



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-19-145
Meeting 19-28
November 13, 2019

AGENDA ITEM 5

AGENDA ITEM

Contract Award to Grassroots Ecology to Protect and Restore Natural Resources through Service-Learning

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the General Manager to enter into a four-year agreement with Grassroots Ecology of Palo Alto, California to provide service-learning events for an amount not to exceed \$295,417, a portion of which is reimbursable through an existing grant.

SUMMARY

Since 2015, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) and Grassroots Ecology (Grassroots) have partnered to provide stewardship and volunteer engagement to expand public awareness, involvement, and support of natural resource management activities at District Open Space Preserves (OSP). The General Manager recommends awarding a four-year cooperative agreement with Grassroots for a base amount of \$295,417. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 budget includes sufficient funds to cover expenditures through June 30, 2020. Funds to complete the contract work in future years will be proposed as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process. A portion of the contract, up to approximately \$104,448, is reimbursable through a Memorandum of Understanding and grant from Valley Water.

DISCUSSION

The District manages invasive plants on OSPs “to protect and restore the natural environment” with the goal of safeguarding the diversity and integrity of the natural resources and ecological processes. District field staff, contractors, non-governmental organizations (e.g. Grassroots), and volunteers all assist in vegetation management on OSPs. District staff oversee the work of partner organizations by conducting pre- and post- treatment surveys and providing biological monitoring when working near sensitive areas such as ponds with rare aquatic species. The District uses Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices to manage invasive species, and workers are required to follow thirty-seven (37) best management practices (BMP) to protect the environment and human health. Over the past two years, volunteers led by professionally educated and trained personnel account for 37% of all hours dedicated to invasive species work.

Service-Learning

Service-learning on District managed lands is an educational approach that combines learning objectives, through formal and informal interpretative talks by knowledgeable leaders, with community service. Service-learning projects meet resource management goals while also achieving the District’s mission to “provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public

enjoyment and education”. It provides a “down-to-earth” enriched learning experience while engaging community members in meaningful stewardship work to protect and restore the natural environment.

Grassroots Ecology

Grassroots (www.grassrootsecology.org) is a local, nonprofit 501(c)(3) whose mission “is to engage and educate the public to restore local ecosystems” (Attachment 1). In 2015, the Board authorized a partnership agreement with Grassroots to increase volunteer stewardship opportunities at District OSPs (R-15-145). The organization’s staff has extensive experience in managing habitat restoration volunteer programs, as well as establishing relationships with local schools for the purposes of outreach, education, and volunteer recruitment. Over 80% of the participants are local youth. Grassroots Ecology works to involve underserved communities wherever possible, such as working with the San Jose Conservation Corps, thereby expanding diversity efforts consistent the District’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy.

The proposed contract would allow Grassroots to continue existing restoration efforts through service-learning events at both the Hawthorns area of Windy Hill and Russian Ridge OSPs, and expand similar efforts at other District preserves in Santa Clara County using grant funding from Valley Water. District staff, with input from Grassroots, has identified a third new restoration site at Bear Creek Redwoods OSP and a fourth possible project location for a native pollinator demonstration garden at Rancho San Antonio OSP, as previously presented to the Board in May of 2019 (R-19-14). Attachment 2 shows the general locations of the four new restoration efforts under this proposed contract. Service-learning events with Grassroots involves teaching volunteers how to identify and manually remove targeted invasive species while educating them on the impacts of these species to natural resources at the selected sites.

Grant Funding

Valley Water provides funding for habitat restoration activities through its Measure B, the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program. In June of 2017, the Board authorized the General Manger to enter into a five-year MOU (ending in July of 2022) with Valley Water under the D2: Revitalize Stream, Upland and Wetland Habitat Program (R-17-79). This program is one of five priority programs in Santa Clara County. Funding under this program is available for the removal of non-native, invasive plants, revegetation of habitats with native species, and public education about the impacts of invasive species and benefits of native species.

