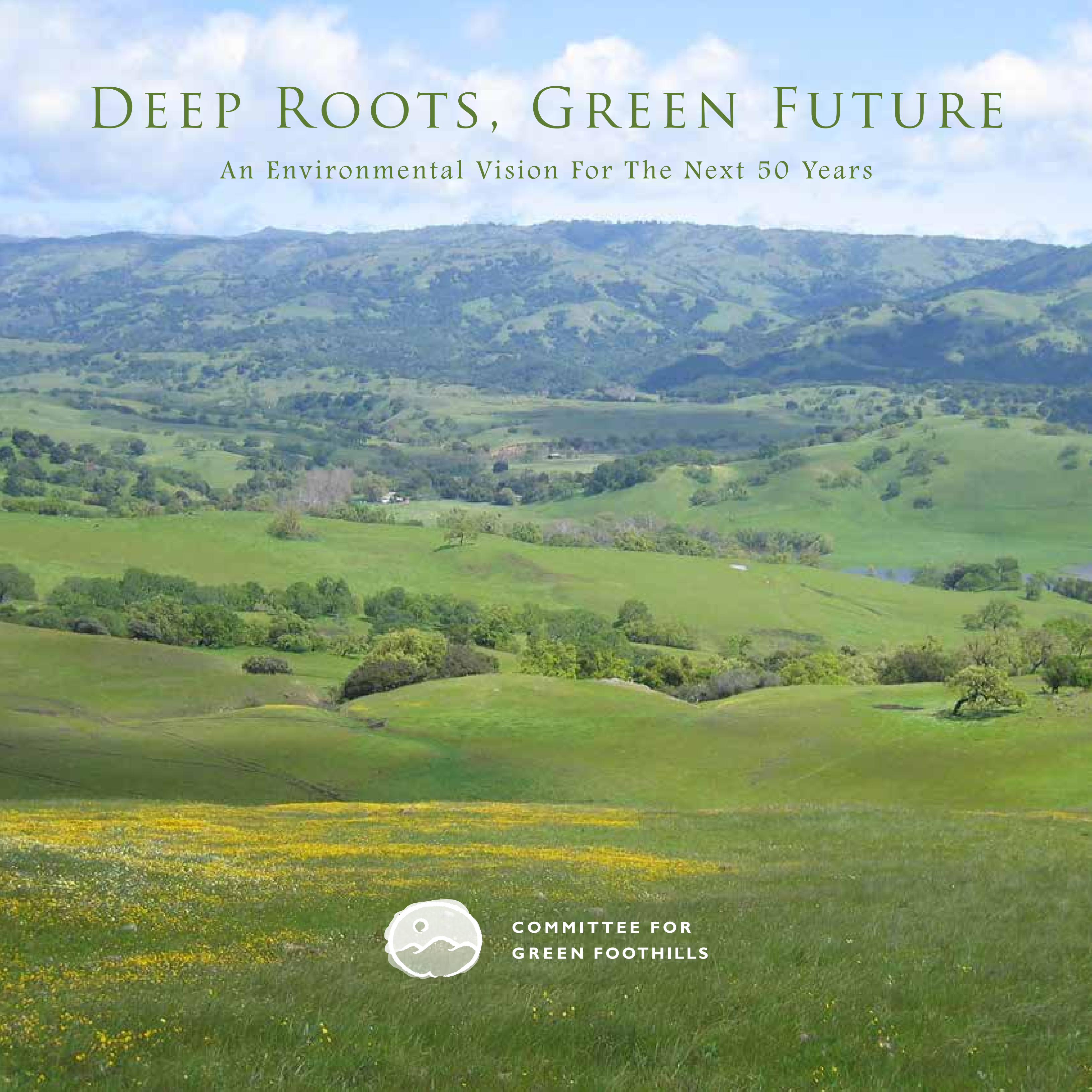
Deep Roots, Green Future

An Environmental Vision For The Next 50 Years



COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS

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Foreword

> *"There's no way that we can help children to learn to love and preserve this planet, if we don't give them direct experiences with the miracles and blessings of nature."*
>
> **Anita Olds**

By Megan Medeiros, Executive Director, Committee for Green Foothills

Do you have any special memories of childhood adventures in nature?

Did you ever try to wrap your arms around the largest tree in a forest? Do you recall the joy of watching a seed you planted blossom into a flower? Perhaps you spent some time at a creek perched on a rock admiring lively tadpoles. Maybe you watched a graceful flock of birds dance over a pond at sunset.

Can you imagine who you would be had you not experienced each of the moments you had in nature?

How do you feel about preserving the places you explored as a child for future generations?

Environmental stewardship doesn't happen by accident. The protection of wildlife and the health of natural systems is dependent upon the continued ability of everyone to have meaningful experiences outdoors.

Over half a century ago, a handful of people who had a deep appreciation of the green hillsides of our region realized they would need to take action in order to save their beloved open space. These visionaries formed Committee for Green Foothills, and the organization took flight quickly and gained respect and influence. Since then, Committee for Green Foothills has protected thousands of acres of natural land and wildlife habitat.

One of Committee for Green Foothills' greatest, often unmentioned, successes is that many children growing up today enjoy the same opportunity to form a deep, long-lasting connection with nature as past generations did.

We have just entered an era defined by its environmental challenges. The threats to local open space, farmlands, and natural resources are greater than ever.

Deep Roots, Green Future is Committee for Green Foothills' vision for what our region can grow to become over the next half century. It will take many smart, committed people who understand our interdependence with the natural world to make this vision a reality.

Future generations deserve the sense of wonder that can only be provided by seeing fish swimming in our creeks, native wildflowers in bloom, old-growth redwood trees, migratory bird species in flight along the bay, and whales breaching in our ocean. If you haven't already, I hope you will join us in the effort to protect local open space, the wildlife that depends upon it, and the right of every person to form a rich, long-lasting connection with nature.

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS

Deep Roots

50 Years Ago. The two dozen citizens who were spurred into action in 1962 to protect Palo Alto's foothills from sprawling development had no idea how influential their fledgling organization, Committee for Green Foothills, would become.

