to work with others across the spectrum to reach our goals. The advancement of the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan is one such example where a diverse group of stakeholders, including CGF, has come together in a win-win situation for both the development proponents and those seeking to protect endangered species and their precious habitat.

For five decades now, CGF has been profoundly engaged in curbing urban sprawl and protecting the quality of life in the communities of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. We look forward to doing so for another 50 years. 

From the President

by Margaret MacNiven

If you do an internet search for environmental issues in 1962, you will find buried in the over four million hits variations on the following statement: *Committee for Green Foothills began in the Spangenberg living room in Palo Alto in 1962, with Ruth Spangenberg serving as Vice President, and Wallace Stegner serving as President.*

I attended Ruth's memorial service in Palo Alto recently, and learned more about this remarkable woman's life, her love for her community and her involvement in local growth issues as a young widow raising six children in the 1960s. The stories I heard that day got me thinking back 50 years to those days when the environmental movement was in its infancy. What was going on in 1962, and what events were shaping the future of the natural world that would bring out a passion to advocate for protection of natural and open spaces?



Ruth Spangenberg and sons at CGF event (circa 1970s)

The 1950s had been a time of economic recovery and huge growth in America following the devastating effects of the Depression and two World Wars which had dominated world events for the previous 35 years. The population was rapidly increasing with the arrival of the Baby Boomer generation, and families were moving in droves to newly developed suburbs where a seemingly endless supply of land was available. Industrial production was on the rise to satisfy a growing appetite for consumer goods, all of which could be built from the nation's vast supply of readily and easily available natural resources. Large agribusiness began to

dominate the farming industry and chemical fertilizers and pesticides were used to bolster crop production. Life appeared easy and economic growth limitless. However, there were those who were concerned that such growth was unsustainable and destructive to the environment.

In 1962, Wallace Stegner was a professor of creative writing at Stanford. He was passionate about the wilderness and nature, and believed that access to natural environments and open spaces is essential for one's spiritual health. He became concerned that uncontrolled growth on both a local and national level would lead to the destruction of open spaces—and our sanity. In 1960, he had written his *Wilderness Letter* to the federal government urging protection of remaining wild places. His work is often credited with bolstering testimony in favor of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

To celebrate his 103rd birthday this past February 18th, a group of CGF members hiked up to the Stegner bench on Long Ridge Open Space Preserve. There we gathered to celebrate his work as a founding member and first Board President of CGF. We listened to readings of his extraordinary works, all the while engulfed in a dizzying and damp fog that further reminded us how powerful nature can be.

In the early 1960s, the community of Palo Alto was divided between those who wanted to encourage local growth and develop Stanford Industrial Park into the foothills and up to Skyline, and those who valued the beauty of open spaces around the town and wanted them to remain in their natural state. The early CGF-ers urged a divided City Council not to approve permits for the Industrial Park, and even prepared a leaflet to inform the community of the issues at hand. At Ruth's memorial we heard the delightful story of Ruth attending a formal faculty dinner at Stanford with these leaflets pinned all over her gown, to the consternation of her husband, a professor at the University. The Council did not approve the development project. 

WHERE WERE YOU IN '62 ?

- > The **Beach Boys** and the **Rolling Stones** were rockin' our world.
- > **John Glenn** and fellow astronaut Scott Carpenter became the first American astronauts to orbit the Earth.
- > The first James Bond movie, **Dr. No**, was released.
- > **Tony Bennett** first recorded *I Left My Heart in San Francisco*.
- > **Rachel Carson's** *Silent Spring* was published, ushering in the modern environmental movement.
- > **Committee for Green Foothills** was founded!



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CGF Salutes Two Volunteers

Norman Arslan is one of CGF's most active volunteers. A resident of San Carlos and member since 1995, Norm is always enthusiastic and willing to contribute wherever help is needed. He has tabled at events, helped with display set-up and tear-down on numerous occasions, pitched in on mailings, and phone-banking. We are looking forward to the day when Norm's band, 5150—Crazy for Classic Rock, will play at a CGF event. You can listen to some of 5150's songs at <http://5150band.net> and, while you're at it, do some digging for some insight into the band's name.



We would also like to recognize the efforts of **Margarita Castro**, a resident of Gilroy. During the month of January, Margarita served as a Spanish translator at five of CGF's community outreach meetings at various Gilroy (state-run) preschools. Her valuable skills helped facilitate both CGF's presentations and our discussions with the preschoolers' parents. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Margarita for selflessly donating her time and skills to help us further our outreach goals in south Santa Clara County.



Volunteer Opportunities

Do you ever wonder how you can get involved?