The District may be reimbursed up to \$200,000 per year for work meeting grant criteria, as outlined in the MOU. The work in Santa Clara County under the proposed contract with Grassroots meets the MOU grant criteria for reimbursement. Depending on the location and number of service-learning events authorized, this contract is anticipated to be reimbursed between \$77,272 and \$104,448 over the four-year period.

FISCAL IMPACT

There are sufficient funds in the adopted FY2019-20 Budget to cover the cost of the recommendation through June 30, 2019. The Valley Water grant would cover contract costs for work completed within Santa Clara County. The remaining costs for work completed within San Mateo County would be covered by Fund 10 General Fund Operating. The table below summarizes the funding sources and expenditures over the four years, as described in the recommendation.

Cooperative agreement with Grassroots Ecology	FY2019-20 Adopted	FY2020-21 Projected	FY2021-22 Projected	FY2022-23 Projected	TOTAL
District Funded (Fund 10):	\$10,000	\$53,500	\$55,000	\$63,045	\$181,545
Valley Water Grant Amount*:	\$33,880	\$34,806	\$35,762	\$0.00	\$104,448
Total Funding Sources:	\$43,880	\$88,306	\$90,762	\$63,045	\$295,417

*Maximum grant reimbursement funding estimated at time of this report.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

The Board approved the funding MOU between the District and Valley Water on June 28, 2017 (R-17-79), which was subsequently signed on July 24, 2017.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Public notice was sent to interested parties and adjoining neighbors by postal or electronic mail.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the District's IPM Program, which the Board approved on December 10, 2014 (R-14-148), analyzed the vegetation management activities in the recommended contract. On February 27, 2019, the Board approved an addendum to the Final EIR for the IPM Program (R-19-11). District staff have incorporated the associated mitigation measures and BMPs from the environmental review documents into the proposed project and the contract documents.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval by the Board, the General Manager will enter into a four-year contract with Grassroots to oversee service-learning events focused on protecting and restoring the natural environment. If additional grant funding is provided by Valley Water, the General Manager will return to the Board at a later date to amend the contract for additional service-learning events that meet the criteria for the Valley Water grant for the fourth year. Valley Water funding is uncertain for the fourth year since the MOU expires at the very beginning of FY2022-23. All work associated with this contract will be reported back to the Board as part of the annual IPM Report.

Attachments

1. Grassroots Ecology Annual Report
2. Map of Service-Learning Locations

Responsible Department Head:
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources

Prepared by:
Coty Sifuentes, Senior Resource Management Specialist, Natural Resources

Contact person:
Tom Reyes, IPM Coordinator, Natural Resources

Graphics prepared by:
Francisco Lopez, GIS Technician



2018-19 ANNUAL REPORT

**FOSTERING VIBRANT LANDS
AND COMMUNITIES**



OUR MISSION

To engage and educate the public to restore local ecosystems.

OUR VISION

Vibrant, healthy lands and human communities that sustain one another and are resilient in a changing world.

Dear Friend,

The daily barrage of bad news confirms that climate change has become a climate crisis.

One million species threatened with extinction, an impending insect apocalypse, communities made vulnerable by flooding, fire, and other natural disasters... The list goes on.

But as the stories and numbers in this annual report attest, we can do something about it right here, right now. This year we brought thousands of people together—school children, college students, corporate groups, families, government agencies, and concerned community members—to confront the climate crisis and create a more resilient local environment.

