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Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

2020 Urban Grant Program

Deadline: 7/1/2020

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society **Oak Savanna Citizen Science Project**

Jump to: [Project Description](#) [Documents Upload](#)

\$ 79,608.00 Requested

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EIN 94-6081420

Project Description [top](#)

Applicant Type

1. What type of organization is this?

- Public Agency
- School or School District
- 501(c)3 Nonprofit
- Eligible organization acting as Fiscal Sponsor for another organization

2. Does the application include a fiscal sponsor?

If the project includes a fiscal sponsor, the fiscal sponsor must be the applicant.

- YES
- NO

Overview

3. Which type of grant are you requesting?

- Small (\$10,000 - \$39,999)
- Large (\$40,000 - \$250,000)

4. Grant category (check all that apply)

- Environmental Stewardship and Restoration
- Parks, Trails, and Public Access
- Environmental Education
- Urban Agriculture / Food Systems

5. Type of project (check all that apply)

- Capital improvement (Large projects only)
- Planning
- Program

6. 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.

Field trips, bird surveys and bioblitzes will be held in the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area–Laguna Lake, near the intersection of Bailey Ave and Santa Teresa Blvd in San Jose, CA.

Classroom portions of the program will be held at area high schools.

7. Project Location: Open Space Authority District (check all that apply)

A detailed map of the Authority Districts can be found under the Library tab, or online at <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/public-information/board-of-directors.html>.

- Authority District 1
- Authority District 2
- Authority District 3
- Authority District 4
- Authority District 5
- Authority District 6
- Authority District 7

8. Who does the project serve? Please indicate which Open Space Authority Districts are served (check all that apply)

A detailed map of the Authority Districts can be found under the Library tab, or online at <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/public-information/board-of-directors.html>.

- Authority District 1
- Authority District 2
- Authority District 3
- Authority District 4
- Authority District 5
- Authority District 6
- Authority District 7

9. Project Abstract

(Brief, 3-4 sentences)

The Oak Savanna Citizen Science Project (OSCSP) is an education program being developed by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) to promote citizen science, environmental awareness and an appreciation for the land and wildlife at the Laguna Seca portion of the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area. SCVAS will offer field trips to Laguna Seca along with a classroom segment to area high schools. Regular bird surveys and bioblitzes at Laguna Seca will be open to the public.

Project Planning (20 points)

10. Describe the proposed project.

The Oak Savanna Citizen Science Project (OSCSP) is a new initiative by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) to engage high school students and the public in conservation projects at the Laguna Seca site in the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area. These projects are designed to instill an appreciation of land and water conservation, promote an understanding of local biodiversity (specifically oak savanna and seasonal freshwater wetlands) and teach skills that enable public contributions via citizen science fieldwork.

The OSCSP project will fulfill the goals of Measure Q and the OSA mission statement by expanding public access to the Laguna Seca property, and will provide a guided learning experience for all participants. The very core of this project is its goal to connect people to nature.

The project consists of three components: (1) monthly bird surveys, (2) quarterly bioblitzes and (3) a high school education program. These are described in detail in question 11, key project deliverables.

The surveys and bioblitzes will generate reports that document variations through the seasons and from year to year. This information will give OSA the ability to evaluate the impact of habitat restoration, changes in land use, and climate change on bird populations.

A key component of the project is the high school program. Working with teachers, we will provide classroom and homework activities to prepare students for a field trip to Laguna Seca. While there, students will learn about the local ecosystem, its birds, insects, plants, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and practice basic scientific data collection. During the program, students will gain an understanding of the importance of land and water conservation for our planet's health and be encouraged to consider careers in environmental work.

To address health concerns related to COVID-19, we can make classroom materials available in the form of prepared videos, online documents and quizzes, and conduct livestreams and video conferences with students. The on-site surveys, bioblitzes and field-trip visits to Laguna Seca will follow outdoor social distancing guidelines established by the county such as requiring facemasks, reducing group sizes and spacing participants further apart. We sterilize binoculars and other field items before and after use and do not allow participants to share equipment.

11. Describe key project deliverables and estimated completion dates.

The OSCSP has three primary components whose deliverables are public events and student programs. In addition, we'll produce regular reports and a formal high school curriculum.

Component 1: Bird surveys using eBird, a Cornell Lab of Ornithology platform created for in-field submission of bird sightings. These surveys will be open to the public, who will assist our staff and volunteer trip leaders in gathering this data. We will model the surveys after our popular birding field trips, but emphasize formal bird survey techniques to ensure data integrity and follow established transect methods to collect information about bird species, numbers, and population trends over time. See attachments: a current eBird checklist showing the need for more data and a conceptual map with potential survey routes.