In the over 50 years since its founding, Committee for Green Foothills has been widely recognized for its contribution in protecting open space, farmlands, and our irreplaceable natural resources in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. As the only advocacy organization that concentrates on land use decisions affecting natural areas in our two counties, Committee for Green Foothills, working with like-minded organizations, has indeed changed the face and the future of the region.

Spin back the clock and imagine: the year is 1962. Post-World War II planners, developers, and speculators have already drawn up plans to transform the Peninsula into a mega-metropolis. Decision-makers have enthusiastically adopted these far-flung plans, and most people accept them as inevitable.

Without citizen intervention on myriad fronts to change this scenario, a shocking future would have been realized. Consider these radical transformations of the Peninsula we know and treasure today:

The shallow waters of San Francisco Bay south of the Dumbarton Bridge would be filled and paved over with asphalt and concrete, with only a small remnant lake in the middle of what was formerly thousands of acres of Bay and marshes. The coast of San Mateo County would be covered with Los Angeles-style subdivisions from Daly City to Santa Cruz. A huge Army Corps dam would impound Pescadero Creek at Worley Flat to supply water for 100,000 homes on the south coast. South of San Jose, subdivisions and strip malls would have smothered the rich agricultural soils in Coyote and Almaden valleys. On gentle hillsides and steeper ridgetops, McMansions would have replaced the stately oaks and scrubby chaparral. Even the more remote productive farmlands and ranchlands would have been lost. To accommodate this auto-centric sprawl, new freeways would have extended like spider webs across the landscape.

Yet this nightmarish vision did not happen. Ordinary citizens, along with experts in planning, geology, hydrology, biology, and other professions who placed a higher value on the natural world, spoke up, loudly, clearly, and persistently. Through old-fashioned grassroots action, they changed the future.

We dedicate Deep Roots, Green Future to those early visionaries.

Green Future

50 Years From Now. This Deep Roots, Green Future visioning process began when Committee for Green Foothills volunteers and staff asked the simple question: What do we want our region to look like in 50 years?

The document in front of you is our answer to that question. Deep Roots, Green Future divides the spectrum of Committee for Green Foothills' work into seven distinct areas – Baylands, Coast, Hillsides and Grasslands, Forests, Farmland, Rivers and Streams, and Urban Green Spaces.

Each section begins with a vision that asks you to imagine yourself 50 years from now, visiting the baylands, bicycling along the coast, hiking through the hillsides and forests, visiting a farm, wading in the streams, and enjoying urban parks and green spaces. These visions include what we love about these regions today as well as what we hope for them in the future.

You'll then find concrete goals, some specific, others broad, in each section. These goals will serve as guideposts by which we will plan our strategy, prioritize our actions, and evaluate our successes.

At its heart, Deep Roots, Green Future is what Committee for Green Foothills stands for.

If realized, this proactive, positive vision for the next half century will achieve not only great environmental wins, but help to guarantee the long-term economic resiliency and social well-being of our region. This is a vision worth sharing. We will partner with nonprofits, public agencies, businesses, developers, and individual citizens to make it a reality.

We hope that 50 years from now, the next generation will be able to enjoy a beautiful and healthy local environment.

And perhaps, they will look back to our work in making this possible with the same sense of gratitude and pride that we feel for the work of our predecessors.

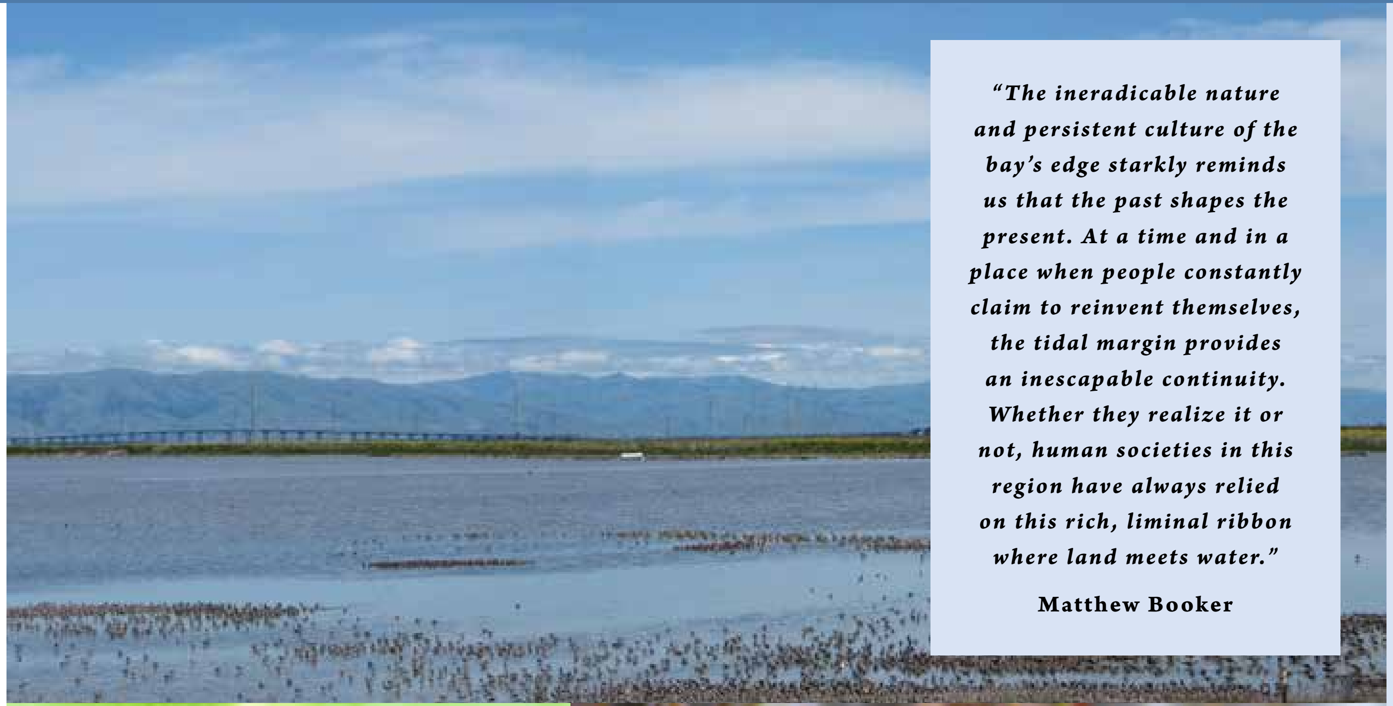
Baylands

IMAGINE. It's a mild winter day, and you're chaperoning your son's school field trip to visit the restored bayland habitat in Redwood City. The shoreline is dotted with innumerable birds, from American Avocets strutting through the shallow water near the shore to Northern Shovelers floating farther out. A Great Blue Heron standing on the shore curls up its long neck and spreads its wings before taking off in flight over the water.