At Grassroots Ecology, we are leveraging science, strategic partnerships, and volunteer power to:

- Rebuild biodiversity from the ground up, starting with native plants that feed wildlife and support robust ecosystems
- Expand green infrastructure—rain barrels, cisterns, berms, swales—to clean our water and alleviate localized flooding
- Create urban habitat, from planting oaks to installing rain gardens, to make our cities more welcoming to people and to wildlife
- Educate youth about their interdependence with the environment and all living things, and how they can collectively create a better future
- Arm people with information and experience so they can help lead the grassroots movement to heal our region and our planet

To get where we need to go, we need each and every one of you. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

David Smernoff
Board President

Alex Von Feldt
Executive Director



OUR IMPACT, 2018-19



HEALTHY, ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

12,500 participants
9 partnering cities
75 collaborative partnerships
540 volunteer opportunities
270 educational events

HEALTHY, RESILIENT ECOSYSTEMS

2,400 acres stewarded
7 creeks monitored
6 miles of creeks cleared of trash
20,000 plants grown
450,000 gallons of water captured

GROWING A COMMUNITY OF

Last year our programs enabled people of all ages to step up as stewards and champions of our local lands.

Stulsaft Park, Redwood City



◀ “Stulsaft Stewards has been an opportunity for me to spend more time outside and to give back to my community.”
—Tommy, Grade 12



McClellan Ranch, Cupertino

260 youth acted as caretakers of **4 preserves** through our Youth Stewards Programs



Arastradero Preserve, Palo Alto



Redwood Grove, Los Altos

▲ “For me, Grove Guardians is a safe space to connect with others and the world around me... and a way to make a difference.” —Emma, Grade 11

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS



We certified **22** California Naturalists

^ "Thank you for the wonderful journey: welcoming us warmly, setting the stage for us to bond, and making it fun and interactive. Together through shared discovery and informed stewardship, we make a difference!" —Katharina Stromeyer, 2019 California Naturalist Graduate



< "My internship with Grassroots Ecology was one of the best experiences I have had to this day. It's made me so much more excited to get back to college and start my pathway down environmental studies."

—Ashley Baillie, 2018 College Intern

Our nursery volunteers dedicated **660** volunteer hours



^ "Volunteering at the nursery gives me a hands-on opportunity to help in rebuilding nature. It's a special place, and I continue to learn something new every time I go there." —Peter Neal, Nursery Supporter since 2002

We trained **8** college interns in habitat restoration

HARNESSING THE RAIN FOR HEALTHIER HABITAT

We installed new rain catchment systems and rain gardens at three sites in 2018–19 as part of our Greening Urban Watersheds Program—made possible by a partnership with the City of Palo Alto and funding from Valley Water. Volunteers assisted with each installation, gaining the skills to carry out similar projects in their own yards. The rain barrels and cisterns capture rainwater that can be used for irrigation, while the native rain gardens slow and filter stormwater runoff and enhance urban habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.



The Learning Center



◀ At this preschool we installed a 55-gallon barrel and 50-gallon raindrop box. Preschoolers and their parents helped with the installation, and will use the captured rainwater to grow plants for their school garden.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto



◀ We installed two rain catchment tanks that can collectively hold up to 315 gallons per storm event. The water captured will be used to irrigate the church's landscaping and vegetable garden.

Bol Park

▲ We expanded Bol Park's native garden by transforming a weedy section of lawn by the bike path into a vibrant rain garden. The new area includes a streambed and native plants that together increase rainwater infiltration and provide habitat for bees, butterflies, and other wildlife.

BRINGING **SCHOOLS** INTO NATURE, AND **NATURE** INTO SCHOOLS

We collaborated with 50 schools to infuse hands-on nature education into their students' school day learning.



180 classroom sessions delivered on watershed science

◀ “The staff was amazing! They were positive, supportive, flexible, knowledgeable, and patient. They made adjustments as needed, and showed real enthusiasm for the content and teaching.”
—Alex Quezada, Ravenswood City School District STEM Coordinator

“This has become ▶ an integral part of our curriculum and I am so grateful to Grassroots Ecology for running the program.”

—Debolina Dutta, Sequoia High School Biology teacher



55 field trips provided

^ “Your passion for what you do comes through, and you inspire these students. You encourage them to think about the environment and their role in it. And you help them appreciate it and cherish it.”
—Elizabeth McPartlan, De Anza College Biology professor

270 high schoolers received our Creek Scientists program

NEW THIS YEAR

At this urban creek site in > downtown Redwood City, we are improving habitat and water quality by planting native trees and riparian plants, removing trash and invasive species including palm trees, and expanding the urban native tree canopy.

