



greenfootnotes



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A Renewed Sense of Purpose

BY JULIE HUTCHESON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Recently I became a grandmother for the first time. Cradling my newborn grandchild in my arms, I was struck anew by how amazing it is that we exist here on this planet and how utterly dependent we are on nature. Each breath my grandchild takes, each flutter of his eyelids, reminds me that we must be responsible stewards of a delicate ecosystem that sustains our families and all life on Earth.

That's why I am heartened by Green Foothills' work to champion climate resilience and biodiversity by protecting local nature, wildlife, and people. Climate change threatens our shared future. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and dwindling biodiversity are not abstract concepts; they are the challenges that threaten the world our grandchildren will inherit. That makes Green Foothills' mission more vital than ever. I've had the privilege of being with the organization for 14 years, and now, gazing into my grandson's innocent eyes, I feel a renewed sense of purpose.

Through our work, we are protecting nature locally and contributing to the advancement of California's 30x30 initiative, a state goal of conserving 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030. Our Advocacy, Leadership, Healing in Nature, and Tribal and Indigenous Partnership programs help advance 30x30 objectives - build climate resilience, protect biodiversity, expand access to nature, strengthen tribal relationships, and sustain our food supply.

For decades we have been at the forefront of local environmental advocacy, helping protect more than 200,000 acres. We are advocating for protecting wildlife corridors in Coyote Valley, Juristac, and San Benito County, for more parks and green space in underserved areas such as East San Jose and East Palo Alto, and for safe farmworker housing in San Mateo County. As always, we are steadfast in addressing environmental opportunities and threats nimbly as they arise in the counties we serve.

Our bilingual and tuition-free Leadership Program broadens participation and perspectives in environmental advocacy by training and supporting the next generation of environmental justice activists. And, we continue strengthening alliances with local tribes and Indigenous groups by providing resources that add to their capacity, including leadership development and grant writing.

Join me at our Nature's Inspiration event on September 29 to celebrate our shared purpose and what we can achieve together. Tickets are available at greenfoothills.org/tickets.

We are a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to protect open space, farmland, and natural resources in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties for the benefit of all through advocacy, education, and grassroots action. We envision a resilient region where wildlife thrives, everyone has natural beauty to enjoy, and communities live in balance with nature.

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Photo credits: Cover photo of Yellow-billed Magpie in Coyote Valley by Dan Quinn; p.4 Coyote Valley sunset landscape by Stephen Joseph, Coyote Valley aerial photo by Derek Neumann; p.6 Harvey Bear Ranch County Park by Larry England; p.7 shorebirds by Scot Griffin, landscape on John Smith Road in San Benito County by Jenny Green.



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Leadership Program

Amplify Your Environmental Advocacy. Lead with Community.

Want to learn to lead effective environmental advocacy campaigns? Advance initiatives for environmental justice and conservation? Better prepare for leadership roles at nonprofits, public agencies, and community-based groups? Apply for the Green Foothills Leadership Program!

Tuition is free. Spanish language interpretation is provided for all sessions.

Classes meet one Saturday a month from January-August 2025, generally from 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Most sessions are held in person. Applicants must live in or serve communities in San Mateo, Santa Clara, or San Benito Counties.

Apply by 10/31/24 at greenfoothills.org/lead



"It made me feel empowered to make change and get involved."

- **Mel Sarmiento,**
Associate Director,
North Santa Clara Resource
Conservation District

"It taught me to build a campaign and provided the networking tools to be a successful leader."

- **Agustín Angel,**
Co-founder of Leaders4EARTH

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The Leadership Program is tuition-free thanks to the support of Applied Materials Foundation Community Fund, the County of Santa Clara, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (NSCRCD), Sand Hill Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Network's California Wildlife Program, and Green Foothills donors.



POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT THREATENS WILDLIFE IN COYOTE VALLEY

BY ALICE KAUFMAN POLICY AND ADVOCACY DIRECTOR

One of the biggest victories for the Bay Area's environment in recent years was the historic 2021 decision by the City of San Jose to protect Coyote Valley from industrial development. Coyote Valley, located in south San Jose, is critically important for wildlife, flood and groundwater protection, and farming. Large portions of this irreplaceable open space area have been acquired for conservation, and San Jose's actions have helped to stave off development on the remaining parcels.

