

OSA Outlook



Message from the General Manager The Healing Power of Nature

Dear Friends,

This Winter Newsletter focuses on restoration and the healing power of Nature. In the aftermath of the recent Loma Fire that burned close to 5,000 acres of natural habitat in the Uvas Watershed and destroyed 12 homes to a contentious national election that has fueled division and a sense of disconnection and disease, people need connection with nature and community now more than ever.

“Nature helps a neighborhood rediscover its community” says Pascal Mittermaier, Director for Cities at The Nature Conservancy. “We must bring nature back to our cities, and in doing so, make them vibrant, resilient places where people can thrive.” At the Santa Clara Valley



Open Space Authority we couldn't agree more. On November 10th, the Authority's Board of Directors awarded the first round of urban open space grants under **Measure Q**, the *Open Space, Wildlife Habitat, Clean Water and Increased Public Access Measure* approved by over 2/3rds of voters in 2014. This competitive annual grant program is designed to protect open space, wildlife habitat and corridors and create nature-based parks; implement bicycle trail connections; plant trees; create and expand urban farms and community gardens to support public health and local agriculture; and expand

science-based environmental education programs and hands-on youth engagement projects to build community. The Board of Directors, with input from the Citizen's Advisory Committee, awarded \$1.55 million to fifteen diverse urban open space projects ranging from creating community gardens to restoring Coyote Creek; creating a community open space on a vacant lot and planting trees in park poor, low income neighborhoods; getting youth out on nature trails and linking trails to

new transit hubs; expanding environmental education opportunities for youth; all projects which connect our diverse urban populations to nature and to one another. It is also our intent that these grants build the capacity of communities to do incredible place-making nature-focused projects in urban areas.

For many of us, our fondest childhood memories are rooted in unstructured play in the outdoors – climbing trees, picking dandelions, playing in creeks and building forts. For many children today, those kinds of outdoor nature experiences are just not accessible. That's why the Authority is excited that the Children's Discovery Museum has broken ground on *Bill's Backyard: Bridge to Nature*, a 27,500 square foot outdoor nature space in the heart of downtown San Jose along the Guadalupe River. The project is funded in part by the Open Space Authority, the State Coastal Conservancy and First Five and will encourage unstructured outdoor play and interactive nature experiences that instill in all children, a sense of wonder and curiosity about nature in the Santa Clara Valley.

From all of us at the Open Space Authority, we wish you a season of peace and hope and encourage you to give yourself a gift — visit one of our free *open space preserves* — beautiful, peaceful natural spaces where you can connect with what and who really matters in your life. You can find your open space at openspaceauthority.org.

Peace,

Andrea Mackenzie

Measure Q Urban Open Space Grant Awards Exceed \$1.55 Million Fifteen Organizations Receive Funds for Local Conservation Projects

The Open Space Authority Board of Directors has awarded \$1,553,077 in the initial grant cycle for the Measure Q Urban Open Space competitive grant program. The \$1.5 million in grant awards leverages more than \$1.1 million in matching funds from the grantee organizations for a total urban open space investment of more than \$2.6 million.

The Authority awarded grants in each of its seven districts, which include Milpitas, San Jose, Santa Clara, Campbell, Morgan Hill and unincorporated parts of the county. Details of three projects, representative of the range of grantees are provided below at the left.



