



greenfootnotes

WHAT'S INSIDE

Victory on Measure A in San Benito County
Why Land Matters in the Fight Against Climate Change
Annual Report 2024
Building Farmworker Housing Without Causing Sprawl
Developing New Environmental Leaders
Green Foothills Is Watching
Green Foothills Applauds
Become a Community Ambassador

Now for the Good News

BY JULIE HUTCHESON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The next four years present a challenging landscape with a federal administration set to weaken environmental protections, putting decades of progress at risk. This makes Green Foothills' work to protect local nature and farmland more critical than ever. It requires building on our remarkable successes in influencing land use and open space decisions. We're up for the challenge. And we do have good news to report.

We started the year by welcoming Alexandra (Lexi) Mendoza to our advocacy team. Lexi is working with our phenomenal long-time advocate Lennie Roberts on the San Mateo Coast implementing our Coastal Resilience Program. A native of Redwood City, Lexi comes to us after working for Peninsula Open Space Trust for the last three years.

Having reached our initial \$2 million milestone, the Lennie Roberts Advocacy Fund now helps finance a portion of our advocacy efforts. This restricted fund ensures long-term support for our advocacy and honors Lennie's 50+ years of full-time volunteer service with Green Foothills. Heartfelt thanks to those who have donated to the fund. We welcome additional donations.

Our efforts in San Benito County continue on an upward trajectory with the passage of Measure A (more on p. 3). This ballot measure underscores our commitment to protect wildlife habitat and animals' ability to move safely from one habitat range to another.

Through our Leadership Program, we continue to nurture the next generation of environmental changemakers with leadership and advocacy training. We support alumni in advancing environmental justice and conservation initiatives in the counties we serve. And we are excited to launch the Green Foothills Community Ambassador Program for passionate volunteers to represent Green Foothills at local events where they will encourage others to be a voice for nature. Details about the program are on the back page of this newsletter.

Finally, after a very intentional and thoughtful process, our board is poised to adopt our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan at its March meeting. The plan outlines how we will rise to the challenges and opportunities around critical conservation issues in the next five years. Look for detailed information about the plan in the coming months. With a growing staff and board – we recently welcomed new board members Fernando Fernandez, Jean Forstner, Bindu Kandoori, Lisa Liddle, and Susan Michael – we are primed and ready to meet the challenges head-on.

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

3921 East Bayshore Road
Palo Alto, CA 94303
info@GreenFoothills.org
GreenFoothills.org
(650) 968-7243

Staff

Julie Hutcheson
Executive Director
Alice Kaufman
Policy and Advocacy Director
Jenny Green
Marketing Director
Justyne Schnupp
Associate Development Director
Ben Estrada
Leadership Program Manager
Jocelyn Rodriguez
Community Engagement
Program Manager

Moises Mena
Development and Marketing
Associate Manager
Lennie Roberts
Legislative Advocate
Alexandra Mendoza
Environmental Associate
Jessica Wohlander
Environmental Associate

Board of Directors

Ann Monroe
President
Jon Adams
Secretary
Greg Boro
Treasurer

Ian Bain, Manjeet Singh Bhamra, Fernando Fernandez, Jean Forstner, Susan M. Hansch, Bindu Kandoori, Lisa Liddle, Susan Michael, Lisa Munro, Claudia Rossi, Jeff Segall, Arpana Tiwari

Photo credits: Cover photo of Coyote Valley by Larry England; p.3 hills in San Benito County by Green Foothills; p.4 Almaden Quicksilver County Park by Oleg Levitsky; p.9 farmworker housing courtesy of Peninsula Open Space Trust; p.10 Edgewood Park by Matthew Gulbraa; p.11 Coyote Valley by Ron Horii, and Juristac courtesy of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band; p.12 photo credit Green Foothills.



