

California's 30x30 Initiative will lead to more parks and a more climate-resilient Bay Area

by Michele Beasley

Thirty-six biodiversity hotspots have been identified around the world. A hotspot is a region that has a high percentage of plant life found nowhere else on the planet — more than 1,500 endemic vascular plants — and has greater than 70% habitat loss. A hotspot is irreplaceable and threatened.

Many hotspots are in Asia and Central and South America. The Caribbean and all of Madagascar are hotspots. The California Floristic Province, located along North America's Pacific coast, is another hotspot. It contains many ecosystems, such as our redwood forests, coastal dunes and salt marshes. Within this global hotspot is the San Francisco Bay Area, which as we all know, is an extremely special place thanks to its varied topography at the ocean's edge.

How special? The Bay Area is one of the nation's six most important biodiversity hotspots, still home to quintessential species like steelhead trout and mountain lion.

"Without species, there would be no air to breathe, no food to eat, no water to drink. There would be no human society at all... hotspots are critical to human survival." — Conservation International

These special places are threatened by both development and a changing climate. And that means we are all threatened, because everything is interconnected.

Addressing the climate crisis is an urgent, collective effort.

There is a global goal of protecting 30% of the world's land and water by 2030, known as 30x30. In January 2021, President Biden signed an executive order pledging to protect 30% of U.S. lands and water by 2030. A year prior, Governor Newsom issued a similar order for California. Twenty-four percent of California's lands and 16% of its coastal waters are already protected, according to the California



Edgewood at sunrise.

Hannah Ormslow

Natural Resources Agency, which is leading implementation of 30x30.

But the goal isn't just to buy some land and be done with it. The goal is to protect land that has a rich diversity of plant and animal life; that absorbs carbon and helps the state become more resilient to climate change; and that provides more equitable public access to parks.

The Bay Area has long been working toward such a goal. In fact, the Conservation Lands Network (CLN), which is the region's biodiversity conservation strategy, states as Goal 1 "Conserve 2.5 million acres of priority lands by 2050", in other words, 50x50. San Mateo County is doing well, with 42% of the land in some form of protection, which in the 9-county Bay Area, makes it second only to Marin County.

Let's pause to think about our own San Mateo County Parks for a moment.

- **Edgewood Natural Preserve** is home to a mosaic of habitats, including unique serpentine grasslands that support about 550 species of plants—all within just 467 acres. Many of Edgewood's plants are endemic and over a dozen are rare, threatened, or endangered. To learn more, visit www.FriendsofEdgewood.org.

- **San Bruno Mountain's** topography, climate and geology provide a habitat that supports an array of rare, endangered and unique species of plants and animals, including four rare and endangered butterflies. It has been cited as one of the most important and threatened biodiversity sites in the world. To learn more, visit www.MountainWatch.org.

- **Pescadero Creek**, which flows through two San Mateo County Parks year round, is one of the largest remaining runs of

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San Mateo County Parks

Cowell – Purisima Trail
Coyote Point Recreation Area
Crystal Springs Regional Trail
San Andreas Segment
Sawyer Camp Segment
Edgewood Park & Preserve
Devil's Slide Trail
Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
Pillar Point Bluff
Flood Park
Friendship Park
Junipero Serra Park
Huddart Park
Memorial Park
Pescadero Creek Park
Sam McDonald Park
Heritage Grove
Mirada Surf
Moss Beach Park
Quarry Park
San Bruno Mountain Park
Sanchez Adobe
San Pedro Valley Park
Tunitas Creek Beach
Woodside Store
Wunderlich Park

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A Hidden Gem in the Heart of North Fair Oaks

by *Adriana Fernandez Arriaga*

Nopales, corn and tomatoes were just some of the many vegetables that stood out as I walked through North Fair Oak's hidden gem, Friendship Park. During my first three months with the Foundation, I've had the honor to learn about Friendship Park through some of the many collaborators who come together at the park's community garden. Friendship Park was built in 2014 on a vacant parcel that sits on the Hetch Hetchy water line easement near Redwood City with the help of many community partners and volunteers. Less than an acre in size, Friendship Park provides a space for neighbors to grow essential vegetables and reap the mental health benefits of being outside all while creating the next generation of environmental stewards.