Deliverable: 36 bird surveys, monthly for the duration of the project (March 2021 - February 2024)

Component 2: Bioblitzes, which are structured surveys of all discovered organisms using iNaturalist as our mobile input platform, providing peer-reviewed and validated identification of photographed specimens, will be conducted quarterly at Laguna Seca with SCVAS staff, our members, and residents of OSA's urban area. Led by entomologist Dr. Merav Vonshak, we will document the insects, plants, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals found at Laguna Seca in each season of the year. These bioblitzes are open to the public, where we will introduce participants to the biodiversity of Santa Clara Valley as well as basic data collection methods, with the objective of stimulating an appreciation for the natural beauty of our region and a curiosity for science.

Deliverable: 12 quarterly bioblitzes (April 2021 - January 2024)

Component 3: A new high school environmental education program that we will develop in year one and deliver in years two and three. There will be both a classroom and a field trip module. The program will cover the oak savanna and seasonal wetland ecology of Laguna Seca and engage students as citizen scientists conducting naturalist fieldwork. It will follow Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and be Common Core compliant.

Deliverable: 24 high school programs (April 2022 — end of the project in 2024)

In addition, SCVAS will deliver the following items:

36 monthly bird population reports - completed within two weeks of each survey (or by the end of the project, for the final monthly report). March 2021 to project end.

3 annual bird population reports - in March of 2022, 2023 and 2024.

1 project-end bird population report - March 2024.

12 quarterly biodiversity reports, 1 for each bioblitz - completed within 2 weeks of each bioblitz (bioblitzes are anticipated to be held in January, April, July, and October during the project period).

3 annual biodiversity reports - February 2022, 2023 and 2024

1 project-end biodiversity report - March 2024

1 New NGSS and Common Core compliant high school curriculum

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

Scheduled access to Laguna Seca has already been established for our field trips through the Open Space Authority. We simply communicate exact dates to OSA to arrange pick up of keys. As soon as dates have been set for bioblitzes and high school programs, SCVAS will work with OSA for entry on those days as well. The dates for the high school programs are uncertain at the moment because they will depend in part on how many schools express interest and when their schedules allow for field trips of this kind. These arrangements are typically made months in advance of the field trip, but not negotiated until the beginning of the school year. That means we would not be able to specify dates until at least August of 2022.

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

The project spans three years as previously described. The first year will consist of data gathering through bird surveys and bioblitzes that feed into the development of the high school curriculum. In the second and

third years we will conduct the high school educational program for area schools and continue regular site surveys and bioblitzes. SCVAS intends to continue teaching the high school program after the grant period ends. After the grant period, we will seek additional funding through future grants, fundraising campaigns, and may consider charging small fees to participating schools to offset the cost of materials and instructors.

14. Describe the project's readiness for implementation.

The bird surveys are ready to go. For decades SCVAS has been deeply involved in the monitoring of avian species. Our volunteer trip leaders are familiar with the mobile app they will be using to record their findings and have experience leading public events. As well, the bioblitzes are prepared to launch immediately. Dr. Merav Vonshak, our consultant on the bioblitzes, has helped local non-profits organize dozens of bioblitzes in Santa Clara County. She will advise us on the event logistics and lead the entomological portion of the events. Our Education Specialist has successfully developed and deployed school programs for 3-5 grade levels. We plan to hire an education consultant to guide us on the development of the high school level curriculum to meet Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. We are currently working to form partnerships with high schools in the mid-county area where the project will take place.

Project Budget (15 points)

15. Budget Summary - Grant Request

This is a budget summary only; a detailed Project Budget must be submitted using the Documents Upload tab. Please enter dollar amount. Note: after the application is submitted, the software will automatically add a TOTAL.

53053	Grant request: Personnel
22642	Grant request: Contracted Services
3913	Grant request: Supplies / Materials
0	Grant request: Other Direct Costs
0	Grant request: Indirect Costs
79,608.00	TOTAL

16. Budget Summary - Matching Funds

This is a budget summary only; a detailed Project Budget must be submitted using the Documents Upload tab. Please enter dollar amount. Note: after the application is submitted, the software will automatically add a TOTAL.