Hiking Series

We piloted a monthly series of interpretive hikes at our open space sites covering a variety of topics, from birds to traditional uses of native plants. >



We crossed over!

This was our first full year as an > independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Thanks to all of our partners, volunteers, and supporters for transitioning with us. Onward!

Redwood Creek Restoration



Westwind Berm Project

We are using berms and native plants to sink and filter stormwater runoff along a tributary to Adobe Creek at Westwind Community Barn in Los Altos Hills. >



FINANCIALS

REVENUE AND EXPENSES, JULY 1, 2018 — JUNE 30, 2019 PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED

REVENUE SOURCES

Government Agencies.....	\$538,641
City Contracts.....	\$524,394
Foundation Grants.....	\$291,000
Individual Donations.....	\$153,855
Corporate Contributions.....	\$113,458
Nursery Sales and Service.....	\$106,752
Event Income.....	\$46,469
Program Fees, Other.....	\$11,036
Total Revenue.....	\$1,785,604

EXPENSES

Programs.....	\$1,322,299
Fundraising.....	\$129,993
Administration.....	\$50,882
Total Expenses.....	\$1,503,174
Change in net assets.....	\$282,429

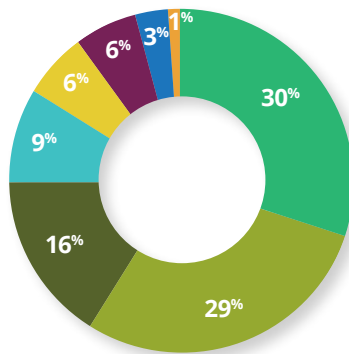
BALANCE SHEET

Assets.....	\$714,050
Liabilities.....	\$82,266

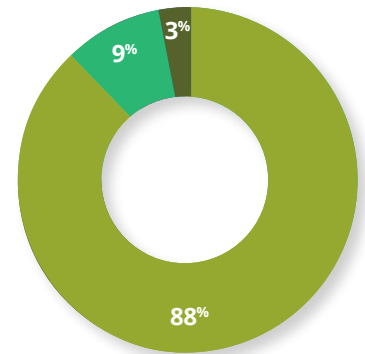
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets..... \$185,166

Unrestricted Net Assets..... \$446,618

- Government Agencies
- City Contracts
- Foundation Grants
- Individual Donations
- Corporate Contributions
- Nursery Sales and Service
- Event Income
- Program Fees, Other



- Programs
- Fundraising
- Administration



East Palo Alto Girl Scouts water new bioswale plantings in our Cooley Landing restoration area.



SUPPORTERS

JULY 1, 2018 – JUNE 30, 2019

Thanks to our individual, foundation, government, and corporate funders. This broad-based support enables us to foster healthy, resilient lands and waters on a regional scale.

\$100,000+

City of Palo Alto
J. Vance Huckins Fund of the Tides Foundation
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
The David & Lucile Packard Foundation
State Coastal Conservancy
Valley Water

\$50,000 – \$99,999

City of Cupertino
City of Los Altos
Town of Los Altos Hills

\$25,000 – \$49,999

Franklin and Catherine Johnson Foundation
Morgan Family Foundation
StarLink Logistics Inc. and Sanofi

\$10,000 – \$24,999

Adobe Foundation
Steve and Shelley Brown
City of East Palo Alto
City of Menlo Park
Google
Kit Gordon and Tony Alvarez
Jerry Hearn
Tabitha Jordan and Adam Weissman
The Laurel STEM Fund
Redwood Serenity Fund
San Francisco Estuary Project
San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Bart and Nancy Westcott

\$5,000 – \$9,999

City of Mountain View
City of Redwood City
Lucille Glassman and Phillip Harter
Noble and Lorraine Hancock
Los Altos Community Foundation
Michael and Anne Hoge Milliken
Patagonia

