

Program Application: 81795613

Linked Pre-Application Form - DO NOT DELETE

Community engagement and stewardship in Alum Rock Park

Grant Amount Requested

\$38,669.22

Organization Name

Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship

Urban Grant Program Application Questions

Overview

Type of project (check all that apply)

Grant category (check all that apply)

Environmental Stewardship and Restoration, Parks, Trails, and Public Access, Environmental Education

Project Location: Address / Neighborhood

What is the physical location of the project? If there is no physical location, please enter "N/A." If the project will be in multiple locations, please list all. Note: project location(s) must be within the Authority's jurisdiction.

The Dig Day volunteer event will take place in Alum Rock Park, located at 15350 Penitencia Creek Road, San Jose, CA 95127. The staff training and planning components of this project will take place in a combination of locations: on site in Alum Rock park, on site in San Jose Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services offices, and remotely, as appropriate.

Project Location

Open Space Authority District of Project Location(s)(check all that apply)

Authority District 7

Who does the project serve? Please indicate which Open Space Authority Districts are served (where do the people served by the program live) (check all that apply)

Authority District 2, Authority District 6, Authority District 7

Project Abstract

Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship (SCMTS) seeks funding to provide San Jose City Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services with staff training and a public 'Dig Day' volunteer event hosted by SCMTS in Alum Rock Park. The training will cover sustainable trail maintenance and repairs, volunteer stewardship, and volunteer training, and will include planning support throughout the project duration. This project is intended to kickstart a new volunteer trail stewardship program for Alum Rock Park that will ultimately be led by Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services staff. This program will be based on SCMTS's successful Dig Day volunteer event model that provides long-term environmental and trail stewardship, increased public access, public education, and strong community-building.

Project Planning

Describe the proposed project.

THE PROJECT

SCMTS envisions a future where outdoor adventures spark collective care for open spaces, helping communities and landscapes thrive together. SCMTS partners with agencies, cities, counties, and other land managers throughout the greater Bay Area to support access to the outdoors and community & climate resilience. In addition to trail construction and stewardship, we engage community through volunteer programs and events, provide online & in-person education, and support local fire restoration and prevention.

For this project, the San Jose City's Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) department seeks SCMTS's expertise in training

volunteer leaders, mobilizing the local community to become invested local park stewards, and hosting educational and community-building events. SCMTS will specifically provide San Jose City PRNS with:

Education and program planning support in the form of our Trail Crew Leader Training and selected Trail Academy classes for 5 key staff and community members (including Park Rangers and a community leader) in East San Jose/Alum Rock
Planning and hosting 1 Dig Day volunteer event in Alum Rock Park - during Dig Days SCMTS-certified trail crew leaders lead up to 80 total volunteers in groups of 8-10 in trail maintenance activities

The goal of providing this training and hosting a Dig Day (including planning and community outreach support) is to set up San Jose PRNS to have their own ongoing volunteer trail maintenance event program in Alum Rock Park. This Dig Day will officially launch that program. This program will serve the need for community events, deeper community connection to nature, and immediate and ongoing improved public access and safety in the Park in a cost-effective model.

BACKGROUND

Alum Rock Park is supposed to be an important nexus for community events and services for the Alum Rock and East San Jose communities. Due to a long history of marginalization and a lack of access to nature for local residents, East San Jose and the Alum Rock neighborhood, in particular, are included in Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority's (SCV OSA) "Deep Engagement Communities."

Local community groups, supported by San Jose State University developed the Community Priorities for the Alum Rock Corridor report in 2020. This report presents a list of 11 community-identified priorities, which include:

- Enhance Cleanliness and Safety of Parks, Streets, and Gardens
- Expand Access to Open Space and Parks
- Improve Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety
- Make More Space for Recreation Centers and Outdoor Events and Festivals

San Jose PRNS seeks to build connections to nature for the residents of East San Jose in alignment with these community-developed and City-wide priorities.

Alum Rock Park was founded in 1872 and is one of California's oldest municipal parks. The Park encompasses 720 acres nestled in Alum Rock Canyon. Park activities and amenities include hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, picnicking, barbecue pits, water and restrooms, lawns, and a children's playground. PRNS staff offer a variety of educational programs in Alum Rock Park. There is therefore a great need to ensure trails are safe, maintained, and accessible.

At the same time, there have been significant cuts to programs and staffing in recent years, including key programs such as the Summer Camp which offered summer hiking, exploring creek waters, bird watching and other recreational activities to youth from 5-14 (program cut in fiscal year 2025). The City's ability to support more outdoor events and programs is therefore currently decreasing, not growing.

Moreover, a significant amount of maintenance in the Park has been deferred in recent years due to these same funding shortfalls. This is particularly problematic in Alum Rock Park, as it is prone to storm damage due to the steep terrain and narrow corridors. This leads to heavy erosion along both the trails and roadways going into the park during the rainy season and many trail and road closures. With the increasing frequency of both droughts and torrential rains due to the impacts of climate change, these problems are expected to worsen in the coming years.

Taking all these factors into consideration, the need for stewardship and maintenance in Alum Rock Park is not something 'nice to have' for the community, but increasingly a critical need to ensure safety and climate resilience, while increasing public access and connection to nature.

Despite the significant need for ongoing park maintenance and community programs in Alum Rock Park, the City of San Jose has neither the resources, nor the staff to address these issues at this time. The PRNS team therefore requested SCMTS's support as outlined in this project. As the department does not have the funds to contract SCMTS for this project, we are seeking grant funding from the SCV OSA's Urban Grant Program to cover the costs associated with developing this much-needed program in partnership with the City of San Jose's PRNS department.

