



greenfootnotes

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Honoring My Father's Legacy Through Conservation

BY JULIE HUTCHESON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My father passed away unexpectedly this past March, just as the Measure D campaign was ramping up. I hadn't had a chance to tell him yet that I was one of three proponents who put this citizens' initiative forward to secure lasting funding for the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (see page 3). I think it would have made him happy. I know it would have made him proud.



My father grew up on a small farm in a rural village in western Hungary, where life was hard. From the age of five, he worked alongside his parents to grow enough food to get by. He endured the bombing of his home and village during World War II, and at eighteen escaped to Canada during the Soviet occupation that followed, carrying with him his resilience and his roots.

In Canada, he built a life and a family, and instilled in me a love of nature and a respect for farming. I don't know that it was intentional. It was simply how he lived.



He was an avid gardener with a dark green thumb, who relished every hour he could spend outdoors. Our backyard always held a thriving mix of vegetables, fruits, and flowers. He even leased a community garden plot to grow more. Our house was full of plants, and tending them on weekends was one of my regular chores. Summers meant time at a cottage by a lake, immersed in the natural beauty that asks nothing of you except your presence. And when I visited Hungary with my family, I was always feeding my grandparents' chickens and turkeys, touching the same earth my father had worked as a boy.

That is the inheritance he left me. Not a belief in conservation as policy, but as something you do because it feels right. I did not witness the devastation my father saw in his childhood and youth. But I know that now, in this era of a changing climate and rapid, unprecedented loss of species, we need to be vigilant in safeguarding nature. It is a necessity. So when the opportunity came to support the future of the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, I did not hesitate. It felt right.

Measure D, the Santa Clara Valley Wildfire Protection, Clean Water, and Open Space Act, passed in June with more than 55% of the vote. It ensures the Open Space Authority's ability to continue stewarding the increasing acreage in its care for its greatest value, for people and for nature.

My father never knew about Measure D, but he would have understood why this mattered and why so many people came together to make it happen.

Green Foothills is a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to protect nature and farmland to ensure a healthy environment for everyone in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and San Benito Counties. We envision a resilient region where wildlife thrives, everyone has natural beauty to enjoy, and communities live in balance with nature.

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Photo credits: p.3 San Mateo County coast by Michael Powers; p. 7 view overlooking proposed battery site courtesy of Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

A Win for Nature and People: Measure D Passes

BY JULIE HUTCHESON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In June, Measure D passed with more than 55% of the vote. It provides the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority with about \$17 million annually in local funding to care for the lands that protect our communities and provide them with recreation. These funds will support wildfire resilience, clean water, wildlife habitat, farmland preservation, and public access to open space, with local oversight and accountability.

Green Foothills proudly endorsed and campaigned for this voter-sponsored initiative, championed by Ken Yeager, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) Board Member, Shiloh Ballard, Santa Clara Valley Water District Board Director,* and me, and sponsored by the POST Action Fund.

This comes at a critical time, as the Authority has doubled the land it manages over the past decade, but funding has not kept pace with its growing responsibilities. Without Measure D, vital restoration and stewardship work, including flood and wildfire prevention, would have been at risk.



A Green Foothills “support Measure D” backyard party with Assemblymember Gail Pellerin

Thanks to voters, our region can continue building healthy, resilient landscapes that safeguard both nature and our communities for generations to come.

We’re grateful to everyone who made this victory possible. It demonstrates our community’s commitment to protecting nature, even during challenging economic times.

** for identification purposes only*



Julie Hutcheson has been on staff since 2010 and became Executive Director in 2023. She is working on new opportunities to scale our impact, broaden partnerships, and create a more inclusive local conservation movement.

Proposition 45 Weakens Environmental Protection: Vote No!

BY ALICE KAUFMAN POLICY AND ADVOCACY DIRECTOR

This November, California voters will be asked to consider a harmful ballot proposition, Prop 45, that would weaken environmental review for large construction projects across the state. Please vote no!

The California Chamber of Commerce – funded by corporate PACs, for-profit utilities, and industrial interests – placed Prop 45 on the ballot to allow corporations to bypass many of the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), shifting the burden of pollution, health risks, and climate impacts onto taxpayers.

CEQA is California’s premier environmental law. For more than 50 years, CEQA has protected our environment by requiring analysis of the impacts of development projects on wildlife, air and water quality, and other natural resources. This ballot proposition guts those protections for a wide range of

major projects, including freeway expansions, dams, waste incinerators, and landfill gas facilities – exactly the kinds of projects that require careful scrutiny due to their long-term impacts on communities and ecosystems. It would also allow developers to sue cities that deny their projects.

Big corporations put this on the ballot to try to trick voters into weakening environmental laws so they can increase their profits. Don’t be fooled. Vote no on Prop 45.



