

# ENGAGING AND EDUCATING

THE PUBLIC TO RESTORE LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS







## 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,

This is a year none of us will ever forget.

Up until March, we were operating at full bore: stewarding 2,400+ acres and 7 creeks with the help of thousands of volunteers, and expanding partnerships with local colleges and the San Jose Conservation Corps to provide more field science education and training to young adults.

Then came spring. To continue advancing our mission through a pandemic, we put our volunteer events on pause, temporarily moved our educational programs online, and found new ways to safely connect people to nature.

We also completed a strategic planning process that will guide our path forward. Our top priorities? Deepening the experiences of our volunteers, and building a more socially diverse stewardship community. While we determined these priorities early in the year, recent events have underscored their urgency and compelled us to act swiftly.

We have adapted our outdoor youth programs—now in higher demand than ever—to serve small groups using new safety protocols. We have created naturalist education opportunities that reflect an expanded definition of the outdoors, from neighborhood streets to backyards and parks. And we are re-evaluating how to meaningfully engage young people with less access to the outdoors.

This year, we have all had a taste of what disconnection feels like. The distress so many of us have experienced due to prolonged periods of sheltering in place helps us more fully appreciate our basic human need to stay connected to nature and to each other.

Grassroots Ecology is here to honor and leverage the human need for connection by bringing people together to appreciate and restore our local environment. As we look to the future, we reaffirm our commitment to work collaboratively with the public to strengthen ecosystems, advance and apply scientific knowledge, and empower people to make a difference.

These are tough times, but each day we choose to respond with hope and action. We are deeply grateful for your enduring support.

In community,

Alex Von Feldt  
Executive Director





# DISTANCED, BUT CONNECTED

Even in tough times, our restoration projects continue to help nature and community bloom.



## BY THE NUMBERS, 2019-20



**5,000** volunteers



**2,425** acres stewarded



**1,200** outdoor education participants



**7** creeks tested monthly for water quality



**2,025** indoor education participants



**29,200** plants grown at our nursery



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIELD



“Your collaboration has helped provide not only work experience but also **life-changing** experiences to our Corpsmembers. With your leadership and guidance, we are growing the next generation of community-engaged citizens together.”

—Dorsey Moore, Executive Director, San Jose Conservation Corps

*We worked with over 60 San Jose Conservation Corps members—including recent high school grads and those working toward their GED—to provide education and work experience in sustainable land management.*



“While I’ve discussed the negative impacts of dams on riparian ecosystems with my students, this experience was more **impactful** than anything I could have taught them in the classroom!”

—Costanza Rampini, Ph.D, San Jose State University

*DeAnza Community College students examine creek invertebrates and learn about their sensitivity to pollution. This was one of 11 college classes that took part in our field trips along Stevens Creek at McClellan Ranch Preserve.*



"I am left without words to express the **joy** I feel to have witnessed the immediate positive impact this outing had on our families."

—Gloria Cahuich González,  
San Mateo County Health

*Our Naturalist Walks and Talks and Exploring Nature Near You virtual program helped people discover the wonders and workings of nature in settings ranging from their local parks to their own back yards.*



"Stulsaft Stewards means having a break from everything and enjoying the environment and **friends** around me."

—Ismael, Youth Steward

*Record numbers of students showed up for our Youth Stewards program at Stulsaft Park in Redwood City—as many as 46 per day! Though we had to shorten our spring session due to COVID, the program will return in 2020-21 for small groups.*



# OUR VISION OF GRASSROOTS STEWARDSHIP

A **steward** is someone who learns about, cares for, protects, or advocates for nature.

We believe that our most significant long-term impact is to inspire people to become lifelong stewards of nature, and that building human capacity is the most effective way to create healthy local ecosystems. That is why our strategic plan for 2020–2023 lays the groundwork for us to:

- Increase the quality and depth of steward engagement
- Bring stewardship opportunities to new audiences
- Improve local ecosystem health in new geographic areas of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties



*Stewards help beneficial plants flourish within a roadside bioswale at Cooley Landing in East Palo Alto.*





## NATURE IS ALL AROUND US

### All people

have the right and responsibility to be stewards of their local lands, waters, and communities.

*This young steward is helping us restore creekside habitat in downtown Redwood City.*

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion** are foundational to our mission because we believe that:

- Real environmental change is only possible through everyone's involvement
- Environmental knowledge and stewardship can be a catalyst for social change
- Nature is all around us, and there are many ways to enjoy and protect it
- Connecting to nature is an essential part of healthy lives and human communities

We recognize that historical oppression and ongoing social injustice impact all aspects of our lives, including access to the outdoors and meaningful engagement with nature. Grassroots Ecology is committed to our role in addressing the barriers and inequities that exclude people from environmental activities.