OUTCOMES

The Dig Day event will engage 50-80 local community members in a full day (9 am to 3/3:30pm) of community building, learning, and trail maintenance/repairs in Alum Rock Park. Dig Days include free breakfast and lunch, snacks, and end-of-day refreshments, education on trail maintenance and the local flora and fauna, trail maintenance skill building, team building activities, and typically raffles & prizes sponsored by local businesses as well. Dig Days are suitable for most ages and abilities (small children can join with their parents/guardians, however, children

younger than 3 are not encouraged for full Dig Days. Similarly, we work hard to ensure these volunteer events are accessible for as many participants as possible - physically, linguistically, and culturally - however, the park trails where the volunteer maintenance takes place may not be accessible for wheelchair users, based on the limitations in Alum Rock Park). To increase accessibility for the public, all tools and safety equipment (helmets, goggles as needed, etc.) are provided for the event (though volunteers are welcome to bring their own, if they have them).

Alum Rock and East San Jose community members will benefit from this project through direct connection to nature and each other and nature-based learning regarding the environment and trail maintenance as a result of their Dig Day attendance. Based on SCMTS's decade+ of experience hosting these volunteer trail stewardship events (we hosted our first Dig Day in 2013), the long-term impacts of this type of community program include deeper community relationships, increased understanding and appreciation of the benefits of open space access, knowledge of invasive and native plants in their local parks, and the development of a new generation of land stewards and environmental leaders. We have found that our volunteer trail stewardship model produces very dedicated trail and open space advocates and the vast majority of volunteers return for future events.

San Jose PRNS will be prepared to support their own ongoing volunteer stewardship program for Alum Rock Park as a result of the direct training in trail stewardship and volunteer program development and management for their staff and local community leader (5 participants total), as well as the support in planning and hosting a volunteer Dig Day for the community. The training will provide the frameworks and knowledge for PRNS staff to train local volunteer leaders themselves going forward, and the Dig Day planning and execution will provide the knowledge, experience, and initial volunteer engagement needed to successfully launch a dedicated local Alum Rock Park Dig Day volunteer trail maintenance program.

The immediate benefits of this project for Alum Rock Park are improved trail conditions and access, fewer invasive plants, increased safety (i.e. fewer trail hazards), and improved drainage as a result of the Dig Day event. In the long-term, with recurring volunteer trail stewardship events hosted by PRNS (made possible by the training, planning support, and program launch included in this project) the outcomes will include better, more consistent management of the trail system, improved protection of the natural landscapes, decreased erosion and runoff into the nearby watersheds (i.e. Upper Penitencia Creek), and better support of native habitats and species, all of which will contribute to improved resilience to a changing environment in Alum Rock Park, and the surrounding areas.

Our innovative, community-based approach to long-term trail and environmental stewardship will bring City staff and the community together, provide the necessary tools and education, make Alum Rock Park safer, more enjoyable, and more accessible, increase trail sustainability, and improve the environment. We thank you for your consideration of our application to support the City of San Jose and the residents of Alum Rock and East San Jose.

Describe key project deliverables and estimated completion dates.

The deliverables included in this project are as follows:

EDUCATION & PLANNING:

If awarded, SCMTS will provide Trail Crew Leader Training and selected Trail Academy classes for 5 key staff and community members (including Park Rangers and a community leader) selected by San Jose PRNS in fall 2026. The selected classes are:

Classroom-based instruction (virtual or in person, average 1-2 hours per class):

- 101 - Introduction to Trails
- 121 - Introduction to Trail Maintenance
- 211 - Maintenance Planning and Trail Assessment
- 311 - Trails in Challenging Terrain
- 501 - Managing Volunteers

Field training (on site in Alum Rock Park, average 6 hour day):

- 221 - Trail Maintenance Assessments
- 222 - Basic Trail Maintenance - Brushing, Drain Clearing, and Grade Reversals
- 223 - Trail Maintenance - Tread and Berm Repair
- 224 - Trail Rerouting, Reclamation, Closure, and Decommissioning
- 511 - Volunteer Management

DIG DAY:

The Dig Day volunteer stewardship event in Alum Rock Park would take place in winter 2026, or early spring 2027, depending on weather and staff availability outlook, with event planning activities starting in summer/fall 2026.

As noted above, this event will engage 50-80 local community members in a full day of community building, learning, and trail maintenance/repairs in Alum Rock Park. This public event (open to all community members) will include free breakfast and lunch, snacks, and end-of-day refreshments, education on trail maintenance and the local flora and fauna, trail maintenance skill building, team building activities, and, if possible, raffles & prizes sponsored by local businesses as well.

Typically Dig Days provide maintenance and repair for 1-3 miles of trail, depending on the terrain and trail needs. The exact location and nature of the Dig Day trail stewardship activities will be determined during the event planning phase in summer/fall 2026. Determining factors will include the highest need, accessibility, and the ability to provide an engaging and fun volunteer experience as the first community Dig Day event.

The outputs from this project, modeled after SCMTS's own successful core volunteer program, will include:

EDUCATION & PLANNING:

- Direct trail stewardship education for PRNS staff
- Training in volunteer program development and management
- City staff are prepared to train local volunteer leaders themselves
- Completed planning of the City's own Alum Rock Park ongoing volunteer trail stewardship program (this will be incorporated into the classes provided, as part of our training personalization for -San Jose PRNS, as well as outside consultation as needed for anything not covered during the classes and Dig Day planning process - see below)

DIG DAY:

- San Jose PRNS's Alum Rock Park volunteer trail stewardship program is launched (the Dig Day included in this project will be event number 1 for the program)
- Local community members are connected to nature and each other
- Nature-based learning for Dig Day attendees regarding the environment, local flora and fauna, and trail maintenance
- Direct trail stewardship and trail restoration for 1-3 miles of trail
- Improved public access and safety for the Dig Day stewardship site
- Decreased erosion from trails into the local environment

Does this project require permission, permits, or other approvals? If so, please describe the status of these.