47889	Total Matching Funds
47,889.00	TOTAL

17. Budget Narrative

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

Each line item in the budget was rounded off to the nearest dollar. Totals were calculated based on the original budget numbers, then rounded off, so not all totals will equal the sum of the rounded-off line items. Personnel – Hourly rates for staff include salary, payroll taxes, health benefits, and workers' compensation. Most of the Project Manager's time is part of the grant request (we are donating this position's time conducting the bird surveys, since the PM will only occasionally be involved in this work). We are donating the Executive Director's time on the project as well as our volunteers' time. Contracted Services – We will hire Dr. Merav Vonshak as a contractor to help us implement the bioblitzes. Dr. Vonshak will also prepare flyers for each bioblitz. We will hire an education consultant to advise us on curriculum development for the high school program. Supplies and Materials – Most of this section is for printing costs and is a conservative estimate. If we need to print many copies at once, we will seek bulk discounts. It is possible that we will not need as many copies as we estimated if we put our materials online. Because of the pandemic, we have

budgeted for sanitation supplies. We will have an office supply of these products and are donating what we use as matching funds. We have loaner binoculars that we use for all of our programs (not itemized here since we already own them). Other Direct Costs – We have estimated the number of round trips staff will make between our offices and Laguna Seca, and have also used this distance as a proxy for trips between our offices and schools. Matching Funds – Items that will be included in our future organizational budgets are considered to be “secured”. Future volunteer hours are considered to be “pending.”

Project Goals (15 points)

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

The OSCSP fulfills an important need for the local community. We are in the process of building relationships with other non-profit organizations to better serve the underserved communities in the deep involvement area. Our current outreach strategies, combined with those of sister organizations, will provide us with maximum exposure in the target communities. With regard to the program itself, in addition to providing information on and appreciation for the biodiversity of Laguna Seca, we will also closely monitor the area to understand the ecological response to habitat restoration efforts before and after they are launched. The Laguna Seca property, located in South San Jose, will expose local high schoolers to a fragile open space environment close to their homes. By engaging students in data collection, and in-field instruction that will support their classroom activities, these young people may have their first meaningful experience with natural habitat, gain valuable local wildlife knowledge, and learn techniques used by wildlife workers. It is not hard to imagine that these activities may inspire many of these students to pursue careers in biology, botany, wildlife or land management and conservation. It is certain they will gain an appreciation for the outdoors, perhaps forming a lifelong interest in nature, which in turn will make them better stewards of the environment.

19. How does this project serve the community?

These metrics are required for all projects. Project-specific metrics can be added under Question 20 below.

Note: after the application is submitted, the software will automatically add a TOTAL that will not be used.

<input type="text" value="1100"/>	Number of people served
<input type="text" value="600"/>	Number of youth served (under 18 years)
<input type="text" value="72"/>	Number of programs provided
<input type="text" value="1,772.00"/>	TOTAL

20. In what other ways does the project serve the community? Please list the project-specific goals (both social and environmental).

Please list any additional goals and how they will be measured (e.g. surveys, field measurements, attendance sheets, etc.).

The OSCSP will serve the community and fulfill the goals of Measure Q and the OSA mission in a number of ways. First it will expose citizens and local high school students to a protected natural area—a unique landscape that provides opportunities for outdoor learning. Guided by our staff and volunteers, the information gathered during the bird surveys, bioblitzes as well as during the high school program will be compiled in the iNaturalist and eBird databases, providing useful data to help guide the OSA during any habitat restoration that will occur on the property. We will measure our impact by recording the number of participants during bioblitzes, as well as the number of schools and students that attend the walks. We hope to stimulate interest in scientific careers by exposing young people to field studies and the wildlife we encounter, and increase interest in the protection of green spaces such as our study area. The data we gather, from a more complete catalog of plants, insects and birds, to observations of seasonal changes will be data we believe will provide context for any future habitat restoration at Laguna Seca.

Impact (15 points)

21. Describe the lasting impact of the project.

Because the foundation of adulthood develops in large part during high school—with advances in long-term and abstract thinking, political and social issue awareness, and the setting of goals—adolescent experiences in nature are crucial for our culture's survival. By exposing high school age students to the environment and its complexity, fragility, and value, we inspire a curiosity about how the organisms they encounter fit together in an ecological community. Why, for example, is the Red-winged Blackbird drawn to the field? Why is its very close relative, the endangered Tricolored Blackbird rare in the same area? Why are there so many ducks in winter but not in spring? These questions and hundreds more will be addressed in class, and in-field experiences naturally beget more questions—and curiosity is born. From countless observations, we have learned this curiosity leads naturally toward concern—concern for the animals and plants encountered during field trips. That concern, fueled by the adolescents' growing familiarity with abstract thinking and issue awareness motivates the student to learn more about environmental issues and take action. Questions about conservation projects they can become involved with, available careers in the environmental sector, as well as other opportunities to learn more about what they are seeing are all natural results of the inquiry-based project we propose. We believe the lasting positive impact of this program cannot be overstated.