Stanford Real Estate Office
Town of Portola Valley
Joan Ferguson and Craig Uhrich
Sarah and Dan Wernikoff

\$2,000 – \$4,999

Anonymous
Elizabeth Arndorfer and Clint Smith
Kathleen Bennett and Thomas Malloy
Patrick Chen
Tammy and Bill Crown
Friends of Stevens Creek Trail
Roger Hine
Charlie Krenz
E3 Youth Philanthropy, a program of Los Altos Community Foundation
Maryann Moise
Kylar Murlas
One Tree Planted
Palo Alto Stanford Aquatics
Jimmy Schmidt and Kristen Williams
Elizabeth Schwerer and Kingston Duffie
David Smernoff and Cindy Russell

Stanford Conservation Program
Woodside Atherton Garden Club
Youth Outside

\$1,000 – \$1,999

Adobe
Anonymous
Apple
AppLovin
Criteo
Melanie and Peter Cross
Marge De Staebler
Kelly Drewitt
Susan Dunn
Claire Elliott and Doug Kent
Lyn Elliott
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Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati Foundation
Woodside Priory School

\$500 – \$999

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Facebook
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HandsOn Bay Area
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Hillbrook School
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Michelle Mann and Eric Schmidt
Jack Morton and Mary Ellen White
Judith and Robert Murphy
Eric Andrews and Angela Rumi
George Salah
San Mateo County Schools
SAP
Rich Schwerin and Julie Weiss
Margo Sensenbrenner
Lisa Smernoff
Symantec
Tableau Software
Tammy and Mike Taylor

Don Weden
Woodside High School
Green Academy
Jennifer and Bill Youstra

\$250 – \$499

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Autodesk
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Leslie Ballinger
David Beaver and Renee Courington
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Bowman School
Junko and Kevin Bryant
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Linda and Jerry Elkind
Marilynn Gallaway
The Girls' Middle School
Jeff Grainger and Maren Monsen
Savanna Hung
International School of the Peninsula
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Gabriel Kronstadt
Zoe Lefebvre
Vicki Martell
Bob and Myung Sook McIntyre
Linda and John Nightingale
Barbara Oshman
Sacred Heart Schools
Ventana School
Linda and Harvey Ziff



“Grassroots Ecology’s education services combined with their habitat restoration work is literally helping future generations of many species right here on the Peninsula.”

— Julie Weiss, City of Palo Alto
Public Works Watershed Protection

Photo taken by Ryan Phillips at our
Permanente Creek restoration site in Mountain View.

\$100 - \$249

Kim Ahrens
Anonymous (9)
Michelle and Omar
Baldonado
Dick Baumgartner and
Liz Salzer
Linda Beyce
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Sukey Bryan
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Winery
Jerry Hearn

Charlie Krenz
Microsoft
Neely Wine
Patagonia Palo Alto
David Smernoff
Stanford Jasper Ridge
Biological Preserve

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David Cooper
Claire Elliott and
Doug Kent
Stephen Haas
Heidi McFarland
Peter Neal
Penny Pollock
David Smernoff and
Cindy Russell
Madeleine Stovel
Jennifer Tsai
Laurie and Jay Witt

We have made every effort to ensure that our donor list is complete and accurate. Please notify us of any errors or omissions at emily@grassrootsecology.org.