No permits are required for the education and planning, or trail stewardship components of this project. An event permit will be required for the Dig Day, which will be obtained by San Jose PRNS's Volunteer Management Unit and Ranger staff once a date for the Dig Day has been decided on by PRNS and SCMTS staff.

What is the lifetime of this project? If applicable, describe plans for operating and maintaining the project in the future.

As noted above, this project is designed to train and prepare San Jose PRNS to host high-impact volunteer trail stewardship events. The Dig Day event will further serve to kick off an Alum Rock-specific volunteer trail stewardship program. The event preparation will include volunteer and local business sponsor recruitment. As SCMTS knows from our experience, participants in these events have a high return rate for future volunteer stewardship events.

Further, in addition to education and planning support, the selected learning modules will prepare PRNS to train volunteer leaders who will guide the volunteers in smaller groups (8-10) in the execution of the actual trail work. All materials used in the education/training components of this project will be provided to PRNS staff to keep and use in perpetuity. All of this together sets San Jose City PRNS up to be able to operate and maintain this community stewardship program into the future after the completion of this project. Given SCMTS's history of over a decade of this type of community-based volunteer stewardship, the potential lifetime of this Alum Rock Park-specific program is also a decade and beyond.

Describe the project's readiness for implementation.

SCMTS has over a decade of experience hosting Dig Days. We typically host 6-12 Dig Days for our own volunteer community annually. In addition, we have a variety of other volunteer programs with varying goals and durations (such as Hike & Help designed for retired community members) and we host Dig Days for businesses and partners seeking team-building volunteer opportunities for their staff.

We further launched our Trail Crew Leader Training in 2014. Over 200 Trail Crew Leaders have currently graduated from this program. In 2018, we developed and launched Trail Academy, an educational series that incorporates all aspects of trail building, maintenance, management, and construction. As such, we are well-prepared to provide the training, education, and planning support San Jose PRNS seeks for this project.

Part of the costs included in this project will be dedicated to creating updated materials for certain training modules that have not been updated in the last 5 years. These updated materials will reflect the new developments and learnings that our team incorporates into the classes and field days. We anticipate this work would take 1-2 months to complete in advance of providing the trainings to the San Jose PRNS team. During this time, we will be able to provide the trainings that are already fully updated and collaborate on Dig Day planning, the overall volunteer program design, and outreach.

Project Budget

Budget Summary - Grant Request & Budget Summary - Matching Funds

Grant request: Personnel

\$17,274.35

Grant request: Contracted Services

\$10,000.00

Grant request: Supplies / Materials

\$400.00

Grant request: Other Direct Costs

\$4,550.00

Grant request: Indirect Costs

\$6,444.87

Total Matching Funds

\$9,600.00

Total Budget

\$38,669.22

Please upload a detailed version of your budget by accessing the link below:

SCMTS Alum Rock UGP_Project_Budget_2025.xlsx

Materials and Budget Template (item #9) found here: <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/programs/grant.html#Materials>

Provide a brief budget narrative to explain the expenses listed in each of the budget categories (e.g. Personnel).

The expenses included in this budget are largely SCMTS staff time, with some materials costs for food and beverage, signage, and marketing costs associated with recruitment for the Dig Day event. Contract services are included in the form of a consultant to support our curriculum & materials updates for training and classes, as our staff capacity for these activities is currently limited (on staff, only our Trail Planning Director can create, approve, and/or finalize curriculum and associated materials updates, and his schedule is already overburdened)

The staff time will cover time spent providing the classroom and field trainings, travel time to and from Alum Rock Park and San Jose PRNS offices as needed, planning and preparation time for each field training day and the Dig Day (SCMTS staff must scout locations that will provide the appropriate hands-on skill building opportunities for each field day as well as the Dig Day), program personalization, training updates, volunteer recruitment, and planning time with PRNS staff. Overhead costs of 20% are included to cover the administrative costs associated with providing these services, such as payroll and accounting, insurance, equipment maintenance, and staff oversight.

Matching costs are provided in the form of PRNS staff time, which has not been included in this grant request. Staff time will at minimum be 48 hours of learning for 4 PRNS staff members (the matching dollar value included here), but will likely also include additional staff time spent coordinating with SCMTS staff and local partners and community leaders.

Award Amount: The Board reserves the right to award partial funding on projects. If your project were to receive partial funding, what would this mean for your project?

If partial funding was awarded for this project, SCMTS would coordinate with San Jose PRNS on what components of the project to condense or remove. For example, certain training modules could be left out, or less staff time could be spent on joint program planning. Further, training materials that require updating could be minimized: SCMTS staff is fully prepared to provide all trainings included in the current plan without new materials or curriculum updates. However, updated materials would make the trainings complete (verbal and written content would match) and provide up to date and accurate information that could be shared by PRNS with other team members and volunteer trail crew leaders for the new Alum Rock Park volunteer trail stewardship program.

Project Goals

Describe the specific problems, issues, or unserved needs the project will address.

As noted, there is an urgent need for ongoing park maintenance and community programs in Alum Rock Park - East San Jose and Alum Rock have been consistently underserved for generations and now, with city and county budget cuts, community programs and park staffing are shrinking, not growing. Further, a significant amount of maintenance in Alum Rock Park has been deferred in recent years due to funding shortfalls. Alum Rock Park, moreover, is prone to storm damage due to the age of the park - many trails were not designed with landscape sustainability, land conservation, or modern outdoor recreation in mind.