Unfortunately, some landowners are still attempting to undo these protections and further put wildlife in harm's way. Green Foothills is leading the charge to defeat these development attempts and ensure that all of Coyote Valley is ultimately protected.

MONTEREY ROAD STUDY: CONCERNS FOR WILDLIFE, WATER, AND FARMING

In 2021 the San Jose City Council changed the land use and zoning in North Coyote Valley from industrial to open space and agriculture. At that same meeting, however, the Council also directed city staff to study the potential for allowing new recreational and commercial land uses along the Monterey Road corridor through Coyote Valley. The outcome of this study could have significant impacts on the critical wildlife corridor of Coyote Creek.

Monterey Road runs right through Coyote Valley, with the railroad next to it on the west side and Coyote Creek on its east side. The city's study will analyze the potential for new development on the land between Monterey Road and Coyote Creek. Since all the parcels in question are directly adjacent to Coyote Creek, any new development could cause noise, human activity, nighttime lighting, trash, and other impacts that will harm, stress, or drive away the animals that rely on Coyote Creek to migrate between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range.



Coyote Valley, looking west towards the ocean, with the Santa Cruz Mountains in the background. Fisher Creek is on the valley's west side (just above Monterey Road in the photo), and Coyote Creek is on the east side (just below Monterey Road). The land at issue in the city's study lies between Monterey Road and Coyote Creek.

The wildlife linkage of Coyote Valley depends on the valley's two creeks: Fisher Creek on the west side of the valley, and Coyote Creek on the east side. Many animals rely on creek corridors for both migration and live-in habitat. The denser vegetation, the greater variety of plant species, and the high-moisture environment offer diverse foraging, nesting, and breeding opportunities. Any impacts to the Coyote Creek corridor would affect the functionality of the entire Coyote Valley landscape linkage.

To cross Coyote Valley, animals must cross Monterey Road. The only alternative to attempting to run across the road is the Fisher Creek culvert at the northern end of the valley. Running across the road often has fatal results: more animals are hit by vehicles and killed on Monterey Road than on Highway 101. New development along Monterey Road will only exacerbate this problem by increasing traffic and blocking animals' access to the Coyote Creek corridor.

Another concern about development here is the flood risk. Coyote Creek floods frequently, with heavy storms typically causing the banks to overflow in low-lying areas. In 2017, Coyote Creek flooding caused over \$100 million in damage to urban areas in San Jose downstream from Coyote Valley. New development would worsen flooding for the rest of San Jose by decreasing the amount of open land absorbing floodwaters in Coyote Valley. In addition, any new development along Coyote Creek would itself be vulnerable to flooding from the creek.

Finally, development here would result in the loss of valuable farmland. All of the parcels along Monterey Road are zoned agricultural, and some of them are actively farmed. Santa Clara County has already lost the vast majority of its prime agricultural soils, and the valley that was once called the "Valley of Heart's Delight" for the beauty of its blossoming orchards now risks losing even more of its remaining farmland.

SAN JOSE'S LAWS AND POLICIES PROHIBIT MOST DEVELOPMENT IN THIS AREA

All of the parcels being studied lie outside San Jose's Urban Service Area, and the larger parcels also lie outside San Jose's Urban Growth Boundary. This means these sites are severely restricted in terms of the type and intensity of land use that is allowable.

The Urban Service Area (USA) is the boundary beyond which the city is not allowed to extend urban services such as water and sewer service, trash collection, and utilities. San Jose's General Plan states that development outside the USA is allowed only if it does not require a significant increase in public services or infrastructure.

The Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), adopted by the City Council in the 1990s and affirmed by the voters in 2000, is even more restrictive. San Jose's General Plan states that areas outside the UGB must be reserved for "rural, agricultural, open space, habitat, or other very low-intensity uses."

Some landowners are proposing that the rules should be changed to accommodate the type of urban development that would reap them huge profits. The study is unlikely to support this since changing the USA or the UGB would be difficult, time-consuming, and unlikely to succeed. Nevertheless, these landowners may persuade the City Council to embark on this process.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Once the study is complete and city staff release their proposal for how much, if any, new development to allow, the city must complete an environmental analysis of the potential impacts of that development. After that, the proposal can go to the City Council for a vote, which is expected to occur in 2025.