photo: Bernd Zeugswetter

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Board Vice President
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- Bart Westcott,
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- Nina Orellana
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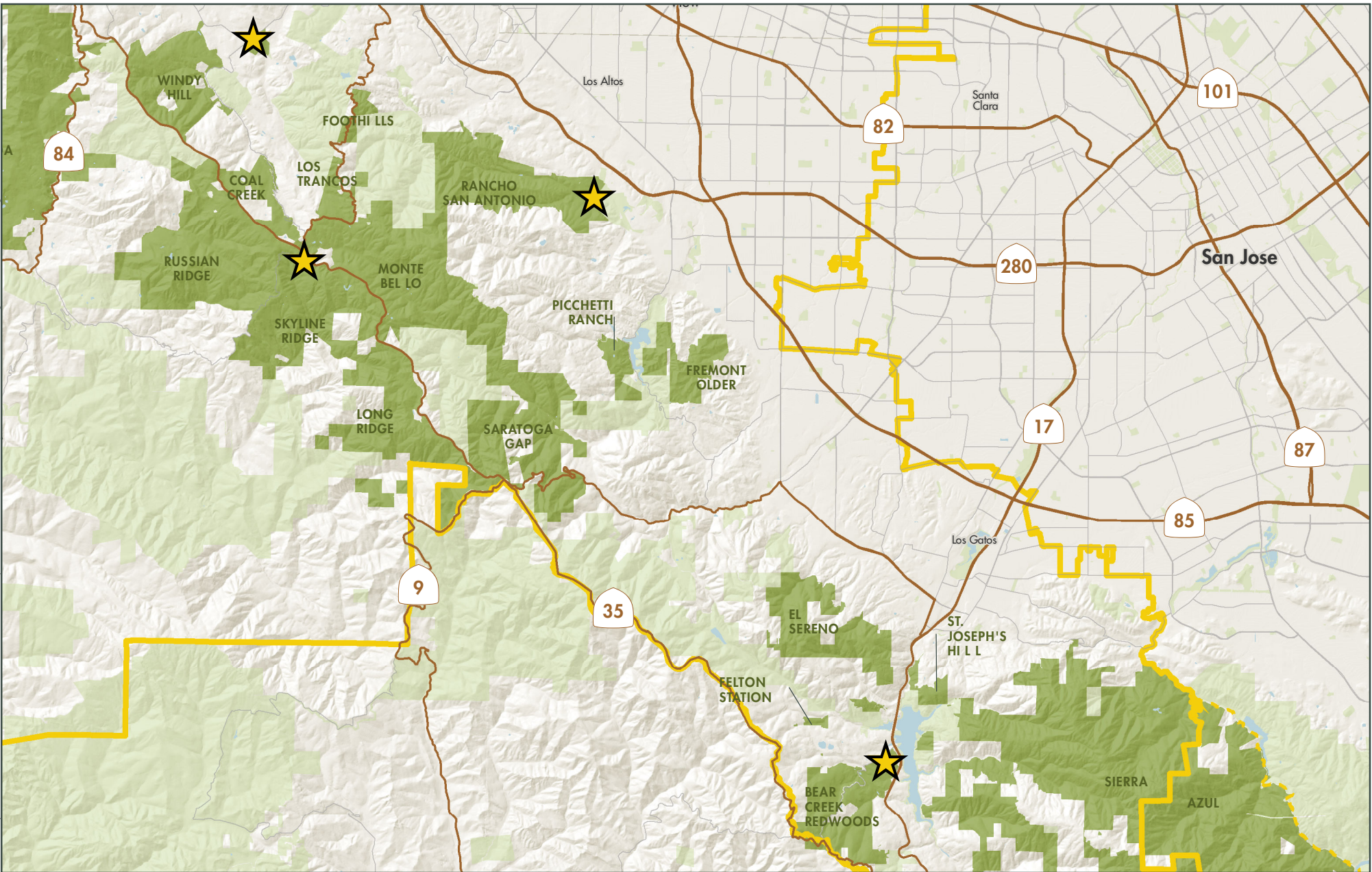
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“Each Grassroots Ecology workday is about more than just managing volunteers to complete a task; it’s about connecting people to their natural spaces and laying the foundation of a life spent taking care of our beautiful planet.”

—Casey Mullins, 2018 College Intern





Service-Learning Event Locations

- MROSD Preserves
- Other Protected Lands
- District Boundary
- Sphere of Influence
- Restoration Location

ATTACHMENT 2

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
9/25/2019