This, in combination with the Park's steep terrain and narrow corridors leads to heavy annual erosion along both the trails and roadways going into the park, especially during the rainy season. For example, in the winter of 2023, the Park was closed for nearly 6 months due to the effects of atmospheric rivers that caused heavy rainfall that year. With the increasing frequency of both droughts and torrential rains due to the impacts of climate change, these problems are expected to worsen in the coming years.

Heavily eroded trails with ruts and trenches are dangerous for trail users who risk injury from the uneven and crumbling trail surfaces and widen or create alternate trails as they attempt to avoid these sections. Not only does this process of erosion and trail widening destroy the landscape of and immediately around the trail, but it also deposits soils into nearby creeks, disrupting fragile ecosystems.

As noted in Santa Clara Valley Greenprint Report, "water quality impacts from sedimentation and other pollutants are a very serious concern, especially in Coyote Creek, Uvas Creek, and the Upper Pajaro River." Upper Penitencia Creek runs through the heart of Alum Rock Park and is a tributary to the Coyote Creek. Moreover, both Coyote Creek and Upper Penitencia Creek provide important steelhead habitat. Upper Penitencia Creek also supports native fish populations as well as California Red-legged Frog and California Tiger Salamander.

It is therefore critical that trail erosion in Alum Rock Park is addressed on an ongoing basis through regular trail maintenance and upgrades to preserve the local environment and downstream watersheds.

The trainings provided by SCMTS to San Jose PRNS will include the following topics: maintenance planning and trail assessment; trails in challenging terrain; brushing, drain clearing, and grade reversals; tread and berm repair; trail rerouting, reclamation, closure, and decommissioning; and volunteer management. This content will be provided in both a classroom setting and through on-site practical skill-building and with a lens to how to teach the core concepts and practices to community volunteer leaders. This will set the foundation for long-term sustainable trail stewardship by PRNS staff and a growing group of volunteer leaders over time.

Not only will this training help PRNS grow the number of volunteer leaders over time, it will also ensure that volunteer leaders are well-versed in important trail knowledge such as erosion and how to fix it through grade reversals, tread and berm repair, and drain clearing and when to use which solution. Most of the current volunteer groups in the park lack trail knowledge and skills training and only engage in activities like trail brushing and invasive plant removal. This training will therefore ensure that volunteer activities during Dig Days are actually able to impact trail sustainability and long-term environmental impacts.

In addition, the Upper Penitencia Creek and East Foothills area is one of the SCV OSA's 10 Conservation Focus Areas. These areas are not only important for their wildlife habitat, water resources, and scenic views, but, critically, their protection is essential to meet the county's recreational needs and objectives. As noted in the Greenprint Report, "land protection here will protect critical views of the foothills and help close gaps in parkland and trails [...] This area includes the park-deficient Alum Rock neighborhood, as well as several major gaps in the Bay Area Ridge Trail."

This project will contribute to the Authority's goals of protecting natural resources and ensuring livable communities in one of the most important landscapes in the Authority's jurisdiction.

Additionally, as noted previously, the Community Priorities for the Alum Rock Corridor include:

- Enhance Cleanliness and Safety of Parks, Streets, and Gardens
- Expand Access to Open Space and Parks
- Improve Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety
- Make More Space for Recreation Centers and Outdoor Events and Festivals

Alum Rock Park, specifically, is supposed to be an important nexus for community events and services for the Alum Rock and East San Jose communities. If the Park does not have trails that are consistently safe, maintained, and accessible, then public access and community events are at risk. By training staff to manage a strong, community-based volunteer stewardship program that thrives as a result of regular, inclusive events like the first Dig Day event included in this project, we can address both environmental and social needs in Alum Rock Park in a cost-effective way.

As noted above, SCMTS's experience with these community stewardship events has shown that they are strong community connectors, bringing a range of trail users together (families, athletes, conservationists, hikers, bikers, equestrians, etc.). Participants consistently report that they feel more connected to their community and local open spaces, and become strong advocates for open space and environmental protection as a result of their Dig Day participation. Program growth is typically led by repeat participants returning for more Dig Day enjoyment and inviting in new friends and family. We find that local businesses are happy to support Dig Days with free food, drinks, and prizes, because they see the strong event turnout (typically between 60-80 participants) and the positive feedback loop that happens between their association with events that are well-loved in the community.

With 1-3 miles of trail impacted by each Dig Day event, 5-12 Dig Days each year will be able to cover all 13 miles of trail in Alum Rock Park once the program is up and running.

This Alum Rock Park volunteer stewardship project that will address outdoor access, events, recreation, cleanliness and safety, and conservation in one project, will therefore meet both the community's and the Authority's goals.

How does this project serve the community?

Number of people served

85

Number of youth served

20

Number of programs provided

11

Other Grantee Goal #1 (optional)

Number of miles of trail maintained through the Alum Rock Dig Day volunteer trail stewardship program over the course of a year: 13 miles (all of the miles in Alum Rock Park)

Other Grantee Goal #2 (optional)

Impact

Describe the lasting impact of the project. Please include whether the program is open to the public and whether any materials developed will be available to the public.

This project will launch an ongoing Alum Rock Park volunteer trail stewardship program that will address open space access, public events, outdoor recreation, park cleanliness and safety, and environmental conservation. The Dig Day included in this project will be open to the public and is designed to be the launchpad for ongoing public trail stewardship events hosted in Alum Rock Park by PRNS staff and volunteers. Materials developed for this project (mostly educational materials used to train and prepare San Jose PRNS to host high-quality volunteer trail stewardship events. There will also be some marketing materials) will be available to San Jose PRNS staff and to the public through participation in the Dig Day event. Long-term, the materials will be available to program participants through San Jose PRNS.