You walk out with the class along a narrow levee trail. At a viewing platform, the kids pull out their binoculars to complete the bird count they have been working on all semester. An elderly couple, here with their young grandchildren, ask your son about the school project. You smile as he explains earnestly that the birds' nesting islands were built several hundred feet from the trail in order to keep birds from being disturbed by humans. The couple tells him that they remember when these ponds were used for salt production, and how glad they are that the restored landscape is now part of the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge.

On the other side of the platform, stretches of cordgrass and pickleweed spread out in dense tidal marshland. A couple of boys press up against the railing, binoculars glued to their eyes, hoping for a glimpse of a salt marsh harvest mouse hiding in the pickleweed. The teacher reminds them to return to their project and points out an exciting find: several young California Clapper Rails strutting through the cordgrass. The boys raise a shout and the rest of the class comes over to see this once-threatened species, now flourishing thanks to the restoration of its habitat.

As the class boards the school bus, you pause to look out once more over the shining stretch of the Bay waters. A flock of waterbirds takes off from the salt ponds, rising into the air against the backdrop of the Diablo Range. You are thankful that these baylands, so long neglected, are now a prized part of the Bay Area's open space.



"The ineradicable nature and persistent culture of the bay's edge starkly reminds us that the past shapes the present. At a time and in a place when people constantly claim to reinvent themselves, the tidal margin provides an inescapable continuity. Whether they realize it or not, human societies in this region have always relied on this rich, liminal ribbon where land meets water."

Matthew Booker

In 50 years...

- **Wetlands are restored along the Bay shoreline.** All around the Bay, historic wetlands that were once diked and drained for salt production, including the Cargill salt ponds in Redwood City, are now part of protected wildlife refuges. A combination of restored tidal marsh and managed salt pond habitats ensures all shoreline species are thriving. While restored tidal marshlands offer habitat to threatened species such as California Clapper Rail and salt marsh harvest mouse, managed salt pond habitats continue to provide shelter for threatened species such as Western Snowy Plover. The restored wetlands filter pollutants from stormwater runoff and reduce greenhouse gases by absorbing carbon from the atmosphere, as well as provide protection from flooding and sea level rise by slowing and soaking up flood waters.

- **Development along the Bay shoreline is restricted to protect against sea level rise and to safeguard wildlife habitat.** Where possible, buildings, roads and other infrastructure that were once vulnerable to sea level rise have been relocated. Open space along the shoreline is protected from development and serves as wetlands or as transition zone habitat, providing foraging areas for wetland species as well as higher ground for these species to retreat to during floods or high tides. Developed areas along the shoreline are managed in a way that is sensitive to the needs of wildlife in the nearby wetlands.

- **Trails and other passive recreational resources balance public access with the needs of wildlife.** Sensitive shorebirds and waterbirds have been protected from human presence and disturbance. Trails, parks, and other recreational areas are designed to minimize disruption to nesting, breeding, and foraging wildlife. Within these limits, trails, interpretive centers, and viewing platforms make it easy for people to connect with nature. Educational programs enable people to access inspirational learning opportunities which highlight the relationship between humans, natural lands, and wildlife.

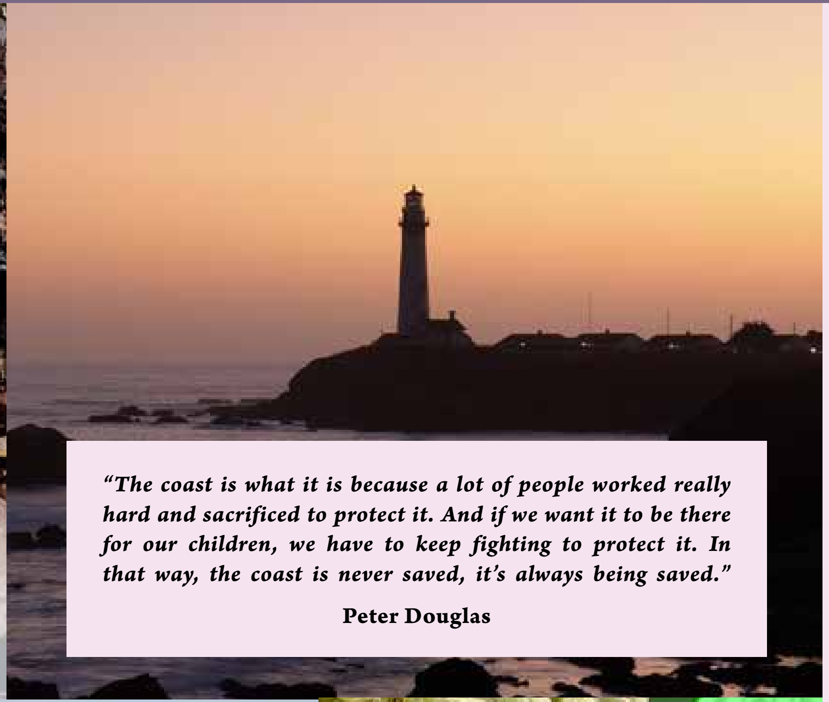
Coast

IMAGINE. You're spending the weekend biking along the California Coastal Trail through San Mateo County. It's a sunny day in September without a trace of fog, and the Pacific Ocean sparkles in the sunlight as you begin your trek south from Pacifica. You revel in all the sights, from the sweeping views of cliffs and white surf from Devil's Slide, to the peaceful small-town atmosphere of Montara, to the sight of families exploring tidepools at the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. The views inland are just as spectacular, offering dramatic vistas of the forested heights and grassy slopes of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Lunchtime finds you in downtown Half Moon Bay, with its Main Street lined with historic, stately buildings. You stop at a local café and enjoy soup made from artichokes grown right here on the coast. After a little window-shopping on Main Street, you set off again along the winding coastal route of Highway 1. Passing farms lined with crops that thrive in the foggy, cool climate of the San Mateo County coast, you stop at a small farmstand to buy some Brussels sprouts and artichokes to take home.