Connecting with Voters Was Essential for Measure A Victory

BY JESSICA WOHLANDER ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATE

Last November, San Benito voters passed Measure A, the “Empower the Voters to Make Land Use Decisions” ballot initiative. Measure A gives voters a say in how San Benito develops, requiring voter approval for projects that would change the General Plan land use designation from agricultural or rural to commercial, industrial, or residential. It also removes four areas – called “nodes” – from commercial development along Highway 101. All four fall within a critical wildlife corridor that connects the Gabilan and Diablo ranges to the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Measure A provides an extra layer of protection for the county’s open space and agricultural lands, and sets the county on a new path for future growth. Green Foothills endorsed the measure and worked with a robust team of incredibly dedicated volunteers, community groups, and organizations throughout the campaign.

From the beginning, we knew connecting with voters would be critical to our success. We wanted to educate voters, but we also wanted to listen. Protect San Benito, the community group that wrote the ballot initiative and led the campaign, knew this would be essential too. We trained our canvassing team to use “deep canvassing,” which encourages listening, connection, and in-depth conversations. Knocking on doors and standing in front of grocery stores and using this technique, I had numerous conversations with residents about how quickly San Benito was changing, their concerns about the loss of farmland and open space,

and the hours of traffic they sat in each day just to get to work. Many were unhappy with the direction San Benito was heading and were ready for a change.

Using what we heard, the campaign developed suitable messages and sent out numerous mailers to voters including one focused on the environmental benefits of Measure A. For this, we collaborated with Save Mount Diablo, another organization engaged in the campaign.

I represented “Yes on A” at a virtual community forum, where both sides made their cases and answered questions from the audience. Over 60 people attended, and I was excited to share information about how Measure A would help us protect local nature and forge a more environmentally and economically sustainable future. Toward the end of the campaign, I also spoke regularly with reporters to highlight how Measure A would benefit San Benito County, using messages that reflected concerns we had heard from county residents.

These efforts on the part of the Protect San Benito campaign, Green Foothills, and other partners resulted in a huge success for Measure A. I’m grateful for this victory and heartened that nature is now better protected in San Benito County.



Jessica Wohlander, Environmental Associate, joined Green Foothills in October 2023. She lives and farms in San Benito County, and she leads our advocacy efforts in San Benito County and southern Santa Clara County.



WHY LAND MATTERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

BY JENNY GREEN MARKETING DIRECTOR

Green Foothills was founded by people who were alarmed by the rapid destruction of nature that occurred in the Bay Area in the 1960s. At the time, there were plans to fill in much of the Bay, run freeways over mountain ranges, and destroy natural areas along the coast to accommodate auto-centric sprawl. While many accepted these plans as inevitable, Green Foothills' founders recognized nature's role in our well-being and took responsibility for advocating for sustainable land use.

That's why they focused primarily on influencing planning decisions that would affect the future of open space and farmland. In this newsletter's first issue in 1962, they wrote, "Green Footnotes...will keep you informed...and reaffirm in many different ways our basic goal...the wisest use of the land."

The core of our mission today remains the same. Green Foothills' advocacy for land conservation and responsible growth has had a lasting impact on our region, with more than 200,000 acres now permanently protected as a direct result of our advocacy. But our work now

has additional urgency due to climate change, which was not on most people's radar 60 years ago. If we are to stop climate change, or at least keep it at manageable levels, land use decisions will be part of the solution.

LAND CONSERVATION IS CRITICAL FOR A HEALTHY CLIMATE

To understand why land conservation is an important part of solving the climate crisis, it's helpful to understand why the climate is changing. The basic explanation is simple: The Earth's atmosphere is like a blanket that surrounds our planet. When we burn fossil fuels such as oil, coal, and gas, we add more and more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which thickens the blanket. The thicker the blanket gets, the more heat is trapped underneath. This "blanket effect" leads to warming, which disrupts the climate. As the air, land, and oceans absorb more and more heat, climate disruptions become more severe and unpredictable. This results in effects such as extreme weather, sea level rise, species extinction, and other harmful outcomes, which we are already starting to experience.

The solution to climate change is to reduce and eventually eliminate human-caused emissions of heat-trapping gases. To achieve this, we must transition to clean energy sources that do not involve the use of fossil fuels. There are also nature-based solutions that can help, and chief among these is conserving natural lands that absorb carbon.