The Dig Day event included in this project, will launch this new program which is designed to continue with between 5-12 day-long Dig Day events hosted by San Jose City PRNS per year (or more as needed). Each Dig Day typically has 50-80 volunteer participants. As noted above, SCMTS has been able to demonstrate that Dig Day events bring a range of trail users together, that participants report feeling more connected to their community and local open spaces, and become strong advocates for open space and environmental protection as a result of their participation.

The communities for whom Alum Rock Park is most important and most readily accessed, are East San Jose and the Alum Rock neighborhood, in particular, which are included in SCV OSA's "Deep Engagement Communities." The Alum Rock neighborhood is called out as "park-deficient" in the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint Report (see Underserved Communities below for more detail). Moreover, the Upper Penitencia Creek and East Foothills area is one of the SCV OSA's 10 Conservation Focus Areas. This area's protection is essential to meet the county's recreational needs and objectives, in addition to having important wildlife habitat, water resources, and scenic views.

Water quality impacts from sedimentation are further a very serious concern in Coyote Creek, which is fed by the Upper Penitencia Creek that runs through the heart of Alum Rock Park. It is therefore critical that trail erosion in Alum Rock Park is addressed on an ongoing basis through regular trail maintenance and upgrades to preserve the local environment and downstream watersheds.

Research increasingly proves that access to open space is essential for basic human physical and mental health and maintaining a high quality of life. For example, easy access to outdoor recreation such as parks and trails has a dramatic positive impact on reducing obesity, depression, and high blood pressure for both children and adults. The presence of open space and parks can increase the value of homes up to 16% and attracts businesses and highly qualified workers, contributing to a vibrant local economy (McConnell, V and M Walls. 2005. "The Value of Open Space: Evidence from Studies on Nonmarket Benefits." Resources for the Future, Washington, DC).

As noted in the Greenprint Report: "Perhaps less tangible, but equally compelling, are social benefits offered by parks and open spaces. Outdoor public gathering places in our cities help foster interactions among various groups and serve to help communities in defining a shared sense of permanence and place, and creating pathways of connection to nature and our neighbors."

With this knowledge, a new, high-quality volunteer trail stewardship program in Alum Rock park has the capacity to significantly impact this Deep Engagement Community socially, environmentally, economically, and its inhabitants' physical and mental health. Not only will the program participants receive direct benefits from participating in Dig Days (an anticipated 300+ unique program participants per year after launch, depending on event frequency), the overall community will receive benefits from the existence of this program through greater outdoor access, safer trails, less environmental impacts, and the abovementioned economic impacts of an improved local open space. All this, while taking into account the limitations of the City: a lack of funding and staffing to do the required trail maintenance themselves.

Alum Rock Park is supposed to be an important asset for community events and services for the Alum Rock and East San Jose communities. This project will therefore contribute to the Authority's goals of protecting natural resources and ensuring livable communities in one of the most important landscapes in the Authority's jurisdiction.

Climate Resilience

How does this project enhance and/or raise awareness about climate resilience? Please include any metrics that can be used to help quantify or understand the climate benefits of the project.

As previously stated, the Upper Penitencia Creek and East Foothills area, where the Alum Rock Park is located, is one of the SCV OSA's 10 Conservation Focus Areas. By the Authority's own measurement, this area's protection is essential for its important wildlife habitat, water resources, scenic views, as well as its ability to meet the county's recreational needs and objectives.

Water quality impacts from sedimentation are a particularly serious concern in Coyote Creek, which is fed by the Upper Penitencia Creek that runs through the heart of Alum Rock Park. Important habitats requiring protection from erosion runoff in the Upper Penitencia Creek include steelhead, California Red-legged Frog, California Tiger Salamander, and native fish populations.

At the same time, Alum Rock Park has a significant amount of deferred maintenance due to funding shortfalls. This is particularly problematic environmentally, as the Park is prone to storm damage due to its age, steep terrain, and narrow corridors. Together, these factors lead to heavy annual erosion along the Park's trails and access roads, especially during the wet season. The impacts of this erosion frequently lead to trail closures and even Park-wide closures in years with particularly heavy rainfall.

Due to the impacts of climate change the frequency of both droughts (and the associated fire risk) and torrential rains (and the associated mudslides and flooding) are expected to increase in the coming years and decades.

This project addresses the need for ongoing deep maintenance (i.e. by trained volunteers who understand sustainable trail design and maintenance) to mitigate these environmental factors, while improving public access, and providing community-enhancing events. It simultaneously offsets the City's lack of funds to meet all of these needs separately by its design as a volunteer trail stewardship program.

Moreover, in 2023, the U.S. Department of Transportation published a report (available online here: <https://www.railstotrails.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Trails-and-Resilience-Review-of-the-Role-of-Trails-in-Climate-Resilience-and-Emergency-Response-.pdf>) on the critical role of trails in climate resilience and emergency response, and in 2022, the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force shared their CALREC Vision (available online here: <https://www.calrecvision.org/joint-strategy>). This states that "environmentally, stewarding public lands for outdoor recreation is associated with ecosystem protection and conservation efforts that ensure watershed, forest, and habitat preservation." The research across the board is clear: stewardship of public lands, sustainable trails, and outdoor recreation are essential to long-term environmental protection, public safety, and healthy and just communities.

Taking all these factors into consideration, the need for trail stewardship and maintenance in Alum Rock Park is not merely something 'nice to have' for the community, but increasingly a critical need to ensure safety and climate resilience.