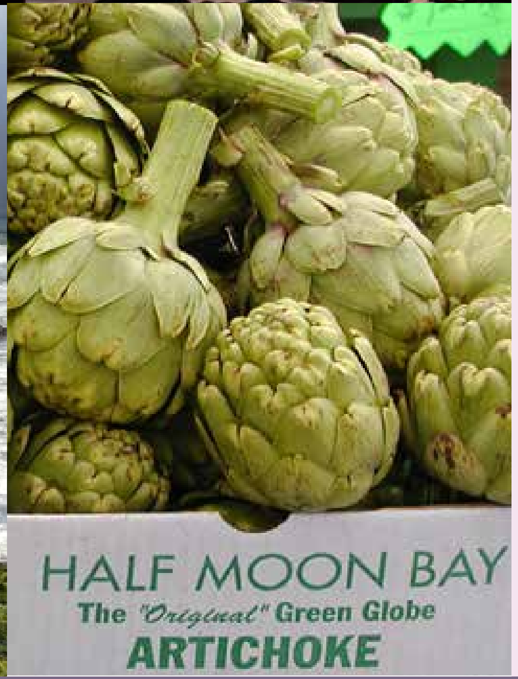
Then you're back on the trail, passing long stretches of beach and gently rolling slopes interspersed with more farms. It's late afternoon now, and the fog has started to roll in. At Bean Hollow State Beach, knowing you're near your destination, you stop to watch the crashing waves. A pair of seals play out at sea, their sleek black bodies dancing in the waves.

Finally, you arrive at Pigeon Point Lighthouse, your destination for the night. After a simple dinner, you relax outside and plan the next day's ride past Año Nuevo State Park into Santa Cruz County, as the sound of the surf washing onto the shore fills your ears. All at once, you get goosebumps. It's not the night air, it's how you are suddenly struck by the magnitude of the ocean, all of the life it supports, and its mesmerizing beauty.



"The coast is what it is because a lot of people worked really hard and sacrificed to protect it. And if we want it to be there for our children, we have to keep fighting to protect it. In that way, the coast is never saved, it's always being saved."

Peter Douglas



In 50 years...

- **Bluffs, cliffs, and beaches that form the dramatic interface between ocean and land, are protected from development and highway expansion.** Allowing the natural erosion of bluffs and cliffs replenishes beaches up and down the coast. Shoreline structures, buildings, and roads previously built in the path of sea level rise and crumbling cliffs are moved further inland, with adequate room provided for trails and beach access.

- **Fertile farm fields on coastal terraces and valleys are producing a wide variety of locally-available fresh vegetables and fruits.** Rotational grazing that mimics historic movement of deer and elk herds is bringing back native grasses, reducing erosion, and increasing soil fertility. Farmers can store water from creeks in off-stream ponds during times of high winter stream flows to provide for irrigation during dry summer months, thus leaving more water in streams for aquatic and riparian habitats.

- **The California Coastal Trail is completed.** Hikers and cyclists can traverse not just the 55 miles of San Mateo County's coast, but the entire 1100 miles from Oregon to Mexico. Beaches and scenic overlooks are accessible to all. Visitors to the coast enjoy the historic downtown of Half Moon Bay and the amazing variety of beaches and habitats from Devil's Slide to Año Nuevo.

- **Permanent urban boundaries around Half Moon Bay and Pescadero focus new development within urban areas.** These policies protect the rural, agricultural, and open space areas from excessive sprawling development. Coastal hillsides and terraces stretching from the ridgelines down to the ocean remain a place for farms, wildlife, and open space.

Hillsides and Grasslands

IMAGINE. It's a beautiful Sunday afternoon in springtime. You step off the shuttle from San Jose to Coyote Valley, your two small children in tow. You are among the many visitors to what is now one of the Bay Area's most famous open space preserves. This is a place where rolling, golden hillsides and rich farmland offer precious habitat for wildlife as well as opportunities for people to enjoy natural beauty.

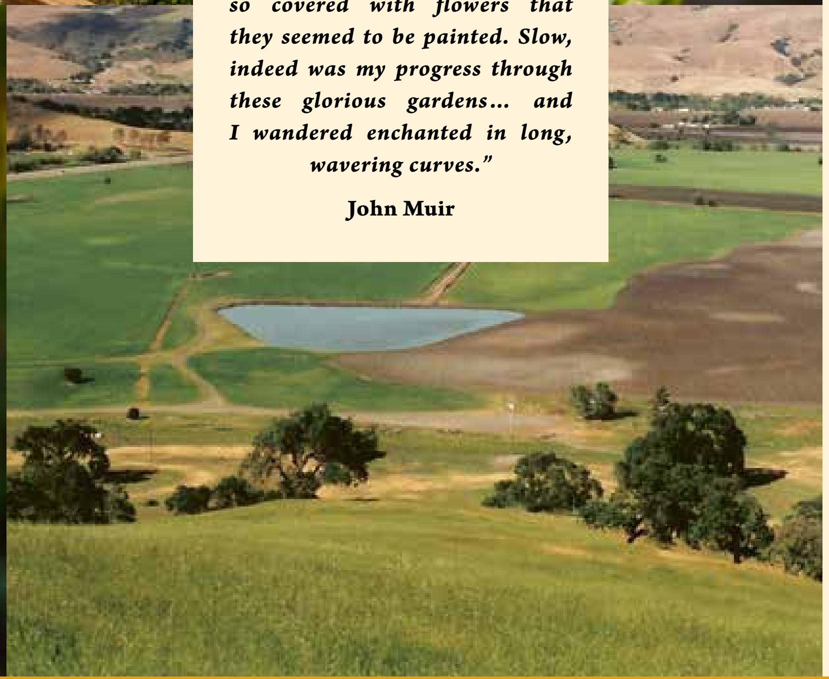
As you and your children head uphill through the preserve, both sides of the trail are covered in tiny wildflowers, from butter-yellow tidy tips to small purple puffs of owl's clover. At the top of the hill, a breathtaking field of bright California goldfield blossoms opens up before you, punctuated by the gray-green boulders that mark this hilltop as a rare serpentine grassland. Several orange- and black-checkered butterflies are flitting among the wildflowers. You explain to your children that these are the once-threatened Bay checkerspot butterflies – now thriving here thanks to these protected grasslands. A herd of cows grazes on a nearby slope, eating the non-native plants that would otherwise crowd out the native wildflowers that provide the butterflies' habitat. Your kids are delighted at the idea that cows can help flowers bloom.