We welcome our members to come in and volunteer their time, anytime! The Committee for Green Foothills is always in need of great thinkers and writers to contribute content to our website and newsletters, assist with grant writing, conduct research, help archive our history, and file/organize materials. If the bustle of the office isn't your calling, come and enjoy the outdoors by assisting at one of our outside events. Sign up to volunteer for tabling, event preparation, or rev up your creative juices and help with photography, sign development, postcards, or other outreach materials. As you can see, CGF is looking for volunteers of all types. Give us a call and we'll find something that suits your interest!

Are you missing out on Action Alerts?

CGF sends email *Action Alerts* to our members who have given us email addresses. Alerts provide background information and links to write or call elected officials. Alerts allow you to voice your support of, or opposition to, an issue. Send us an email if you're missing out and want to receive Action Alerts.

Get involved and make a difference!

Upcoming Events

2nd Annual South County Earth Day Celebration (Gilroy)

Saturday, April 21st, 10:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

After a very successful first year drawing 2,500 participants, the Committee for Green Foothills is once again teaming up with the South County Earth Day Committee to create a fun and educational event for the whole family.

Earth Day Fair @ Full Circle Farm (Sunnyvale)

Sunday, April 22nd, 11:00 a.m.—4:00p.m.

Full Circle Farm, a Sunnyvale nonprofit, is hosting its 5th annual Earth Day Fair. This family-oriented event features kid-friendly activities, farm animals, contests, bee-keeping and worm-composting demonstrations, and dozens of local earth-friendly organizations. This event will also have live music and local food vendors.

Los Altos Earth Day (Los Altos)

Saturday, April 21st, 11 a.m.4 p.m.

Meet us at the Los Altos History Museum Courtyard for some free fun for the entire family! Last chance to see the exhibit "Shaped by Water: Past, Present & Future". Visit CGF and other non-profits; pick up educational materials to guide your family in conserving and caring for our water resources.

Coastal Farm Tour (San Mateo County)

Saturday, August 4, 9:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Explore coastal farms and learn about farming techniques, strategies, and challenges on this annual CGF tour. Guests will have the opportunity to sample fresh-picked produce at each stop. The tour's scheduled programming will end at Pie Ranch for a delicious dinner and expert speakers.

50th Anniversary Party (Woodside)

Sunday, September 23, 2:30 p.m.—6:30 p.m.

Mark your calendars for the Committee for Green Foothills' Golden Anniversary celebration. The party will be held on the beautiful rolling hills of Runnymede Sculpture Farm in Woodside, where guests will have the opportunity to hike and explore, join in the activities, or simply sit back and take in the glorious scenery.



Averting Crisis: State of the Environment

by Lennie Roberts

“The people of San Mateo County are worried about their environment... Warning signs abound that the environment is deteriorating and the public feels it... People see traditional patterns of growth pressing on the absolute limits of air, land, and water, and they are looking for new ways of doing things. They want to curb population growth, save open space, protect irreplaceable natural resources, find new ways of moving around, and improve existing city environments. On the other hand, they do not want to sacrifice jobs, a healthy economy, or pay higher taxes.”

These were some of the key findings of a report titled *State of the Environment—San Mateo County* that the County’s Environmental Quality Coordinating Council published in 1972. Just two years before, the first Earth Day had awakened the entire country to an impending environmental crisis. Overpopulation and pollution were key themes of public concern throughout the country, and indeed, the world.

In San Mateo County, the EQCC’s report, based on an extensive public opinion survey and public hearings, included many far-reaching recommendations:

- Control population growth through strict land-use controls, while minimizing adverse social and economic effects of reduced growth rates
- Restore the vitality of deteriorating city centers rather than allowing sprawl
- Ensure that open space on the coastside, along Skyline, and in undeveloped bayfront areas remains as open space
- Protect San Francisco Bay and restore its water quality through a comprehensive regional effort
- Preserve important natural features, restore streams to their natural state, and address geologic hazards
- Pursue alternatives to the automobile, including bus service, rail rapid transit, and increased bicycle use; no further expansion of freeways unless they are part of a balanced transportation plan
- Curb air pollution, water pollution, and noise pollution; find alternatives to landfill for solid waste disposal
- Solve County problems on a regional basis

The EQCC report was amazingly portentous. Concerns expressed by the public back in 1972 have resulted in a sea change in public policy and significant strides towards a new vision with new priorities on open space, agriculture, and forest protection, containment of cities with effective urban/rural boundaries, and comprehensive transportation systems that emphasize alternatives to the automobile. CGF has been at the forefront of these initiatives:

- In 1972, voters approved Proposition 20, the Coastal Initiative, which set the stage for the most effective set of regulations for coastal protection in the world—the Coastal Act of 1976. San Mateo was the first county in the state to have its Local Coastal Program certified and has local permit authority with provisions for appeal on certain kinds and locations of projects in the County’s Coastal Zone. In 1986, voters approved the first-ever citizen’s initiative, the Coastal Protection Initiative, which prohibits the County Supervisors from discarding or weakening key County coastal protections without voter approval.
- In 1972, voters also approved establishment of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District in Santa Clara County. San Mateo Supervisors initially opted out, but quickly realized their folly and allowed annexation of the southern part of the County with voter approval in 1976. In 2004, the District expanded to include the coast from Devil’s Slide to Año Nuevo. The District has acquired over 50,000 acres in 40 years. Peninsula Open Space Trust, the amazingly successful land trust that was created by the District, has protected over 64,000 more acres through land acquisitions and easements.
- In 1972, voters in San Mateo County approved a ten-year Charter for Parks program, which set aside ten cents out of every dollar to acquire and develop County Parks. Although the Charter for Parks has long since expired, the County’s park system now includes an amazing variety from San Bruno Mountain to Pescadero, from Coyote Point Park along the Bay to the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve on the coast.

These actions in 1972 were just the beginning. Today there are many more agencies and local, state, and national laws that address environmental quality. These include:

San Mateo County 1972

- The State Water Resources Control Board, which regulates the amount of water that can be diverted from streams, and nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards, which protect water quality in streams, rivers, lakes, and San Francisco Bay.
- State and Regional Air Quality Management Districts, which are responsible for cleaning up our air.
- Far reaching state laws such as AB 32 and SB 375 which require regional efforts to curb carbon emissions, revitalize downtowns, and prevent urban sprawl.
- Multi-county cooperation such as the Grand Boulevard Initiative which seeks to revitalize El Camino as a vibrant corridor between Daly City and San Jose where people will enjoy living, working, and visiting.
- Strict new zoning laws that protect the San Mateo County's open space, agricultural lands, and timberlands as important resources that are essential counterparts to urban development.
- Mandates to reduce solid waste through source reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting.

The future will require even more diligence and action by the public. If the predictions of scientists are accurate, climate change and resulting sea level rise will place low-lying developed lands, including San Francisco Airport and much of the Bayshore Freeway, along with thousands of homes, at risk. CGF is ready to help with these new challenges, just as we have done the past 50 years. 

San Mateo County Bans Herbicide Spraying on County Roads and Parks

by Lennie Roberts

After six years of effort by CGF and residents of the Skyline and Coastside areas, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted 4-0, with Rose Jacobs Gibson absent, to ban broadcast spraying of herbicides along county roadsides. San Mateo joins Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte and Trinity Counties in choosing to mow weeds and brush instead of broadcast spraying.

The San Carlos and Half Moon Bay airports will continue to spray green spaces to discourage geese and other birds that create serious hazards to aviation, and spot spraying will be used in limited areas to control particularly invasive and/or resistant weeds.

CGF applauds the leadership shown by Supervisors Tissier, Groom, Horsley, and Pine in this and many other initiatives designed to protect human health as well as the environment.



KIM WEDEN – A Bright Spirit

Committee for Green Foothills recently lost one of its most energetic and enthusiastic supporters, Kim Weden, whose recent death is mourned by many.

Along with her husband Don, Kim was for many years a regular attendee at CGF events where she looked forward to seeing longtime friends and had many kind words of support for CGF's environmental advocacy work.

Kim was an avid fan of author Wallace Stegner, CGF's first President, and kept in her car an audio CD of him reading his essay *Remnants*. This was a favorite of hers, both for the content of the essay and the mellifluous sound of Stegner's baritone voice.

Kim hiked at Rancho San Antonio almost every day, where her warm smile and friendly manner won her new friends, including many who never formally met her but recognized her on the trail.

Her afternoon hikes often resulted in her being alongside the road to and from the field office of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District about the time the District staff were heading home from work. She would invariably give a wave and a smile to each of them as they drove by, thanking them for their work to preserve and maintain the open space resources she loved so much.

Her irrepressible, upbeat attitude and her generosity and concern for others brightened our world. We will all miss Kim and are grateful for the love she shared.



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Green Foothills Golden Celebration

A Committee for Green Foothills Event

Save the Date! **Sunday, September 23, 2012**

Runnymede Sculpture Farm, Woodside

More information and invitations coming soon!