The high school program will require arrangements with individual schools, but bioblitzes and surveys will be open to the general public. All data gathered during said activities will be available to the public on the iNaturalist and eBird platforms.

Community Engagement / Stakeholder Support (10 points)**22. Describe the community support and/or community engagement process.**

Please submit letters using the Documents Upload tab.

Our involvement in Laguna Seca began with an invitation from the OSA to conduct public birding field trips onsite. Although the onset of COVID-19 curtailed most field trips, we conducted preliminary surveys and determined that not only would Laguna Seca be a great place for birding, it would be an ideal location for new education programs introducing citizen science to a broader audience. We could expand our programs (modeled after our Wetlands Discovery Program) to high schools, especially those in underserved areas, and we could conduct bird surveys and bioblitzes, engaging a wider public.

We have attached Letters of Support, summarized here:

Larry Volpe, a 6th grade Science Teacher at Lairon College Prep Academy in San Jose, who has long been involved in SCVAS's Wetlands Discovery Program expressed his support for our new education program.

Susan Hinchey, a Chemistry and AP Environmental Science Teacher at Independence High School in the ESUHSD has written a Letter of Support and outlines the importance of giving her students experience with field studies and understanding of environmental issues.

Sergio Jimenez, the San Jose Councilmember whose district includes Laguna Seca and whose work was instrumental in the preservation of the area expresses enthusiasm about our work and this project.

Sam Liccardo, the Mayor of San Jose, is also supportive of our program and praises the efforts SCVAS has made to support local measures that helped preserve Coyote Valley

Leadership & Innovation (10 points)**23. Describe how this project employs innovative approaches or encourages collaboration and partnerships.**

If there are project partners, please upload partner letters on the Documents Upload tab.

The OSCSP is a complete learning experience for students and members of the community. The bird surveys and bioblitzes, all of which are open to the public, will guide participants on an exciting journey through a fragile protected habitat, exposing them to numerous life forms. During these events participants will contribute data to a citizen science database using the iNaturalist and eBird mobile apps. These apps allow non-experts to collect data that is useful to scientists and supports conservation efforts, making the pursuit and appreciation of science broadly accessible.

SCVAS will partner with Dr. Merav Vonshak, an entomologist who has helped non-profits organize dozens of bioblitzes in Santa Clara County. Our partnership with Dr. Vonshak will broaden our expert resources and enrich the experience of attendees, who will learn to recognize plants, insects and birds, contribute to a citizen science database and gain an appreciation for the value of conservation. See the attached partner letter.

SCVAS has a strong interest in strengthening our relationship with OSA and transforming Laguna Seca into a robust educational environment where the curriculum we develop for the high school program will draw on the data collected by citizens. Each component of our project - bird surveys, bioblitzes, and the high school curriculum - builds upon the other components, creating a richly integrated source of information and educational opportunities for people of all ages.

Organizational Capacity (15 points)

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

If the applicant is a Fiscal Sponsor, please describe both the Fiscal Sponsor and the sponsored organization. SCVAS's flagship education program, the Wetlands Discovery Program, was created more than thirty years ago and has educated over 1,000 elementary school children annually about the importance of the tidal marsh to environmental health. Children have learned in class and in the field about specifics related to this narrow band of tidal habitat, a mere 2% of its original size. They witness amazing examples of the defensive flocking of birds when threatened by a predator, the foraging skills of American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants and various shorebirds. They learn about freshwater and saltwater plants and the animals that make their homes among them. In short, they learn to appreciate a location for more than its beauty—they learn about the inner workings of its ecology and the need for humans to respect and protect it. These same sentiments were echoed by Larry Volpe, a 6th grade teacher in San Jose whose students have frequently benefited from our Wetlands Discovery Program. Mr. Volpe expressed a great need to provide these outdoor instructive programs for the Coyote Valley community.

In the summer of 2018, we offered a naturalist training program for teenagers, introducing them to the birds and plants of McClellan Ranch. The purpose of this program was to expose students to the joys of wildlife education and conservation as well as to inform them of the existence of wildlife career options. Ten teens participated in the program and eight of them volunteered for SCVAS during the following year.

What about our experience relevant to the bird surveys and bioblitzes?