You walk back down the trail, Coyote Valley spread out below you. You know that the line of trees meandering through the valley marks the corridor of Coyote Creek, interspersed with wetlands and vernal pools. Suddenly your child grabs your hand and points – she's spotted a bobcat and her cubs, almost invisible in the thick brush of the gully next to the trail. You all watch, mesmerized, as they disappear into one of the densely vegetated wildlife corridors that pass underneath Highway 101.

Back at the shuttle, you meet up with people returning from their own excursions on other trails. You chat about life here in San Jose and how lucky you are to have such a beautiful place to enjoy, as your children tell everyone about seeing the bobcat and cubs. You marvel at how things have changed since you were that age, and how far we have come in preserving and celebrating the natural beauty and the amazing plant and animal life of our iconic hillsides.

"The landscapes of the Santa Clara Valley were fairly drenched with sunshine, all the air was quivering with the songs of the meadowlarks, and the hills were so covered with flowers that they seemed to be painted. Slow, indeed was my progress through these glorious gardens… and I wandered enchanted in long, wavering curves."

John Muir



In 50 years...

- **Hillside habitats are preserved and enhanced, especially rare and fragile serpentine grasslands.** Many thousands of acres of serpentine grasslands are under permanent protection to ensure the survival of endangered and threatened plants and animals, including the Bay checkerspot butterfly. Non-native, invasive species are controlled through techniques such as managed grazing, and the replacement of polluting vehicles with zero-emission vehicles on our highways has dramatically reduced nitrogen deposition, slowing the growth of invasive grasses on serpentine soils.
- **Coyote Valley serves as a critical wildlife corridor, with open space and wildlife-friendly farms and ranches.** Species such as mountain lions and bobcats travel safely between the Diablo Range and Santa Cruz Mountains, keeping their gene pool diverse and reversing the threat of extinction. Wildlife corridors such as Coyote Creek are permanently protected. Passage for wildlife across Highway 101 has been created by enlarging and vegetating culverts and underpasses.
- **Views of hills and ridgelines from the valley floor are protected.** Even in the midst of urbanized Silicon Valley, we can look up and refresh our eyes with the scenic views of the grassy or wooded hills. Recognizing the importance of natural beauty, policies protect these scenic resources from development.
- **Development on steep hillsides is restricted.** Policies are in place to avoid development on steep slopes, preserving hillside vegetation and keeping our streams free of the habitat-destroying and flood-inducing sedimentation caused by landslides.
- **Parks, preserves, and trails make the beauty of nature accessible to all.** People of all ages, income, and abilities can easily enjoy our region's parks and trails. The Bay Area Ridge Trail provides a continuous loop along the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. Trail connections to urban areas and improved public transit make it easy for all residents to access open space, encouraging a love of the outdoors, healthy living, and improved quality of life.

Forests

IMAGINE. It's a warm summer weekend. For months you have been planning this - an ambitious group backpacking trip from Palo Alto all the way to the sea. Your group sets off in the morning, heading up a winding trail that leads from downtown Palo Alto through a connected series of trails, parks and preserves up to Skyline Boulevard.

Resting on a hilltop at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve, you look out to the west. Forested ridges and valleys stretch out to the ocean horizon, drifts of coastal fog clinging softly to the redwood tree tops.

Even though it is mid-day, the rush of cool air welcomes you as you enter the cathedral-like redwood canopy. Time seems to slow down, and the clatter of your boots is suddenly hushed by soft, pungent redwood needles underfoot. Muted, diffused light slants through the trees, inviting you to stop and gaze upward. Suddenly, you feel small and insignificant in the presence of these giants, yet strengthened and reassured. Their beauty and majesty refresh your spirit.

The next day, emerging from your tent in the dim light of pre-dawn, you hear the call of a marbled murrelet. She's flying straight from the ocean to her hidden nest to feed a single young chick that hatched on a mossy branch high above you. A few of you catch a glimpse of her before she disappears in the tree canopy, and your oldest backpacker expresses his joy at the sight - he remembers a time when the murrelet was nearly extinct. Setting forth re-energized, your group resumes your descent from the redwoods down through the grassy coastal plain to the sweeping Pacific coastline.

Finally reaching the roaring ocean, you turn to look back at the deep redwood forest that has been your home this weekend. You take turns giving thanks to this place - you thank the trees, the wildlife, and the quietude. Your eldest backpacker is the last to speak - giving his deep thanks to all the foresighted people who helped preserve these treasured landscapes.

"For this forest has stood here since the Ice Age, and here, together with this transfixed past, is the future too, for these immense lives will outlast yours by a thousand years or so."

Donald Culross Peattie

In 50 years...