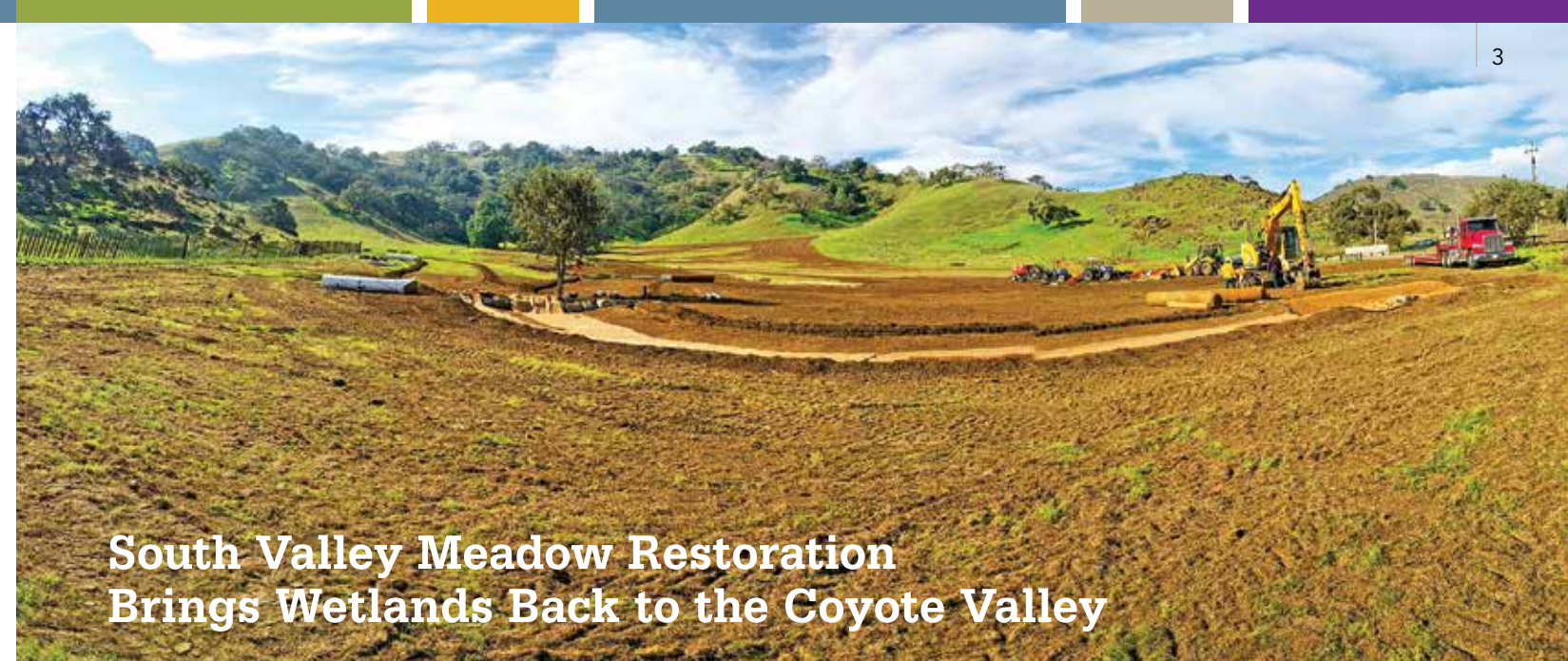
The Guadalupe River Park Conservancy received \$24,987 for its environmental education program. “For many local children, Guadalupe River Park is as close to wilderness as they’ve been,” said Leslee Hamilton, Executive Director of the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, “After we discuss what they might find (no, there are no bears), get them into waders, and turn them loose to find macro-invertebrates, measure stream flow and turbidity, or test oxygen levels, they gain an appreciation for the river and a huge boost in confidence.”

Bay Area Wilderness Training (BAWT) received \$40,000 for its South Bay Capacity Building Project. “Many teachers and youth workers want to bring youth outdoors but lack experience organizing such outings and are unfamiliar with the logistics, equipment and safety skills involved,” said Scott Wolland, Executive Director for Bay Area Wilderness Training. “BAWT addresses this barrier by educating them through our hands-on leadership training courses, giving them the knowledge and confidence needed to take their youth on outdoor trips.”

Latinos United for a New America (LUNA) received \$250,000 for Nuestro Lugar, a multi-use open space along a quarter mile of Midfield Avenue in East San Jose. “The most important lasting impact of this project is that it will create a new capability in the Midfield community to act on its own behalf,” said Chava Bustamante, Executive Director of LUNA. “The current community members are isolated from each other, are often victims of crime, and live in cramped conditions in order to afford rent. This project will unite residents in a common cause, bring them together as they share their new (and only) open space.”

All 2016 Measure Q Urban Open Space Program grantees and projects are listed below and additional details are available at openspaceauthority.org.