Furthermore, SCMTS knows from over a decade of experience hosting large volunteer trail stewardship and education events that engaging the community in local trail stewardship builds a deeper connection to nature and its conservation. By directly seeing and mitigating the impacts of climate-based environmental impacts in Alum Rock Park, the public will be more engaged in building its climate resilience in the long term.

Community Engagement / Stakeholder Support / Community Building

Describe the community support and/or community engagement process. Please upload any community support letters in the Documents Upload section below.

This project already has significant community support. Supporters include:

Public Health Department, Santa Clara County

Staff from the Public Health Department have pledged to help through public outreach and education to raise awareness of Alum Rock Park and this new program utilizing their own community-based programs. They will further support participant recruitment by providing additional information to those who could benefit from visiting outdoor spaces.

Adopt-A-Park Volunteers, Alum Rock Park

This group already volunteers to help maintain Alum Rock Park. The local volunteer leader included (alongside 4 PRNS staff) in the SCMTS training provided through this project will come from this dedicated team of individuals. The plan is for all Alum Rock Park Adopt-A-Park volunteers to ultimately receive full trail maintenance training from PRNS staff based on the education and training preparation provided by SCMTS as part of this project. PRNS and Adopt-A-Park, Alum Rock Park intend to work together for this first Dig Day (included in the grant) and for Dig Days going forward, thereby increasing participant capacity and volunteer learning. The learnings and greater publicity from this project will further benefit Adopt-A-Park's own smaller scale projects, thereby increasing their impact in the short- and long-term.

Youth Science Institute

The Youth Science Institute has a center based in Alum Rock Park. This organization also works with a lot of local schools to provide nature education at Alum Rock Park. As such, they are invested in the ongoing maintenance of the Park's open spaces and trails and the environmental conservation of its important habitats. Because the Institute is so influential in the community, they are well-positioned to advertise Dig Days at Alum Rock Park to receptive audiences across the County and cast a wider net for volunteer recruitment. As such, their support and partnership with San Jose PRNS is deeply meaningful.

San Jose Fire Department

The San Jose Fire Department will support this project through public outreach. As the main party responsible for public safety throughout San Jose, they care deeply about strong community programs and support initiatives that will improve public safety such as this one. Their public backing of Dig Days and Alum Rock Park events in general will help recruitment for event participants and, critically, bolster local business support.

San Jose PRNS has also secured the support of local community leaders, please see attached letters of support for more detail.

SCMTS will further support San Jose PRNS's existing community outreach efforts through outreach to our own land manager, agency, business, and other nonprofit partners, such the Peninsula Open Space Trust, CAL FIRE, Silicon Valley Mountain Bikers, and Patagonia. We will further partner with PRNS staff on outreach to local Alum Rock business & community associations, school districts, hiking and biking clubs, etc. who have not yet been contacted. We will provide both direct outreach support and writing and materials used for our own Dig Day marketing, as needed.

Underserved Communities

Describe how the project addresses open space needs for sensitive populations such as residents of park-poor neighborhoods, underserved, or disadvantaged communities, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, or is located within an under-resourced community.

The communities for whom Alum Rock Park is the most important and most readily accessed, are East San Jose and the Alum Rock neighborhood, in particular. The Alum Rock neighborhood has historically been home to large communities of immigrants. Today over half the population of Alum Rock identifies as Hispanic/Latino. The region's history has included significant racial discrimination and economic marginalization, which is reflected in lower graduation rates and incomes. As a result of these factors, it is included as one of SCV OSA's "Deep Engagement Communities." Based on the Authority's Understanding Our Community Phase II Report, Alum Rock and the areas closest to Alum Rock Park fall within Deep Engagement Community 3 (DEC3).

From the data gathered for the Phase II report, the majority of DEC3 census tracts, including Alum Rock, households typically have less than 60% of the County's median household income (Severely Disadvantaged) or less than 80% of median County household income (Disadvantaged). The report further shows that DEC3 has the two highest densities of population per square mile throughout: 12,501-23,000 and 23,001-106,700 inhabitants per square mile. Further, Alum Rock and DEC3 have a high number of children under 18 (1,300-1,999 children per census tract) and a high number of elementary and secondary schools. DEC3 also has the highest density of overcrowded households per tract in any of the SCV OSA's DEC3s, with 21-31 overcrowded households per neighborhood in almost every single census tract in DEC3.

In addition to lower incomes and a large number of children in overcrowded households, Alum Rock and DEC3 as a whole, have poor health

outcomes: 15-21% of children and 26-38% of teenagers are obese (the highest percentages in the Authority's mapping) in almost the entirety of DEC3. Adult obesity is split between the two highest categories across DEC3, with 20-23% of adults being obese in about half of the tracts and 23-31% in the other half. This correlates to a high number of diabetes deaths throughout this Deep Engagement Community: 40-53 diabetes deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest category in the Authority's mapping.

Helping individuals and families in Alum Rock and the whole DEC3 to access the outdoors, is therefore of critical importance. In the Authority's own words in the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint: "Today, it is abundantly clear that having access to open space is essential not only for maintaining a high quality of life, but also for basic human health and well-being."

As previously shared, local community groups, supported by San Jose State University developed the Community Priorities for the Alum Rock Corridor report in 2020. These 11 community-identified priorities include the following 4 priorities:

- Enhance Cleanliness and Safety of Parks, Streets, and Gardens
- Expand Access to Open Space and Parks
- Improve Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety
- Make More Space for Recreation Centers and Outdoor Events and Festivals

In one of the surveys of residents utilized in the development of these Community Priorities, respondents were asked at the end of the survey about 'other topics of interest' previously not covered in depth. They were given a choice of 20 topics (including an 'other' option where they could enter topics not on the list). The responses were ranked by number and percentage of respondents who selected them. 'Community and Cultural Events' and 'Park Maintenance' were respectively ranked in the 4th and 5th place of importance out of 20, with 46% and 45.1% of respondents saying these need to be addressed in the Alum Rock neighborhood.