- **Vast tracts of redwood-Douglas fir forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains are permanently preserved.** Entire forested landscapes, scattered small stands, and single old-growth trees are permanently protected through private landowner initiatives and in public parks and open space preserves.
- **Degraded forest habitats are being restored.** Recognizing that redwood forests take centuries to achieve old-growth characteristics, park and open space land managers are using natural processes - including fire - to slowly restore previously logged forests. Old-growth forests are a biological legacy for generations to come.
- **Creeks and streams flow free, clear, and cool.** Bad logging practices - causing landslides, mass erosion, and sedimentation of forested streams - are a thing of the past. Old roads, skid trails, and landings for logging are restored or repurposed as trails. Strict regulations of logging on private lands ensure a continuous tree canopy over streams to maintain cool temperatures, which fish and other aquatic species require for survival.
- **Natural forest ecosystems provide complex habitats.** Forest species are flourishing, including newts and salamanders, Cooper's hawks and golden eagles, coyotes, bobcats, and foxes, steelhead trout and coho salmon. Forest flora is thriving, including a diversity of shade-loving ferns, fungi, and lichens. The secretive Marbled Murrelet, a small seabird that flies inland to lay one single egg on an ancient tree's horizontal branch, is no longer an endangered species.
- **Forested lands are recognized as a crucial defense against climate change.** Carbon dioxide concentration levels are greatly reduced, due in part to massive reforestation efforts. In the Santa Cruz Mountains, the emerging forests are demonstrating their inherent resiliency to increased fire risk in the face of extended and more severe drought periods. The oldest and biggest trees are celebrated as champions of carbon sequestration.

FARMLAND

IMAGINE. You're headed south for the day to help a farmer friend of yours. She's been leasing her land for five years from the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, and has just started to make a good living. Now she's going to open a farmstand, and you're going down to help build it.

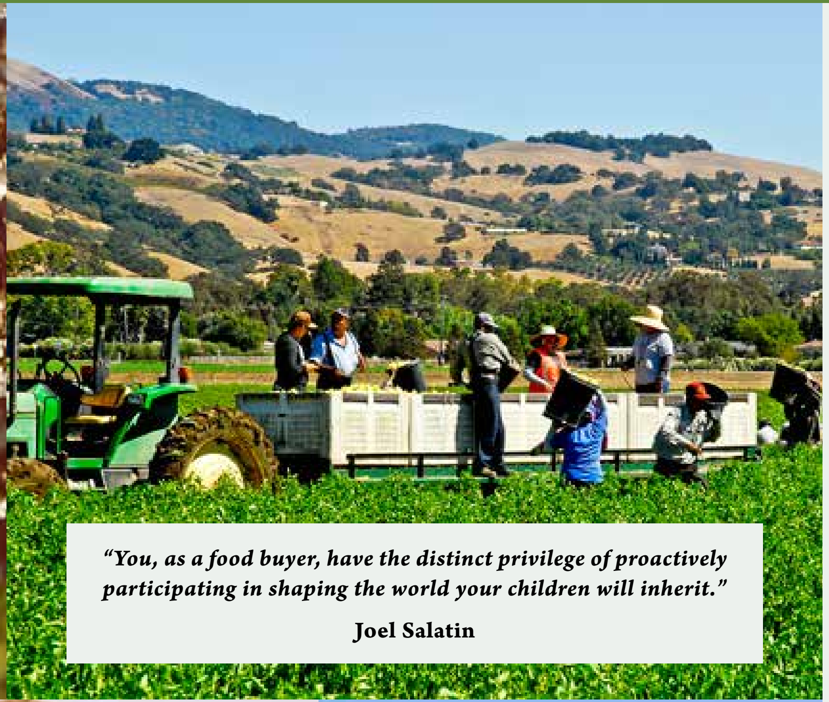
When you arrive at the farm, you see a wide variety of crops growing. Leafy vegetables like collard, mustard, and salad greens, broadcast by hand, grow in three-foot-wide raised beds.

A young orchard is flowering at the edge of the property. Red-winged Blackbirds are singing in the yellow flowered mustard that grows between the trees. The farm is a wild quilt of crops, ranging from tall stands of fava beans and broccoli to low mounds of strawberries and potatoes just beginning to emerge from the ground.

You join the group already at work on the open-sided structure by the side of the road. Many of them are other small farmers who belong to your friend's farming collaborative, sharing tools and experience as well as helping out on occasions like this. As you work, you strike up a conversation with an older man who has farmed in this area all his life. He tells you how working together in the collaborative has helped all of them save resources and expand their businesses. Together they have built strong business relationships with dozens of local restaurants and markets whose customers prefer locally-grown food.

When the group stops to take a break, you get a chance to chat with your friend. She tells you about the new crops she's adding to her offerings this year, including rare heirloom beets, taro root, and new varieties of South Asian greens. Last week, she planted beans and squash among her young corn plants; these three plants protect and nourish one another so effectively that the combination was known in native legend as the "Three Sisters." You can't help but think that our region is truly blessed with one of the best and most versatile climates in the world.

By sunset, the farmstand is almost complete. Your friend has started up her grill and is busy cooking dinner. As the group enjoys wine from a neighboring vineyard, you toast your friend, her farm, and the community supporting her. A few of you relax and enjoy the evening air, talking late into the night of how the new farmstand will help grow the lucrative agri-tourism business in Santa Clara County.



"You, as a food buyer, have the distinct privilege of proactively participating in shaping the world your children will inherit."

Joel Salatin

IN 50 YEARS...

- **Permanently protected farms and ranches form agricultural preserves along the urban edge and coast.** Urban communities rely upon local agriculture for food and recreation, and working farmlands dominate our landscape in southern Santa Clara County and on the San Mateo County coast. These farmlands serve as a source of local produce and other farm products, provide wildlife habitat, and are farmed by methods that ensure the health of both people and the environment. Lands are protected by a variety of methods such as conservation easements and land trust partnerships. Farms along the urban edge are included to ensure that city boundaries remain stable and do not expand.

- **Programs help transition land to new generations.** Robust and varied agricultural education programs, ranging from college degrees to mentoring and apprenticing opportunities, ensure that our working landscapes continue to be farmed and ranched. Thanks to a game-changing economic localization movement, farming creates good jobs, and is a viable occupation for many people.

- **Well-stewarded farms and ranchlands support a healthy ecosystem and help communities adapt to climate change.** Rich and healthy soil provides flood control, groundwater recharge, and protects our watersheds by absorbing and filtering wastewater. Farming practices that mimic natural systems and avoid the use of chemicals are the norm, and farms provide important habitat for wildlife. Ranchlands are managed to benefit wildlife habitat, with grazing utilized to control invasive species.

Rivers And Streams

IMAGINE. It's another grey, rainy Saturday in February. The kids are starting to go a little stir-crazy after days of learning and playing indoors, so you ask them to put their toys away and bring out the rain gear. Donning your rainboots, you head out into the drizzle. Quickly, the kids discover the simple pleasures of puddle stomping. The cold air reddens their cheeks and clears your head.