Grantee	Award
Bay Area Ridge Trail Council - Gateway to Trails and Parks: Ridge Trail Interpretive, Wayfinding and Outings Project at Berryessa BART	\$51,401
Bay Area Wilderness Training - South Bay Capacity Building Project (Getting Underserved Youth Outside)	\$40,000
City of Campbell - Nido Neighborhood Reforestation	\$48,829
City of Morgan Hill - Morgan Hill Community Garden Expansion and Relocation	\$248,012
Friends of Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County - The Master Gardener Community Education Center at Martial Cottle Park: Supporting the Environment at Your Own Home	\$132,353
Guadalupe River Park Conservancy - Environmental Education for Title One Students and Boys & Girls Club Members	\$24,987
Joseph George Middle School / Citizen Schools - Joseph George Learning Lab / Community Garden	\$25,000
Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful - Coyote Meadows Park Community Planning and Concept Project	\$76,703
Latinos United for a New America (LUNA) - Nuestro Lugar	\$250,000
San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory - Coyote Creek Field Station Environmental Education Program	\$34,500
San Jose State University Research Foundation - CommUniverCity: Growing Sustainably	\$166,740
Santa Clara County Creeks Coalition - Coyote Creek Homeless Stream Stewards Trash Free Coyote Creek	\$12,142
Santa Clara County Food System Alliance - Small-Scale Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in Santa Clara County	\$24,999
Santa Clara County Public Health Department - Park and Play Initiative	\$250,000
The Regents of the University of California / UCCE Santa Clara County - Development of a Small and Urban Beginning Farmer Learning Hub at Martial Cottle Park in Santa Clara County	\$167,411



South Valley Meadow Restoration Brings Wetlands Back to the Coyote Valley



Hundreds of years before the Coyote Valley became farm and rangeland, it supported vast wetlands, wet meadows, and oak woodlands that connected wildlife populations migrating between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. In past decades, Coyote Valley was considered opportune for urban expansion. Presently, some are reimagining its future – and viewing the restoration of Coyote Valley’s natural ecosystems as an important strategy for climate change adaptation.

The Open Space Authority recently began construction on a project that offers a model for land and natural resource restoration that could be applied throughout the Coyote Valley. The South Valley Meadow Restoration Project spans 8.5-acres near the main entrance of the protected Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve located at the

end of Palm Avenue (off Hale Avenue in Morgan Hill).

The project restores more than 500-feet of stream and removes a series of agricultural drainage ditches. The restoration reconnects the stream

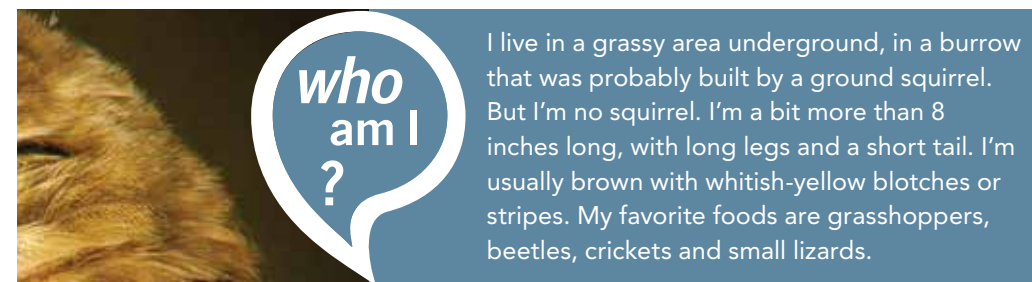
“The South Valley Meadow Restoration Project is partially funded by the voter-approved Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program parcel tax passed in November 2012. This 15-year program includes 28 projects to improve water supply reliability, the environment and flood protection in Santa Clara County.”

Karna DuQuite, Supervising Program Administrator at the Santa Clara Valley Water District

and the upper watershed to the valley floor, thereby allowing the landscape to capture and absorb rainfall and streamflow.