Alice Kaufman has been on staff since 2012. She oversees Green Foothills’ advocacy priorities, strategies, and campaigns, as well as engaging directly in advocacy efforts, particularly in Coyote Valley and elsewhere in Santa Clara County.



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF COASTAL PROTECTION

BY LENNIE ROBERTS LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATE

In 1976, California drew a line in the sand to stop unchecked development that was destroying its coastline. Lawmakers passed the California Coastal Act, recognizing the coast as an irreplaceable public resource that belongs to everyone. The Coastal Act was a watershed moment. It established the processes and legal protections needed to balance development with conservation, ensuring that decisions about the coast would be guided by the public interest rather than short-term pressures.

Fifty years later, we celebrate its success in preserving the coast's spectacular beauty. Thousands of new public access points now connect people to the coast, and more than 4,600 acres of coastal habitat have been restored. There have been disagreements and setbacks along the way, but the Coastal Act has endured because public support for it remains strong.

Green Foothills is proud to have been one of the moving forces behind the passage of the Coastal Act, and we've continued working to protect the coast ever since. As the California Coastal Commission's longest-serving Executive Director Peter Douglas often said: "The coast is never saved; it is always being saved."

HOW WE CAME TOGETHER TO SAVE THE COAST

The movement to protect the coast began well before the Coastal Act became law.

In the 1960s, Bay Area elected officials, developers, and governmental agencies envisioned a very different coastline with multi-lane freeways crossing from the Bayside over Skyline Boulevard and along the coast from San Francisco all the way down to San Luis Obispo, as well as a dam and massive reservoir to be built at Worley Flat on Pescadero Creek. Ancient old-growth redwoods would have been cut down to make way for the reservoir, which would have provided water for 100,000 people to live on the southern San Mateo County coast.

Alarmed by this onslaught of environmentally damaging sprawl proposals, Green Foothills sprang into action. We wrote letters, spoke up at hundreds of public meetings and hearings, and enlisted the support of other like-minded citizens and organizations. But we knew these threats would continue unless measures were taken to protect the coast.

Across California, people had similar fears about unchecked development and the loss of public access to the coast. This led to a groundswell of support for legal protection of the entire coastline. In 1972, California voters passed Proposition 20, the Coastal Zone Conservation Act, which created an interim "Coastal Zone Commission" to halt unchecked development on the coast until the State Legislature was able to draft and pass a Coastal Act. Green Foothills campaigned for Proposition 20, and we were thrilled when it passed.

HOW THE COASTAL ACT PROTECTS OUR SHORELINES

Proposition 20 eventually led to the passage of the California Coastal Act in 1976. The Coastal Act is a comprehensive land-use planning document that requires each city and county along the state's 1,100 miles of coastline to prepare a Local Coastal Program (LCP) and to issue permits for certain categories of new development. The California Coastal Commission, a 12-member agency appointed by the Governor and State Legislature, ensures that federal, state, and local governments fully adhere to the Coastal Act.

The Commission also considers appeals of locally approved projects that don't comply with LCP resource protection policies, and projects that do not adequately provide for maximum public access to and along the shore.

DEFENDING THE SPIRIT OF THE COASTAL ACT ON THE SAN MATEO COUNTY COAST

In 1980, Green Foothills succeeded in convincing the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to adopt a strong LCP – the first county LCP to be certified by the Coastal Commission.

However, just six years later, a new pro-development majority on the Board of Supervisors set to work amending San Mateo County's LCP to weaken many of its strongest protections. But once again, the love of ordinary citizens for the coast proved to be stronger than developers' plans to exploit it. In 1986, Green Foothills campaigned for Measure A, the San Mateo County Coastal Protection Initiative, which passed by an overwhelming 63%. Measure A ensured that 37 key policies protecting the rural San Mateo County coast cannot be weakened or discarded without a countywide vote.

A decade later, Green Foothills was instrumental in passing San Mateo County's Measure T, the Devil's Slide Tunnel Initiative. Approved by 74% of voters, Measure T required Caltrans to build a tunnel at Devil's Slide instead of a proposed seven-mile freeway bypass that would have devastated McNee Ranch State Park. The tunnel opened in 2013, and the former highway became a scenic multi-use trail enjoyed by thousands of visitors today.

Green Foothills also helped create and expand the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) to include the coast. Midpen has permanently protected

vast stretches of coastal grazing land, sensitive habitats, and open space. The nonprofit Peninsula Open Space Trust has also acquired key coastal properties, including productive farmland. Public access to county beaches has been guaranteed, and many new coastal access trails and overlooks have been opened to the public. Notable examples are Cowell State Beach, Whaler's Cove at Pigeon Point State Park, and Pillar Point Bluff, an addition to the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. Tunitas Creek Beach and San Gregorio Beach (north) are expected to open in summer 2026.