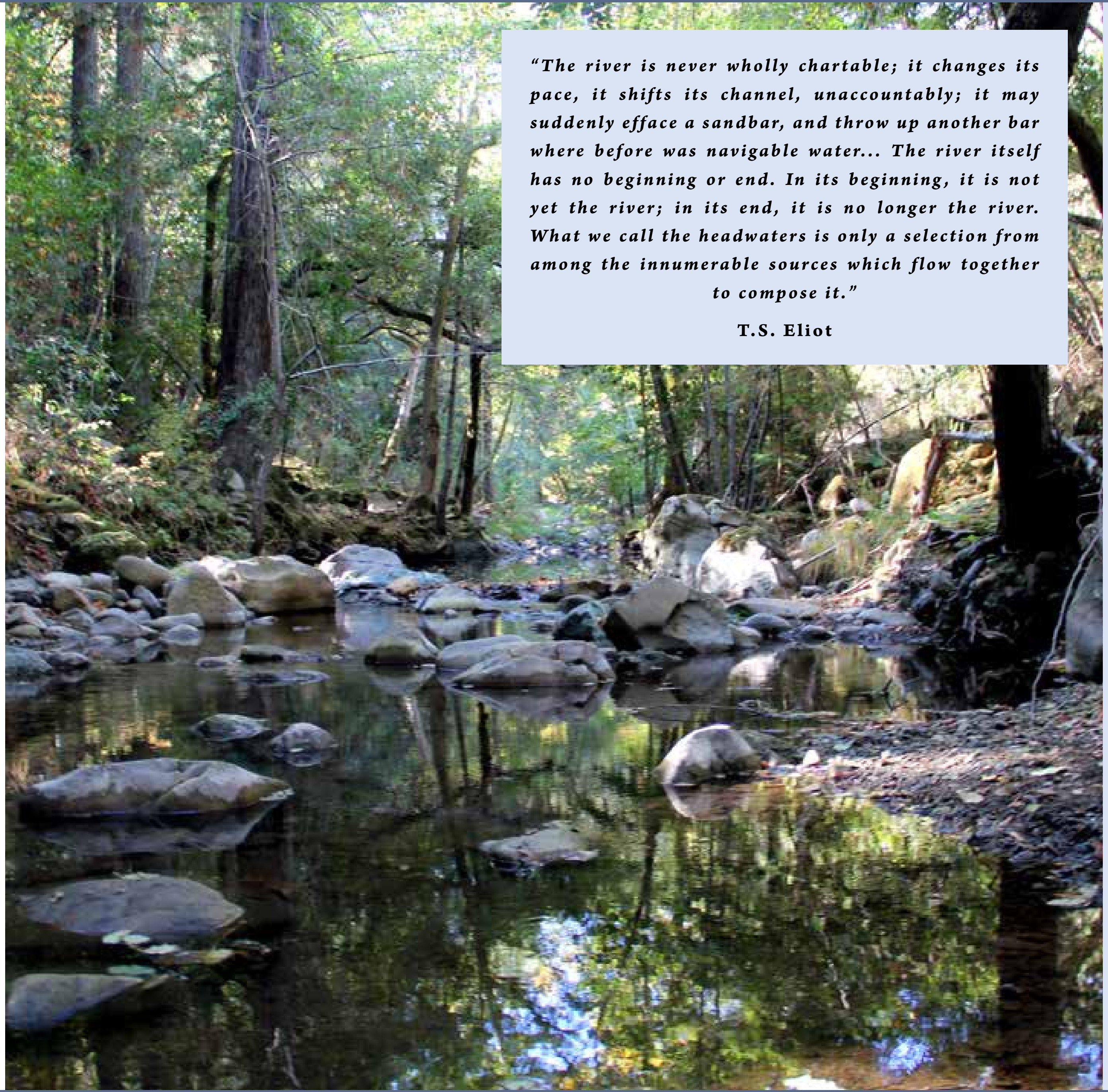
As you walk through the streets, a dense and lush green wall of trees and shrubs, like a ribbon of forest running through your neighborhood, looms up ahead. It's the creek, which used to run underground when you were a child, but has since been daylighted and carefully restored. The banks are now home to cottonwood and willow trees and moisture-loving plants. The creek flows between natural banks, here tumbling over rocks, there drifting gently past a still pool.

The kids run ahead of you down the trail, and find a place where a break in the trees leads down to the bank. A fallen tree has created a pool nearby, and beyond it the water swirls over rocks and drifts away. The kids wade into the stream, their boots splashing.

Beneath the hypnotic pattern of raindrops falling on the water's surface, you spot the swirling, darting motions of a school of tiny minnows. The kids bend over almost double, studying the little fish darting in and out of the shadows of the fallen tree. Suddenly, a much larger shape moves in the shadows, and the kids shout out in excitement. It is the once-endangered steelhead trout swimming in the depths, ready to head upstream to spawn.

The kids scramble up the bank and play in the cascading branches of a buckeye tree. The sibling scuffles have faded completely and they are laughing now. You sit on the bank on a fallen log, in a half-trance from the rushing, swirling eddies of water, giant raindrops plunking down on your raincoat from the trees above.

What seemed like a dreary day only an hour ago now seems precious, a gift to all life on earth.



"The river is never wholly chartable; it changes its pace, it shifts its channel, unaccountably; it may suddenly efface a sandbar, and throw up another bar where before was navigable water... The river itself has no beginning or end. In its beginning, it is not yet the river; in its end, it is no longer the river. What we call the headwaters is only a selection from among the innumerable sources which flow together to compose it."

T.S. Eliot

In 50 years...

- **Rivers and streams, and the vegetation along their banks, are protected for the benefit of wildlife and to prevent flood hazards.** Riparian forests thrive, creating habitat not only for terrestrial animals but also for fish and other aquatic life. Tree canopies provide both shade that helps regulate water temperature as well as organic matter that adds nutrients to the stream. In addition, the riparian vegetation protects water quality by filtering pollutants and helping to prevent bank erosion.