In interviews and focus groups, Alum Rock residents further identified 'Green Space' as a neighborhood 'weakness, vulnerability, or opportunity.' As noted in the report:

"While residents had positive comments about existing parks in the community, there was a common request in the interviews for additional parks and open space. Residents often spoke to a need for green, natural space."

It is indeed notable that, while the Alum Rock neighborhood and the larger DEC3 is not technically 'park poor' according to the Authority's Phase II Understanding Our Community report, the Alum Rock neighborhood is called out as "park-deficient" in the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint Report. This is likely due to the fact that, while there are now more parks within walking distance for most residents in the Alum Rock area, many are paved playgrounds, skateparks, or gathering spaces with limited tree cover or plantings. Green open spaces are still not very accessible for most residents of Alum Rock. This, perhaps, then explains why the neighborhood is still thought of as 'park poor' and why so many residents identify it as a core need that is not currently being met.

While this project does not create more green open spaces, it does meet a critical need to maintain and protect access to the main existing open space available to this community: Alum Rock Park. Alum Rock Park is supposed to be a key resource for access to nature, community events, and services for the Alum Rock community. With the current state of deferred maintenance and closed trails in the Park, the gap between the community-identified need for more open spaces and the existing open spaces is growing larger, not smaller. If the Park does not have trails that are consistently safe, maintained, and accessible, then public access to this important green space and community events in the Park are at risk.

San Jose City's PRNS department therefore seeks to address multiple critical needs for this underserved community through this project, which will train and prepare staff to provide an ongoing volunteer trail stewardship program. This will address the following: more community events, more connection to nature, more outdoor recreation, more public access to the Park, improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists in the Park, decreased erosion from trail users, and putting the community at the forefront of environmental stewardship for their own green assets.

Organizational Capacity

Briefly describe the organization and its ability to successfully implement this project. This might include successful past projects, key staff qualifications, financial resources, etc.

Since 1997, we have been building and maintaining trails responsibly, sustainably, and collectively. SCMTS partners with agencies, cities, counties, and other land managers throughout the greater Bay Area to support access to the outdoors and community & climate resilience. In addition to trail construction and stewardship, we engage community through volunteer programs and events, provide free online & in-person education, and support local fire restoration and prevention.

Relevant to this project specifically, we have been providing our flagship Dig Day events since 2013, our Trail Crew Leader Training since 2014, and Trail Academy since 2018. Through our trails, education, and community stewardship events, we aim to create safe and educational environments that foster connections within our community and to the outdoors.

As noted, SCMTS has been maintaining trails responsibly, sustainably, and collectively for almost 3 decades and is already a trusted partner with the City of San Jose. We have a highly skilled professional trail stewardship team with 25 full-time staff and 1,500 members. Our own volunteer programs engage 1,000+ unique volunteers a year, providing up to 10,000 hours of public service stewardship in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

We also hold a California Class A General Engineering Contractors License, maintain applicable insurance coverage, and are registered with the Department of Industrial Relations. Our business model combines fee-for-service trail design, construction, and maintenance work with funding from individuals, corporate sponsors, and grants to create free public access infrastructure, education, and community events that invite everyone in our community to participate in outdoor recreation and caring for the land.

SCMTS recently built the first 9 miles of trail on Santa Cruz County's first National Monument, the Cotoni-Coast Dairies Unit of the California Coastal National Monument. We are also contracted by the Bureau of Land Management to build the next 10 miles of trail on the Southern portion of the Monument's property.

In addition to new trail construction and specific maintenance projects, SCMTS is committed to maintaining over 60 miles of trails and pump tracks across Santa Cruz County as a free public service. We are therefore uniquely positioned to support the City to address both the stewardship and community needs through an integrated approach.

With over 25 years of building and maintaining world-class trails responsibly, sustainably, and collectively, our holistic design-build-maintain model puts us at the forefront of environmentally responsible trail construction and land stewardship in California.

Leadership & Innovation

Describe how this project employs innovative approaches or encourages collaboration and partnerships.

Due to budget shortfalls, there have been significant cuts to San Jose City programs and staffing in recent years, including key PRNS programs such as the Summer Camp in Alum Rock Park, which offered summer hiking, exploring creek waters, bird watching and other recreational activities to youth from 5-14 (program cut in fiscal year 2025). The City's ability to support more outdoor events and programs is therefore currently at risk.

However, in the park-poor and underserved region of East San Jose and the Alum Rock neighborhood, there is a need for more public events, not less. As noted above, the Community Priorities for the Alum Rock Corridor, developed in 2020, include 4 park, recreation, and outdoor event-related priorities in a list that totals 11.

It is this discrepancy between the need and the City's financial and staff capacity that led San Jose PRNS to seek collaboration with SCMTS to recreate our innovative, community-based trail stewardship program. By launching a volunteer trail stewardship program, PRNS can cost-effectively gain the ongoing maintenance needed to keep Alum Rock Park safe and open to the public and protect the local environment AND simultaneously meet the need for more outdoor community events in the Park.