Each acre of natural lands we protect helps address the climate crisis, because plants, soils, and wetlands act as a carbon reservoir, storing carbon that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere. Every year our natural landscapes absorb massive amounts of carbon, essentially vacuuming it out of the air.

When we cut down forests, drain wetlands, or pave over grasslands, we release the heat-trapping carbon dioxide that plants, trees, and soil once captured and safely stored. Keeping these natural storage systems intact—and restoring those that have been degraded—is critical to help prevent global temperatures from increasing.

LAND CONSERVATION SUPPORTS CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Protecting open space and farmland can also help make our communities more resilient to the climate change effects that are already happening. For example, protecting critical habitats and wildlife linkages can allow animals to safely migrate to find relief from rising temperatures, and to find food or mates. Conserving and restoring natural floodplains, coastal marshes, grasslands, and forests that naturally absorb and hold stormwater, can help protect our communities from flooding due to heavy storms or rising seas. And farms that use sustainable agricultural practices can improve soil and water quality and help preserve biodiversity.

GAINING GROUND AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Because many land use decisions occur at the local level, organizations like Green Foothills that focus on influencing city, county, and state policies will play a key role in stopping climate change.

Your support of Green Foothills is a powerful commitment to helping solve the climate crisis and championing a more climate-resilient region where growth doesn't come at the expense of nature. You strengthen our collective voice for:

- Smart development that protects sensitive habitats and farmland, and that strategically focuses development in existing communities while avoiding areas most vulnerable to climate risks such as wildfires or rising sea levels.
- Nature-based solutions such as allowing natural coastal erosion to replenish beaches, and restoring floodplains to protect developed areas and increase farmland fertility.
- Protection of our area's remaining farmland and support for agricultural workers, including affordable housing and protection from extreme heat.
- Protection of key wildlife corridors such as Coyote Valley and Juristac, which allow wildlife to migrate between the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Diablo Range, and (in the case of Juristac) the Gabilan Range.

**“EACH ACRE OF NATURAL LANDS
WE PROTECT HELPS ADDRESS THE
CLIMATE CRISIS, BECAUSE PLANTS,
SOILS, AND WETLANDS...STORE
CARBON THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE
RELEASED INTO THE ATMOSPHERE.”**

- Increased urban green space. In an era of warming temperatures, green space close to where people live and work provides an irreplaceable benefit in reducing the “urban heat island” effect caused by pavement, buildings, and other surfaces that absorb and retain heat.

As a community member who cares about conservation, you're helping to fight climate change in one of the most effective ways possible: Helping decision-makers make sustainable choices for our communities.



Jenny Green, Marketing Director, joined Green Foothills in August 2021. She partners with the rest of the staff to strengthen, position, and promote Green Foothills' work.

Executive Summary



From the ballot box to policies enacted, our 2024 report celebrates another year of success protecting local nature and farmland through advocacy, education, and grassroots action. Our complete annual report with details of what we accomplished together in 2024 as well as recognition of our wonderfully supportive Green Foothills community is online: greenfoothills.org/2024report.

KEY

- IN PROGRESS
- 📍 SUCCESS!

REDWOOD CITY

Victory! Protected Redwood City parks funding from being cut.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Victory! Our proposed amendments to new policies encouraging farmworker housing will prevent those policies being misused to allow sprawl development.

SAN BENITO COUNTY

Victory! Helped to pass Measure A, a ballot measure requiring that future development of agricultural, rangeland or rural land must be approved by a vote of the people.

SAN BENITO COUNTY

Victory! Prevented approval of a development agreement that would have given developers vested rights to build a truck stop in a wildlife corridor.

Our advocates engaged on **18 land use issues in 2024**. From the coast to the baylands, from the valley to the hillsides, we gave a voice to the most at-risk habitats. This map describes some of those issues and illustrates the extent of our advocacy efforts.