“We’re excited about this project’s potential to inspire larger restoration efforts throughout the Coyote Valley,” said Jake Smith, Conservation GIS Coordinator, Open Space Authority. “Restoring these natural resources helps both wildlife and people adapt to climate change—and makes the most out of the landscape’s ability to provide benefits like reduction of greenhouse gases in the air, water quality improvements, groundwater recharge, and flood risk reduction.”

The Authority will replant the meadow with a suite of native plant species, increasing plant diversity and food sources for wildlife. The plants will improve carbon (CO₂) capture and storage, and enhance the meadowland’s ability to capture and absorb rainfall. Restoration of this 8-acre natural water resource and wildlife habitat offers greater resilience and protection for wildlife and human communities in the face of climate change.

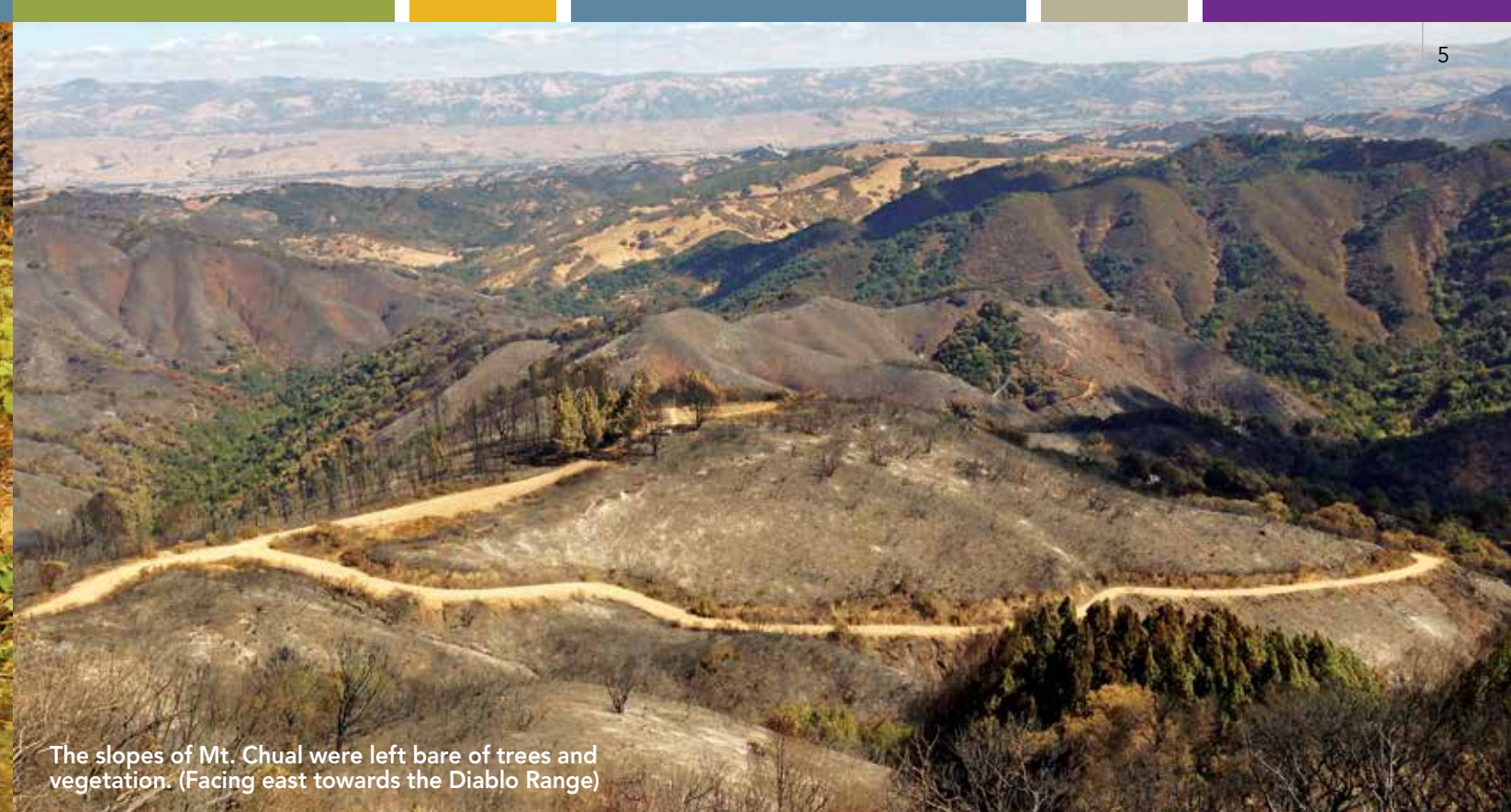


who am I ?