THE COAST IS ALWAYS BEING SAVED

Today, Green Foothills continues to champion protection of the coast. We are closely watching two proposals for inappropriate development on rural, agricultural, and open space lands in coastal San Mateo County: Stonewood Lodge, a sprawling resort proposed for the rural Midcoast area, and a harmful "builder's remedy"

“AS THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION'S LONGEST-SERVING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PETER DOUGLAS OFTEN SAID: “THE COAST IS NEVER SAVED; IT IS ALWAYS BEING SAVED.”

project at Shamrock Ranch near Pacifica, on land the City says it cannot serve with municipal water and sewer services. We are advocating for these two properties to remain in open space and agricultural uses.

The Coastal Act has withstood many attempts to weaken it over the decades, and those attempts continue today. Green Foothills, together with coastal advocates up and down the state, will continue to work to ensure that California's 50-year legacy of protecting and honoring our precious coastal region lives on for future generations.



Lennie Roberts has been with Green Foothills for over 50 years, championing the protection of the San Mateo coast and other key landscapes, and leading critically successful and historic open space campaigns and ballot initiatives.

Welcome New Donors! February 16-June 30, 2026

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 you and the rest of our generous supporters for making our work possible. Together, we're creating a healthier, more resilient future for San Mateo, Santa Clara, and San Benito Counties. For a complete list of donors, please visit greenfoothills.org/OurDonorCommunity.

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Thank You to Our Matching Gift Companies

Many employers amplify their employees' generosity by making charitable contributions to Green Foothills—doubling or even tripling the impact of each gift. We're grateful to the companies whose matching gifts helped advance our mission between February 16 and June 30, 2026, and the employees who made those matches possible. Want to see if your company will match your gift? Visit greenfoothills.org/match.

Apple Inc	Kennedy Jenks	Synopsys Inc
Google	KLA Corporation	The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
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Leave a Legacy for Local Nature

A gift in your will or estate plan can help protect local nature for generations to come. By joining the Mary Davey Legacy Society, you'll ensure that Green Foothills can continue safeguarding the landscapes and communities we all cherish.

Learn more about legacy giving at greenfoothills.org/legacy.

Support Local Nature with Your Donor-Advised Fund

A Donor-Advised Fund is a simple, tax-smart way to support the causes you care about.

By recommending a grant to Green Foothills, you can help protect local nature, strengthen climate resilience, and conserve the landscapes that make our region unique.

Learn more at greenfoothills.org/daf.

Green Foothills Is Watching...

San Mateo County

REDWOOD CITY – which is considering a residential design ordinance that will include new standards for nighttime lighting and bird-safe design. We're urging the city to limit exterior lighting to a level that won't negatively impact wildlife or human health, and to require bird-safe treatment on buildings on the Bay side of Highway 101.

Santa Clara County

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA — where 28 builder's remedy projects totaling over 6,600 homes have been proposed in the rural unincorporated area. Several of these projects have begun environmental review. We're monitoring them closely and providing comments to County staff about these projects' potential impacts. Because none of the projects have access to water or sewer facilities, we're urging the County to reject them.

San Benito County

COUNTY OF SAN BENITO — where eight builder's remedy projects totaling over 2,800 homes have been proposed in the rural unincorporated area. We're monitoring these projects closely as County staff reviews them. Because many of these projects have no access to water or sewer facilities, we will be urging the County to reject them.

State of California

CALIFORNIA VOTERS – who will have the chance this November to vote NO on a harmful ballot measure, Prop 45, from the California Chamber of Commerce that would weaken environmental review for large construction projects across the state. (See article on page 3 for more details.)

Green Foothills Applauds...

San Mateo County



SAN MATEO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

– for approving bird-safe design standards in the County's Design Review Ordinance for parts of the Coastside, Emerald Hills and other important areas for bird habitat.

Santa Clara County

PG&E, LS POWER, SANTA CLARA VALLEY OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY, AND THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (CPUC)

– for deciding to work together to ensure that LS Power's new energy terminal would be located on PG&E's existing Metcalf substation, rather than on the orchard in Coyote Valley where it was first proposed.

AES INC. – for listening to the voices of the community and abandoning its plan for a battery storage facility on prime farmland in Coyote Valley. The battery storage facility would have been surrounded on three sides by protected open space land and on the fourth side by an elementary school. The site was in the middle of a key wildlife corridor and situated on prime farmland.



View overlooking proposed AES battery facility site

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



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nature's inspiration



**is on Sunday, September 27
from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

This year's event is at scenic MOHI Ranch, an expansive vineyard and small farm near Morgan Hill.

You're invited to this fun and inspiring annual celebration and fundraiser that brings together more than 250 champions of local nature to support our advocacy work and educational programs.

Tickets include brunch.

RSVP at greenfoothills.org/tickets.



Special Guest Speaker



Obi Kaufmann
Award-Winning Author,
Artist, and Naturalist

He will share a compelling perspective on how urgent environmental campaigns connect to poetry, place, and policy.