Moreover, the trainings provided by SCMTS to San Jose PRNS will be provided in both a classroom setting and through on-site practical skill-building and all materials will be theirs to keep. This education and training will provide knowledge to the 5 participants included in this grant, and will be focused on how to teach the core concepts and practices to community volunteer leaders. This will set the foundation for long-term sustainable trail stewardship by PRNS staff and a growing group of knowledgeable volunteer leaders over time.

Based on this innovative approach, San Jose PRNS has already secured the support of key community groups (see Community Engagement above) and we anticipate building additional support as a result of the event planning and recruitment activities included in this project. Based on SCMTS's experience with these events, they not only strengthen community connections, they also connect local businesses to the Park and these volunteers (through sponsorships of prizes and Dig Day sustenance), and connect participants to nature and conservation.

As such, this project has the capacity to provide a great many, long-term benefits with a small upfront investment in education, program, and event planning. We, together with the San Jose PRNS staff, thank the review board for your consideration of this proposal that will benefit the Alum Rock Park and Alum Rock community.

Documents Section

Document Uploads (please combine into one file if possible)

Additional files (if needed)

Additional files (if needed)

Submitted Date - Internal

Summary Field:

Name: Average Score (no bonus)

Form: Staff Review

Summary Type: average

Field: Base Score Total

Decimal: 2

Currency: No

Description/Help Text: NONE

Short Name: NONE

Field Purpose: NONE

Filter:

- ALL:
 - isComplete | is | true

Summary Field:

Name: Total Count of Submitted Reviews

Form: Staff Review

Summary Type: count

Field: NONE

Decimal: NONE

Currency: No

Description/Help Text: NONE

Short Name: NONE

Field Purpose: NONE

Filter:

- ALL:
 - isComplete | is | true
 - Folder | is | Submitted

Program Application: File Attachments

Please upload a detailed version of your budget by accessing the link below:

SCMTS Alum Rock UGP_Project_Budget_2025.xlsx

Budget Form

Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority | 2025 Urban Grant Program

PROJECT BUDGET

Highlighted cells are automatically calculated.

PROJECT

Project Name:	Community Engagement and Stewardship Training in Alum Rock Park
Organization:	Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship

PERSONNEL

Estimate employee and volunteer time directly related to the project. Hourly rates for employees can include salary plus fringe benefits, payroll tax, etc, but can not include indirect costs. Note: please list position titles only.

Position Title	Description of Budget Item	Grant Request (\$)	Matching Funds (\$)	Total
Senior Community Engagement Manager	12 hours @ 57.27/hr. Oversees staff engaged in Dig Day planning and outreach. Collaborates with Trail Planning Director on training material updates.	\$ 687.24		\$ 687.24
Trail Stewardship Manager	95 hours @ 42.35/hr. Main contact with PRNS staff for Dig Day and training scheduling and planning. Will also (co-)lead certain training classes. Will lead small volunteer group during Dig Day. Will engage in field training and Dig Day location scouting	\$ 4,023.25		\$ 4,023.25
Trail Stewardship Coordinator	65 hours @ 43.58/hr. Will lead small volunteer group during Dig Day. Will lead Volunteer Management field training day. Supports Trail Stewardship Manager in field training and Dig Day planning and preparation. Will engage in field training and Dig Day location scouting	\$ 2,832.70		\$ 2,832.70

Budget Form

Director of Trail Planning	123 hours @ 68.62/hr. Leads certain training classes. Leads training material updates in collaboration with Senior Community Engagement Manager. Will engage in field training and Dig Day location scouting for specific classes (i.e. class 224)	\$ 8,440.26		\$ 8,440.26
Trail Crew Staff	8 hours @43.58/hr. Will lead small volunteer group during Dig Day.	\$ 348.64		\$ 348.64
Senior Marketing & Communications Manager	4 hours @50.35/hr. Will be first marketing point of contact for PRNS team and provide internal oversight and communication of all media asset creation for the project	\$ 201.40		\$ 201.40
Marketing & Communications Specialist	17 hours @43.58/hr. Will create all digital assets and attend Dig Day and create content for sharing with social media and other outlets with photos and stories from the day.	\$ 740.86		\$ 740.86
PRNS staff time	48 hours of education & training for 4 staff participants @50/hr		\$ 9,600.00	\$ 9,600.00
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
TOTAL PERSONNEL		\$ 17,274.35	\$ 9,600.00	\$ 26,874.35
CONTRACTED SERVICES				
Labor, supplies, and materials to be provided by consultants/contractors for project implementation.				
Item	Description of Budget Item	Grant Request (\$)	Matching Funds (\$)	Total

Budget Form

				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS		\$ 4,550.00	\$ -	\$ 4,550.00
INDIRECT COSTS				
Indirect costs are eligible for grant funding only for 501(c)(3) Nonprofits and are <u>limited to 20%</u> of grant funding. Indirect costs cannot be counted as matching funds.				
Item	Description of Budget Item	Grant Request (\$)	Matching Funds (\$)	Total
Overhead costs	20% of direct project costs	\$ 6,444.87	n/a	\$ 6,444.87
TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS		\$ 6,444.87	n/a	\$ 6,444.87
PERCENT OF GRANT REQUEST		16.7%	n/a	n/a
GRAND TOTAL				
		Grant Request (\$)	Matching Funds (\$)	Total
TOTALS		\$ 38,669.22	\$ 9,600.00	\$ 48,269.22
COST SHARE				
				Matching Funds (%)
A minimum of 25% of grant request in matching funds may be required. This field is automatically calculated.				24.8%
MATCHING FUNDS				
Please describe the source of matching funds listed above. The total matching funds listed here should match the total matching funds listed under Grand Total above. This might include cash match (e.g. grantee's own funds, donations, grants, etc) or in-kind match (non-cash contribution such as volunteer time).				