I live in a grassy area underground, in a burrow that was probably built by a ground squirrel. But I’m no squirrel. I’m a bit more than 8 inches long, with long legs and a short tail. I’m usually brown with whitish-yellow blotches or stripes. My favorite foods are grasshoppers, beetles, crickets and small lizards.



The Loma Fire burns along Llagas Creek in Rancho Cañada del Oro – the preserve’s trail system was largely unaffected by the fire.



The slopes of Mt. Chual were left bare of trees and vegetation. (Facing east towards the Diablo Range)



Loma Fire Recovery Efforts Focus on Watershed Restoration

The Loma Fire began on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 26 and was fully contained nearly two weeks later on October 10. Twelve homes were destroyed along with sixteen outbuildings. Fortunately, no human lives were lost.

General Manager Andrea Mackenzie said, “Our sympathy goes out to all of those who experienced trauma and loss from the Loma Fire. All of us at the Open Space Authority are grateful to CalFire and the numerous agencies that worked tirelessly to contain the fire and minimize losses of life, property and damage to natural resources.”

The fire burned a total of 4,475 acres of which 1,930 acres, or 43%, were open space lands managed by the Open Space Authority. The fire burned 1,500 acres of open space on Mt. Chual, on the east-facing side of the Santa Cruz Mountains, leaving steep slopes bare of trees and other vegetation in its wake. Due to wind and extremely dry conditions, the Mt. Chual area burned the hottest and the fire consumed most of the trees, along with chaparral and other vegetation.

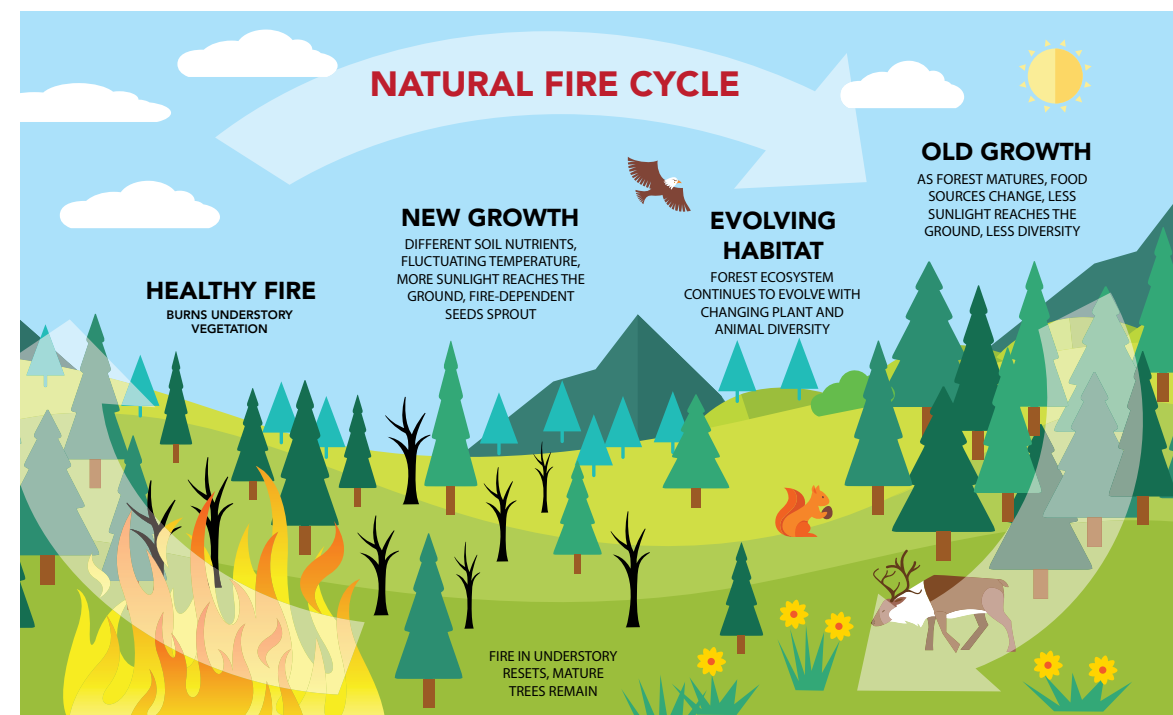
Derek Neumann, the Authority’s Field Operations Manager, said, “Our immediate concerns for the Mt. Chual open space lands are erosion and runoff, which the winter rainstorms will exacerbate. Storms could likely unleash significant amounts of debris and sediment into the creeks and streams, which will clog drainage and affect water quality in the downstream Chesbro Reservoir. The Authority’s Upper Uvas watershed property also burned and likely will release debris and sediment into creeks that drain to the Uvas Reservoir.