As a part of this commitment, we will allocate at least 30% of our funds and staff time to communities with less access to nature or environmental education because of economic inequity, historic marginalization, or displacement.





# ON THE GROUND IMPACT

The data we collect is bearing out the importance of our stewardship work, from habitat restoration to creek monitoring. Following are several key findings from different sites.



*Above: Sweat bee (Halictus sp.), a pollinator of California poppy, is one of over 50 insect species utilizing our Redwood Creek restoration area in downtown Redwood City.*

- **Hawthorns, Portola Valley:** 86% decrease in average density of invasive yellow starthistle from 2017 to 2019 following timed mowing and hand pulling
- **Redwood Creek, Redwood City:** 50+ insect and pollinator species utilizing our restoration area
- **Stevens Creek, Cupertino:** 30 families of benthic macroinvertebrates documented in-stream to track creek health



# FINANCIALS

## REVENUE AND EXPENSES, JULY 1, 2019 — JUNE 30, 2020 PRELIMINARY AND UNAUDITED

### REVENUE SOURCES

City Contracts .....	\$538,212
Government Agencies .....	\$509,298
Individual Donations .....	\$285,975
Foundation Grants .....	\$184,000
Corporate Contributions .....	\$106,738
Nursery Sales and Service .....	\$95,290
Program Fees, Other .....	\$14,549
<b>Total Revenue .....</b>	<b>\$1,734,062</b>

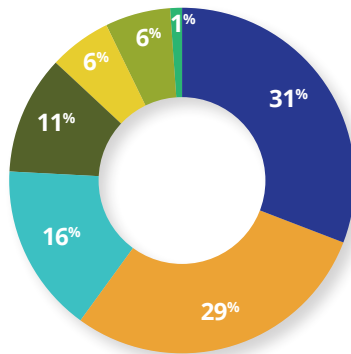
### EXPENSES

Programs .....	\$1,430,700
Fundraising .....	\$179,656
Administration .....	\$95,527
<b>Total Expenses .....</b>	<b>\$1,705,883</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets .....</b>	<b>\$28,179</b>

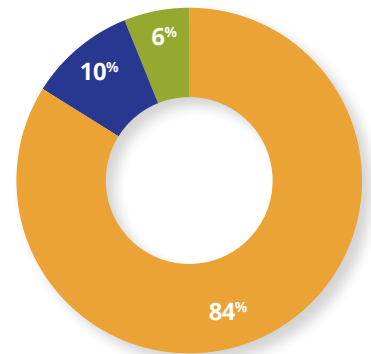
### BALANCE SHEET

Assets .....	\$923,038
Liabilities .....	\$263,076
<b>Temporarily Restricted Net Assets .....</b>	<b>\$87,000</b>
<b>Unrestricted Net Assets .....</b>	<b>\$572,962</b>

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



- Programs
- Fundraising
- Administration



“We’ve had the opportunity to do concrete work to improve our local environment, associated with a high quality project that will have a lasting and positive effect on the local watershed.”

— Michael Milliken, Donor/Volunteer



# SUPPORTERS

JULY 1, 2019 – JUNE 30, 2020

We could not have weathered this turbulent year without the generosity of our many funders. Thanks for helping us persevere in our mission through tough times.

## \$100,000+

City of Palo Alto  
The William, Jeff and Jennifer Gross Family Foundation  
J. Vance Huckins Fund of the Tides Foundation  
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
The David & Lucile Packard Foundation  
Valley Water

## \$50,000 – \$99,999

California State Coastal Conservancy  
City of Cupertino  
City of Los Altos  
Santa Clara County  
Town of Los Altos Hills

## \$25,000 – \$49,999

City of East Palo Alto  
Google  
Franklin and Catherine Johnson Foundation  
Morgan Family Foundation

## \$10,000 – \$24,999

Adobe Foundation  
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## \$5,000 – \$9,999

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Woodside Atherton Garden Club  
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“I’ve always been impressed by the fact that all the staff take the time to really get to know the volunteers. I feel that they have become friends and mentors, not just people who organize the workdays.”

—Emma Nixon, Youth Steward

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*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](mailto:emily@grassrootsecology.org).*



"Grassroots Ecology showed me that it is possible to make big, positive changes with a small group of passionate people on a nonprofit budget."

—Daria Clark, Tufts University Masters Candidate



These rising environmental professionals got their start at Grassroots Ecology!



"Working with Grassroots Ecology kickstarted my love of native plants and launched my career in this field."

—Michael Viramontes, River & Lands Conservancy



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