"These are challenging times for the environment. Green Foothills has a proven track record of overcoming challenges and winning environmental victories. They're local, vocal, and effective."

Josh Becker

*Donor Since 2010
California Senate, District 13*



"The Green Foothills Leadership Program gives you the tools, knowledge, and confidence to navigate and address an environmental issue you're passionate about. You'll connect with amazing people and learn so much from your fellow participants and the facilitators."

Jennifer Adams

*Donor Since 2024
Environmental Justice Senior Program Manager, Nuestra Casa, East Palo Alto
Green Foothills Leadership Program graduate 2024*

Our Impact in 2024

Advocacy Program

8,183

acres of open space protected or benefited



9

victories

out of 10 concluded land use issues



16 key wildlife and plant species benefited

3 policies or plans adopted by governmental agencies

18

land use issues

in total monitored and advocated



15 were in collaboration with a total of 25 tribes, organizations, and community leaders

16,347 comment letters sent in response to our 6 calls to action with 2 favorable outcomes, and 2 outcomes still pending

Leadership Program

19

local changemakers graduated

(including 5 Spanish speakers) for a total of 278 alumni since 2014*



15

alumni in a new leadership role

for a total of 137 since 2014*



11

initiatives won by alumni

for a total of 61 initiatives since 2014*

*year the first cohort graduated

The Leadership Program is supported by Green Foothills donors, Applied Materials Foundation Community Fund, the County of Santa Clara, North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (NSCRCD), San Mateo County Health, Sand Hill Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and Wildlife Conservation Network's California Wildlife Program.

Financials April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

Income: **\$1,926,685**

Total revenue grew over the prior fiscal year due to increases in grant funding, individual contributions, and investment income for the year.

Grants	54.3%
Contributions	17.1%
Nature's Inspiration	15.3%
Investment Income	9.3%
Lennie Roberts Advocacy Fund	4.0%

Expenses: **\$1,310,759**

Overall expenses increased slightly due to higher employee compensation. Program spending decreased 4.5% due to the elimination of one position and a vacancy in another. A new program position was added in late FY 2024-25 so the program ratio will increase significantly by FY25-26.

Advocacy, Education, Grassroots Action (Program)	67.2%
Fundraising	18.2%
Administration	14.6%



"Resources Legacy Fund is proud to support Green Foothills as it engages in public outreach, education, and community engagement

to protect wildlife habitat and connectivity within the Juristac Tribal cultural landscape area in southern Santa Clara County and northern San Benito County."

Peggy McNutt

Senior Program Officer,
Resources Legacy Fund



"I care deeply about sustainable agriculture and more equitable local food systems, which are closely tied to the conservation policies and environmental justice initiatives that Green Foothills supports. That's why I make time to serve as a Green Foothills board member."

Fernando Fernandez Leiva

Donor since 2024
Policy Director, Veggelution

Green Foothills Board Member



Building Farmworker Housing Without Causing Sprawl

BY ALICE KAUFMAN POLICY AND ADVOCACY DIRECTOR

Our region needs more farmworker housing – but how do we build it without also opening the door to massive amounts of luxury home development on farmland and open space? This question came to the Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) last year. Green Foothills led the effort to ensure that LAFCO policies would make it easier to build farmworker housing but would not inadvertently result in suburban sprawl.

LAFCO: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Every county in California has a LAFCO – a little-known agency whose mission is to promote sustainable growth, protect agricultural land and open space, and prevent sprawl development. LAFCOs were created in response to the rampant post-WWII sprawl that destroyed large areas of farmland and open space, and quickly proved to be costly for local governments to service. LAFCOs decide whether to approve annexations of land by cities or extensions of urban services such as water and sewer outside of city limits. The role of LAFCOs is vital because sprawl is not only expensive for cities and taxpayers, it also results in increased greenhouse gas emissions and other climate-related impacts.