Green Foothills has been and will continue to be deeply engaged in the study process. We have been meeting with city staff and Councilmembers to provide our recommendations on the study, and urging the city to limit potential new land uses under the study to very low-intensity uses such as farmers' markets and farming-related educational programs such as 4-H clubs, consistent with the USA and UGB rules. Anything more intensive would harm wildlife, increase flood risk, and would be contrary to the city's laws and policies.

As the Monterey Road study process moves forward, we will continue to work to ensure that Coyote Valley's important environmental resources are protected from harmful new development.

For more information about the potential consequences of development along the Monterey Road corridor, see our detailed analysis at greenfoothills.org/corridor-study. For updates and action alerts, see our blog at greenfoothills.org/blog and sign up for our email newsletter at greenfoothills.org/subscribe.



Alice Kaufman, Policy and Advocacy Director, has been on staff since 2012. She leads Green Foothills campaigns throughout our region, including the campaigns to protect Coyote Valley and Juristac.

Welcome New Donors!

January 1 - June 30, 2024

Green Foothills depends on your donations to protect nature and wildlife, save farmland, and secure more equitable access to open space close to home. Thanks to our generous supporters for making our work possible. For a complete list of donors, please visit greenfoothills.org/OurDonorCommunity.

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Create a Lasting Legacy With Green Foothills

By including Green Foothills in your will or estate plans, you can ensure the protection of local nature for generations to come.

Join the Mary Davey Legacy Society, named in honor of our dedicated board member, Mary Davey. From 1968 until her passing in 2010, she was a passionate advocate for social justice and the environment. She inspired us to celebrate those wonderful people who have included Green Foothills in their legacy planning.

To learn more visit greenfoothills.org/legacy or contact Justyne Schnupp, Associate Development Director, at justyne@greenfoothills.org.



Green Foothills Is Watching...

San Mateo County

SAN MATEO COUNTY FLOOD & SEA LEVEL RISE RESILIENCY DISTRICT – which is proposing a giant artificial lagoon in San Francisco Bay that could result in deadly algae blooms, destruction of wetlands, and other harmful impacts to the Bay. This unprecedented project would construct a 2.65-mile-long offshore barrier stretching from San Francisco Airport to the San Mateo border, walling off 670 acres of the Bay. We are urging that the proposal be dropped.



Santa Clara County

CITY OF SAN JOSE – which is considering allowing commercial and recreational uses along Monterey Road in Coyote Valley. For more information, see pages 4-5.

San Benito County

COUNTY OF SAN BENITO – where voters in November 2024 will have a chance to vote for the protection of farmland, rangeland, and other rural land. We are supporting this ballot measure, which would require future voter approval for development on these lands, thus making it harder to greenlight new commercial development that could block critical wildlife corridors.

Green Foothills Applauds...

San Mateo County

CITY COUNCIL OF REDWOOD CITY – for rejecting a proposal to cut park impact fees, which pay for new parks that are needed when development causes existing parks to be overburdened. The Council's vote ensures that Redwood City will not fall further behind in providing enough parkland for its growing population.

Santa Clara County

SANTA CLARA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS – for unanimously approving an ordinance requiring new quarries and mines to maintain a 50-foot buffer from groundwater. Since mining operations can result in groundwater contamination, this is an important step to protect our groundwater resources.

San Benito County

SAN BENITO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION – for voting to deny the expansion of the John Smith Road Landfill to five times its current size. This landfill expansion would have turned hundreds of acres of rangeland into a mountain of garbage visible from Highway 25, as well as increasing the risk of groundwater contamination and air pollution.



For the latest news, please visit greenfoothills.org/blog or subscribe to our email newsletter at greenfoothills.org/subscribe.



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nature's inspiration

Celebrate on the Coast

You're invited to our 21st annual
Nature's Inspiration celebration at
Oceano Hotel & Spa in Half Moon Bay
on September 29
from 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Enjoy a lovely day on the San Mateo coast and celebrate its beauty and our work to protect it. **Congresswoman Anna Eshoo**, a longtime supporter of Green Foothills, will be our special guest speaker.



This fun event will feature great company, delicious appetizers made from locally sourced ingredients, a signature cocktail, and an exclusive look at our new video about our coastal work. **Sponsor benefits include pre-event Meet & Greet with Congresswoman Eshoo** from 10:30-11:00 a.m. Sponsorships start at \$500. Tickets are available at \$225 per person.

Sponsor or buy tickets today at
greenfoothills.org/natures-inspiration