“Early estimates indicate that the Open Space Authority’s restoration and recovery costs may exceed \$1 million. Our internal Loma Fire Response Team will manage the short and long term impacts on water supplies, trees, vegetation and wildlife,” said General Manager Andrea Mackenzie. The Open Space Authority will work with the County, CalFire, the Watershed Emergency Response Team, Santa Clara Valley Water District, the Hollister office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other partners on the post-fire restoration effort. The Authority will seek partnerships and funding assistance for its restoration work from local, state and federal agencies.

“We are also extremely concerned about potential damage to the land and safety posed by trespassers that ride motorized vehicles on the slopes left bare by the fire. We have increased our presence at Mt. Chual and are installing fencing and signage to discourage trespassers and educate them about the need to allow the vegetation to regenerate and get re-established,” said Neumann.

“We won’t know until spring 2017 whether the seeds in the soil were destroyed,” said Galli Basson, Resource Management Specialist at the Open Space Authority, “Hopefully the winter rains will cause them to regenerate. It is even possible that some rarely seen native plants will emerge that are dependent on fire to release their seeds.”

The Open Space Authority will continue to inform and educate the public about the Loma Fire restoration and recovery effort through interpretive signage, programs, newsletters, social media and other venues.



“Our docents are already preparing educational programs to help visitors understand what to expect over the next several years in terms of regeneration and restoration of vegetation and wildlife. Wildfire is a process that occurs naturally and is also practiced as a land management tool. It can be beneficial to open space lands and even contribute to diverse species and habitat over time. For instance, after a much smaller fire on open space lands, docents saw whispering bell flowers for the first time in more than ten years.”

TERI ROGOWAY
Education Program Coordinator

Advanced Technology Supports Wildlife Protection

In the heart of Silicon Valley, researchers are using technology to track and protect the wildlife that calls Santa Clara Valley home. The *Coyote Valley Bobcat and Gray Fox Connectivity Study*, which maps and analyzes wildlife movement, is funded in part by Peninsula Open Space Trust, the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Local Assistance Grant Program.

"Prior research clearly demonstrates the value of Coyote Valley as a critically important linkage for wildlife," said Neal Sharma, Stewardship Project Manager at Peninsula Open Space Trust. "The goal of the gray fox and bobcat study is to yield detailed information about the ways in which these animals move across and within the valley floor."

To build upon the findings of the *Coyote Valley Wildlife Linkages Assessment* report,* the Open Space Authority is partnering with UC Santa Cruz, Pathways for Wildlife, and the Peninsula Open Space Trust to obtain more focused data on the movement of gray foxes and bobcats with the new study. Researchers will attach



Gray Fox

radio-collars to these animals to map out where they move and cross roads, what paths they are using, and which habitats they prefer.

"Protecting key connecting habitat will be essential to preserving these species and ensuring their survival," said Galli Basson, resource management specialist at the Open Space Authority. "This detailed data will enable local agencies, conservation organizations, and planners to make well-informed decisions about where to locate wildlife crossings to provide safe passage for these animals – and help tip the odds in their favor."

* CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District

ANSWER: I am a burrowing owl. Although I'm not listed as endangered by the federal government, I'm considered a "species of special concern" in the state of California. My habitat is threatened by development, pesticides, habitat fragmentation, as well as by introduced predators such as cats and dogs. I can fly, although I usually choose to remain close to the ground. I breed in the spring. Females lay between 3 and 12 eggs, which hatch in about a month. Owl chicks can hunt for insects on their own when they are about 6 weeks old.

who am I ?



Regional Conservation Gains Support Under AB 2087

Governor Brown recently signed AB 2087 into law, thereby establishing a conservation planning tool called a Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) to promote the conservation of species, habitats, and other natural resources. The Santa Clara County RCIS, which addresses Santa Clara County and northern San Benito County, is one of four pilot RCISs currently being developed in California.

Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority is sponsoring the RCIS and developing the strategy with partner organizations, agencies and the assistance of a consultant team. The RCIS takes into account existing plans and other information, including the *Santa Clara Valley Greenprint*, the *Valley Habitat Plan*, and the *Bay Area's Conservation Lands Network*. It promotes implementation of landscape-scale conservation actions, such as habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement measures including efforts to enhance landscape connectivity for wildlife.

Once finalized, the Santa Clara County RCIS can help expedite delivery of public infrastructure projects by facilitating regional advance mitigation planning: a process in which the environmental mitigation for impacts from multiple projects is pooled and conducted in advance, resulting in larger conservation projects that have greater benefits, while expediting delivery of public infrastructure projects such as transportation or water supply projects.

For more information on RCIS, please visit the California Department of Fish and Wildlife website at www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Planning/Regional-Conservation.



Local Agricultural Lands Bolster Resilience to Climate Change

View of Coyote Valley from top of Coyote Ridge

The Santa Clara Valley, once the fruit and vegetable basket for the nation, has lost 45% of its farmland to development in just the last two decades. The rapid population growth projected for Santa Clara County over the next 30 years puts the remaining 27,000 acres at high risk of development.

To protect California's irreplaceable croplands and rangelands, the State of California launched the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP) in 2015. With grant funds from SALCP, the County of Santa Clara and the Open Space Authority have initiated the Santa Clara Valley Climate and Agriculture Protection Program (CAPP). The CAPP in partnership with the cities of San Jose, Morgan Hill, and Gilroy, is working to map and prioritize agricultural lands in Santa



Clara Valley for conservation, identifying the regional greenhouse gas reduction potential of these lands, and creating local programs to support long-term

conservation of agricultural land in Santa Clara County.

"We are working closely with the county and key stakeholders to design an innovative conservation strategy tailored to Santa Clara Valley," said Andrea Mackenzie, General Manager for the Open Space Authority. "The plan will include land purchases, conservation easements, transfer of development rights, grant funding and strong policies

and incentives to preserve the precious remaining agricultural land in the Santa Clara Valley region."

Working Together for Education, Fitness, and Fun

When people get out and experience the great outdoors, they crave even more! "By working with local partners, we are able to reach more people in a welcoming and personal way," said Teri Rogoway, the Authority's Educational Programs Coordinator."

Learning to Love the Great Outdoors

Latino Outdoors and Bay Area Wilderness Training (BAWT) help connect children and families to Nature with organized hikes and outdoor adventures.

Getting Active With Tai Chi and Bollywood Dance

The Morning Crane Healing Arts Center and Travel Backyard offer free tai chi and Bollywood dance classes in local parks.

Learning to Understand and Protect Wildlife

The Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center features rehabilitated animals who cannot return to the wild. Elementary school children learn about nature from direct experience with live animals.

Connecting With the Universe Under the Stars

The San Jose Astronomical Association and the Open Space Authority have created a truly awesome stargazing experience that shows the beauty and mystery of the night sky!

For event calendar, visit www.openspaceauthority.org/activities.

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Wishing You a Dazzling Holiday Season