HOUSING FOR FARMWORKERS, GUARANTEED

Last year, the Santa Clara County LAFCO decided to revise its policies to give special consideration to requests to extend urban services outside of city

boundaries if needed for farmworker housing. Normally, LAFCO policies strongly discourage urban service extensions outside of cities. Green Foothills supports extending services to farmworker housing, but we were concerned that this exception to LAFCO policies, if approved, could be exploited to allow developers to build market-rate housing under the guise of farmworker housing.

To ensure this would not occur, we proposed amending the policies to require that farmworker housing must be operated by an affordable housing nonprofit or a public housing agency, and must have legal restrictions guaranteeing that it remain affordable to and occupied by farmworkers for the long term. Otherwise, a developer could claim to be building farmworker housing, but then later could evict the farmworkers, upgrade the housing units, and rent them out at market rate.

We're pleased that the LAFCO Board adopted our suggested revisions, thus ensuring that housing built for farmworkers will remain occupied by farmworkers into the future. Green Foothills will continue to advocate for farmworker housing while also protecting our local farmland and open space.



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

Developing New Environmental Leaders

BY BEN ESTRADA LEADERSHIP PROGRAM MANAGER

Since 2013 the Green Foothills Leadership Program has helped more than 270 local changemakers gain advocacy skills so they can promote conservation and environmental justice in their communities. Offered in English and Spanish, it is tuition-free thanks to funder and donor support.

Here are two stories of recent graduates.



Monica Nanez enrolled in the Leadership Program's first cohort in 2013-14. The program helped her learn about careers in environmental work and get ideas for possible career paths. She is currently the External Funding Coordinator for the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority.

"The Leadership Program is a great way to find resources that you didn't know existed," she said, "other organizations that are doing great and innovative work, models that you can use, learn from, and be inspired by." When she signed up for the program, she was working in the field of affordable housing and was interested in creating sustainable communities. She eventually ended up transitioning into the conservation field. In addition to finding inspiration for her career trajectory, the Leadership Program increased her skills and knowledge about policy and the impact of policy on funding. "We spent time learning about the importance and impact of knowing your...elected officials and...understanding how advocacy works and how advocacy in that space can impact what you're doing on a local level," she explained.



Radhika Thekkath, an executive board member of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Santa Clara Valley Chapter, enrolled in the 2021 Leadership Program. Radhika wanted to supplement her volunteer experience and scientific knowledge with an understanding of how to influence policy decisions made by local elected leaders.

"I knew other CNPS members who had participated in this program, and they recommended it," she said. "I had been volunteering for CNPS for 10 years ... but did not know how exactly the advocacy side of environmental movements worked. I was curious to learn how to effect wider change. Elected officials seem to have the final say in how we treat our environment and the people who live in it, and yet they are not always clued into science and the long-term consequences of actions. The Leadership Program met my expectations and I was ... exposed to different ways in which one can begin advocacy work and bring about policy-related changes. It has had an impact on how I plan actions and execute them now."

Longer versions of these stories are available on our website at greenfoothills.org/monica and greenfoothills.org/radhika.

The Leadership Program is made possible thanks to Applied Materials Foundation Community Fund, the County of Santa Clara, North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (NSCRCD), San Mateo County Health, Sand Hill Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Network's California Wildlife Program, and other generous donors.



Ben Estrada joined Green Foothills in September 2023 as our Leadership Program Manager. He is responsible for overseeing the training program and its alumni network. Ben is bilingual in English and Spanish.

Welcome New Donors!

July 1, 2024-December 31, 2024

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

Jennifer Adams
Gerardine Albers
Kieran Alcumbrac
Anonymous
Aisha Baro
Liane Benedict
Holly Beth Garver
Saritha Bhavansikar
Megan Bley
Paul Boehm
Cyril Borchard
Victoria Bowes-Mok
Judith Butts
Tatyana Buxton
Jeff C. Dye
June Cancell
Annie Chang
Adam Cheng
Celia Chu
Ann Cripps
Lisa Curran
Jeanne Davis
John Epperson
Tamara Fagin
Fernando Fernandez
Joan Finnigan
Leslie Flint
Marian Fricano
Steve Godwin
Tamara Goldie