- **Development no longer threatens riparian corridors.** Strong riparian corridor policies create buffer zones that allow riparian habitat to thrive without the disturbances of structures that create bank instability, roads that result in pollutant-laden runoff, or nighttime lights that drive away wildlife.

- **Where feasible, natural channels have been restored, including daylighting of buried streams.** Artificial modifications such as riprap and sacked concrete, as well as concrete-lined channels and enclosed culverts that create "underground streams," have given way to natural streambeds that are allowed to meander within an active floodplain. Natural streams flowing through urban areas now provide beauty and places to play while increasing flood protection and groundwater recharge.

- **Fish and other aquatic species thrive in a diversity of habitats.** Fish populations are on the rise due to the restoration of stream channel habitat. In-stream structures that act as barriers to migrating fish, such as steelhead trout, have been removed. Water quality is cool, clear and free of pollutants and excess algae. Stream channels have been enhanced to provide the varied habitat that fish need, including pools, riffles, gravel beds for spawning, stable undercut stream banks, and overhanging trees to provide leaf litter and fallen branches for food and shelter.

Urban Green Spaces

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS

IMAGINE. It's a beautiful spring day, and you're considering where to spend your lunch break. Should you take your lunch up to your office building's green roof, where the wildflowers are coming into bloom among the native grasses? Instead you decide to walk to the nearby 2-acre nature park, and soon you are seated under a valley oak tree, a giant whose branches sprawl above you. Friends and colleagues from nearby buildings join you to enjoy the sense of seclusion created by the surrounding trees, the grassy fields punctuated with bursts of bright orange California poppies, the warm spring breeze, and the birds calling overhead. The companionship and time spent out in nature relaxes and rejuvenates you; the stresses of work slip away as you breathe in the peaceful atmosphere.

As you leave the park, you stop by the plaza at one end, where every day a different public event is held. Some days it's a cooking class, a farmer's market, or a tai chi exercise group. Today, it's your local Aztec dance group, being admired by an enthusiastic crowd. You spot some of your friends among the performers and wave to them, pleased that so many people are enjoying their performance. At times like this, you feel truly grateful to be part of such a diverse and exciting urban environment.

On your way back to your office, you pass by a large community garden on what was once an abandoned lot. An elderly man in a wide-brimmed hat is working among the neat green rows of cilantro, arugula, radishes, and bok choy. You breathe in the fresh, clean smell of earth and admire the bounty. In the teaching garden, a group of children excitedly gather around a docent, savoring fresh carrots straight from the garden.

Tomorrow, you decide, you will take advantage of the warm spring weather and skip your usual bus commute in favor of biking along the creek trail that runs from the forested hills all the way down to the Bay. You return to your office feeling refreshed, and marvel at the thought of a time when people couldn't experience nature every day.

"A change of heart occurs when people look beyond themselves to others, and then to the rest of life."

E.O. Wilson

In 50 years...

- **Parks include natural landscapes that serve as habitat for wildlife and provide people with peaceful, restorative experiences.** No longer limited to playing fields and hardscape, parks in cities and suburbs include natural features like creeks and native habitat, which also provide vital linkages for wildlife to migrate through developed areas. Communities are encouraged to participate in restoring and maintaining these natural areas to provide a connection to nature and an educational experience about the ecology of the region.
- **Parks and green spaces are featured in urban areas and densely developed downtowns.** Parks are recognized as being vital for public health and quality of life. Cities prioritize the use of public land for green space, and provide incentives for private landowners to include green space in their designs. Innovative projects such as green roofs and vertical gardens make the most of available space. Natural areas provide those who work and live in dense urban cores with a daily opportunity to get outdoors and experience a sense of wonder.
- **Community gardens, front and backyard gardens, and urban farms bring the benefits of food production to urban dwellers.** Land use policies actively encourage the cultivation of nutritious, fresh produce at home. Public buildings and spaces are made available for community gardens. Small urban farms and associated roadside farmstands occupy once-abandoned lots, and community supported agriculture shares from local farms are commonplace for work and home delivery.
- **Green infrastructure is prioritized in order to make cities more resilient, sustainable, and livable.** Interconnected walking and biking trails make the community healthier and reduce car trips. Urban forest canopies keep our cities cool and shady, reduce stormwater runoff, provide habitat, and clean smog from the air. Energy efficiency and the investment in new technologies has greatly reduced our water and nonrenewable energy use while improving our air and water quality.

A Call to Action

Our founders worked diligently to protect our local open spaces and wildlife more than 50 years ago. It is now up to us to carry on their vision. As we explore the beautiful landscapes in our region and enjoy all of the wildlife that live here, we must remember that these last natural places can still be lost.

Children 50 years from now deserve to have hillsides, forests, coastal areas, baylands, creeks, farmlands, and urban green spaces to enjoy. If we want these places to be preserved, restored and enhanced, we need new voices speaking up for them.

As local conservation legend, the late Ollie Mayer, said, "once I thought the battles would end someday, but I know now that conservation battles never end. We just pass the torch to new generations."

We hope you will join us. Here is what you can do:

Lend a hand. We need photographers, event organizers, docents, marketers, legal experts, scientists, office administrators, and people who just love talking to others about open space. Sign up at www.greenfoothills.org/takeaction if you're interested in joining us.

Let your voice be heard. Decision-makers pay attention when they hear from people in their community, and our voices are more powerful when united. Sign up for our action alerts and join us in speaking up for the land, wildlife, and natural resources in our area.

Support the work you believe in. Committee for Green Foothills will continue to work tirelessly to protect our open space and natural resources, but we need your support. Become a member with a contribution to Committee for Green Foothills. If you are already a member, invite a friend to join or consider giving a gift membership.

Get involved. Join us today.

Fifty years from now, you have a bird's-eye view of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. What does it look like? Can you see the towering redwood forests, restored wetlands, sweeping coastlines, and green foothills? Can you find abundant small farms, beautiful urban parks, and native wildlife? It's easy for one to imagine this vibrant, beautiful future - but it will only happen if we speak up for it. Together, we can make Deep Roots, Green Future a reality.

Since 1962, Committee for Green Foothills has worked to protect the open space, farmlands, and natural resources of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties through advocacy, education, and grassroots action.

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS

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Local. Vocal. Effective.