Our Outreach and Education Specialist, Carolyn Knight, has been crucial to the success of these programs. She has a BA in Wildlife Biology & Conservation from UC Davis, experience as an educator with high school students in extracurricular activities, experience with conservation and wildlife monitoring projects in CA Central Valley and Bay Area (UC Davis Wood Duck Project, SFBBO Coyote Creek Banding Station, CNRP, Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley). Her commitment to educational standards, bold use of technology and creative spirit have combined to elevate our education program during her time with us. She has also enlivened our pool of volunteers and attracted new, energetic members—all of which undergo a rigorous training program to be a part of our Wetlands Discovery Program. Carolyn's dedication to her current position convinces us she will perform well in the position of Project Manager.

Our Executive Director, Matthew Dodder, has more than twenty years of experience as an educator at Palo Alto Adult School where his advanced-level class on birding has attracted hundreds of students. He has demonstrated expertise with the subject, an ease with students and an interest in innovative teaching methods that will be useful to the success of this effort.

BONUS POINTS: Underserved Communities (10 points)

25. 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 a Deep Engagement Community (DEC).

This question is optional; please answer if applicable, otherwise enter "N/A." A map of the DECs can be found by clicking on "Apply" at <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/urban>.

The OSCSP has been designed specifically to address the needs of park-poor neighborhoods and underserved or disadvantaged communities. By virtue of its mid-county location, Laguna Seca is well situated to serve students and residents within the Deep Engagement Communities. By contrast, our Wetlands Discovery Program located on the bay to the north is not easily accessible by public transit so requires carpools or chartered school buses to reach it. Access to the Laguna Seca property is easier as a Valley Transport Authority (VTA) bus line runs regularly and stops at a convenient gathering location for visiting the property (see attached VTA route and bus stop images). We have reached out to high schools within the community, and it is apparent our project will be a welcome supplement to current biology and environmental courses. The public nature of the OSCSP makes it uniquely qualified to reach all members of the community. Bioblitzes are known for their family appeal, attracting people of all ages and backgrounds, and awakening within the attendees a new fascination and respect for the life around them. We endeavor to show participants in the program that wildlife exists all around us—even in urban parks—but it is through this program, at this protected location, that many participants will have their first moment of true discovery where curiosity and inquiry about nature are encouraged.

BONUS POINTS: Community Building (10 points)

26. Describe how this project actively encourages community building by engaging or accommodating local residents in novel and creative ways.

This question is optional; please answer if applicable, otherwise enter "N/A."

Shared experiences grow a community. By engaging with local residents for the open bioblitzes and field trips, guiding high school students on a journey of exploration and discovery, exposing them to field research techniques, and educating everyone involved about the environment around them, the community of shared appreciation for this fragile habitat grows and strengthens. We imagine during the life of this project that we will be building a motivated, and environmentally informed people who possess a sense of pride in their local wildlife and ecosystems. The results of this project—the research done and knowledge gained—will be made publicly available on our website at scvas.org. We hope that by making this project a reality we will spark the curiosity of participants, inspire them to care about the life forms they encounter, and motivate them to act on that care by working to preserve the wilderness that remains.

BONUS POINTS: Climate Resilience (5 points)

27. How does this project enhance and/or raise awareness about climate resilience?

This question is optional; please answer if applicable, otherwise enter "N/A."

By its very nature, the OSCSP highlights the importance of noticing changes in the habitat. The events that determine whether California experiences another drought, the increasing frequency of these droughts, the slow but predictable rise in temperatures, and the severity of weather events all have direct relationships with the nature we see around us. As we have done for decades with the Wetlands Discovery Program, the evidence of changes to our environment find their sources in human activity. This concept is core to all of

our environmental programs. Laguna Seca with its vernal pond that recharges our groundwater and mitigates urban flooding is a perfect place to teach attendees about climate resilience and how climate change manifests itself in the decline or proliferation of certain species of plants, birds and insects. We hope to make this connection very clear to attendees of our surveys, bioblitzes and high school field seminars.

Documents Upload [top](#)

Documents Requested *	Required?	Attached Documents *
Financial Statement	✓	Form 990 FY 2018-19 SCVAS
Project Budget download template	✓	Project Budget OSCSP, SCVAS
Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement download template		
Site Control Documentation download template		
CEQA Compliance Certification Form download template		
Letters of Support		Larry Volpe Letter of Support Susan Hinchey Letter of Support Sergio Jimenez Letter of Support Sam Liccardo Letter of Support
Project Partner Letters		Dr. Merav Vonshak, Partner Letter
Maps and Site Plans		Conceptual map showing eBird Hotspots and potential survey routes
Photographs		Looking down on Laguna Seca from Northeast VTA 68 Route Bus Stop Locations VTA Route 68 with Laguna Seca Location Highlighted
Other		eBird Checklist of Laguna Seca showing lack of data for the area

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