Sowbarnika Gunasekaran
Ellen Hall
Susan Hinton
Deborah Hirst
Joseph Howard
Nancy Huynh
Deborah Iacoponi
Jonathan Johnson
Jerry Jones
Bindu Kandoori
Jeanne Kato
Josephine Kawanami
Kyle Kawanami
Leslie Leonard
Ernestine Machado
Mary Martin
Margaret Martinez
Linda Matsuhira
Mike McCormick
Kimberly Meade
Sam Medrano
Michael Mendez
Stuart Meyer
Susan Michael
Mighty Arrow Family Foundation
Jose Morales
Susan Moynahan
Joanie Murphy
Michelle Myjer
Serena Myjer

Aditi Nagaraj
Chinh Nguyen
Raymond Nijssen
Holly Pelking
Nadine Peterson
Mary Ann Poulos
Thomas Redfern
Chris Rogers
David Schorr
Lorraine Segall
Theresa Sherman
Dan Silver
Lawrence Simon
Kelly Spain
Jeff Staben
Adriana Stone
Ryan Talbot
Donald Thomas
Nihat Tunali
Debra Ullmann
Molly Van Houweling
Wanda Waldera
James Warren
Sammetra Williams
Stacey Winters
Stacie Wolny
Richard S. Wright
Terry Yordan
Rena Zahorsky

Green Foothills Is Watching...

San Mateo County

CITY OF HALF MOON BAY – which is reviewing a proposal for a three-story, 20-room hotel to be located next to Sam’s Chowder House west of Highway 1, directly adjacent to the Coastal Trail and the beach. The potential impacts of this project could include blocking coastal views and aggravating the current lack of parking in the area, which is important for coastal access.

Santa Clara County

CITY OF SAN JOSE — which is conducting a supplemental environmental analysis on the Heritage Oaks cemetery and crematorium in Coyote Valley. The land was rezoned to allow cemetery uses in 2014, but the developer did not apply for a development permit until 2023. We opposed the rezoning in 2014 and are now urging the city to deny the permit due to the development’s environmental impacts.

San Benito County

COUNTY OF SAN BENITO — which is conducting an environmental review for two quarry proposals, one on the hillsides west of San Juan Bautista, and one in the channel of the San Benito River. We oppose these mining operations, which would harm wildlife habitat, water quality, and Indigenous cultural resources.



Coyote Valley

Green Foothills Applauds...

Santa Clara County

PALO ALTO CITY COUNCIL – for unanimously approving a resolution calling for the protection of Juristac and opposing the proposed Sargent Ranch Quarry, which would turn a sacred Indigenous landscape and critical wildlife corridor into an open-pit sand and gravel mine.

San Benito County

SAN BENITO COUNTY VOTERS – for passing Measure A, the Empower the Voters to Make Land Use Decisions ballot initiative, by an overwhelming majority in the November 2024 election. Now, any change in land use from agricultural, rangeland, or rural to commercial, industrial, or residential on any land in San Benito County will require voter approval. See page 3.



Juristac

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



3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303

Nonprofit Org
U.S. Postage Paid
Palo Alto, CA
Permit No. 284

Become a Community Ambassador for Green Foothills!

Who are Green Foothills Community Ambassadors?

This is a new program for volunteers to represent Green Foothills by staffing our information tables at local community events. Community Ambassadors will spread awareness about Green Foothills' work on pressing environmental issues that impact San Mateo, Santa Clara, and San Benito Counties. If you're passionate about local nature and enjoy talking to others, this volunteer opportunity is for you.

What are the responsibilities of a Community Ambassador?

You'll attend local community events to represent Green Foothills. You'll set up information tables, engage with attendees, distribute educational materials, and provide information about upcoming Green Foothills events. We'll teach you how! Volunteers must be at least 18 years old, have good communication skills, and live in San Mateo, Santa Clara, or San Benito Counties.

Learn more and sign up today!

Learn more and sign up at greenfoothills.org/ambassadors.
Or email jocelyn@greenfoothills.org for more information.