The garden beds at Friendship Park have become a vital resource to the surrounding community. Marcos, a member of the community garden since March of this year, likes to grow the essentials for his salsas and everyday cooking like "tomatoes, bell peppers, squash, nopales, radish, cilantro, chili peppers, and corn." This is fresh, organic and healthy produce that can be hard to access nearby. Not only that, but their produce is free. In addition, gardeners engage in activity that boosts their mental health. As Luisa shared, "this space is where I can distract myself, feel liberated and be outside, especially because I live in an apartment." Being outdoors makes her feel happy and free.



Casa Circulo Cultural

Another neighbor to Friendship Park is Casa Circulo Cultural, a multidisciplinary arts nonprofit focused on creating programs reflective of the experiences of the Latino community. They offer gardening classes at Friendship Park as part of their youth summer program. They currently have two gardening beds that they use to teach children about soil, water conservation, pollinators and more. Through this program, they are creating the next generation of environmental stewards.

This little park has big

energy, providing a space to grow healthy produce and relax. The San Mateo County Parks Foundation is keen to support improvements at Friendship Park that meet the community's needs. This includes adding more picnic tables and benches, a shade structure for long, summer days, better fencing, vibrant signage and other amenities to help make the park visible and welcoming. Friendship Park truly is a hidden gem; one that has become a vital source of well-being to the neighboring community. We are committed to seeing it flourish.

TOGETHER Bay Area, a regional coalition of park districts, land trusts, local Native American governments and nonprofits, including San Mateo County Parks Foundation, has a list of 115 projects in 10 counties that are ready to help meet the state's 30x30 goals. Examples of local projects include:

- Construction of public access opportunities and habitat restoration for the endangered western snowy plover at **Tunitas Creek Beach** (POST and SMC Parks)
- Acquisition and restoration of **Cloverdale Ranch**, 6,300 acres south of Pescadero extending from Highway 1 inland to the forested slopes of the Santa Cruz Mountains — an “ecological staircase” of diverse habitats. (Midpen and POST)
- Design and build a wildlife crossing across Highway 101 in **Coyote Valley**, just south of San Jose on the way to Morgan Hill. Coyote Valley is a critical wildlife corridor that connects the Santa Cruz Mountains to the Diablo Range, but barriers like highways can isolate wildlife and threaten their survival. (POST and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority)

To learn more about the 115+ Bay Area projects ready to go, visit www.togetherbayarea.org/30x30projects/



Coho salmon and steelhead trout were once abundant in Pescadero Creek.

“What I want Bay Area park users to know is that there is an active, coordinated effort in this region to reach the 30% goal for the state. The talented folks who run park agencies, land trusts, conservancies, and other organizations focused on the land are all working together. What you can do is support them. You can visit your public lands and help take care of them. You can donate to nonprofits. All of it makes a difference, and collectively we'll have an impact.”

— *Annie Burke, Executive Director, TOGETHER Bay Area*

(Continued from page 1)

steelhead within the San Francisco Bay Area and was recently restored for coho salmon; two species facing extinction. To learn more, visit www.SanMateoRCD.org.

While gaining protection for more high-value land remains important for San Mateo County, it is clear that stewarding what is already protected is equally vital. That means wildfire-fuel mitigation and habitat restoration work must stay a high priority for all of our open space lands.

This effort will require plenty of funding, but can you think of a better investment? This one is literally lifesaving and we don't have the luxury of time. Unveiled earlier this year, Governor Newsom's budget includes \$2 billion to achieve 30x30 goals. The state will use this money to acquire new land, buy conservation easements and restore impaired natural areas. The Bay Area could see an extraordinary investment in parks and open space over the next decade, seeing as we are a global hotspot for biodiversity.

We must tend to and heal the land and our relationship to it.

Residents should be able to rely on the land for clean drinking water, fresh air and protection from flooding, landslides and wildfire. But that's only if we are stewarding the environment. When we don't take care of the land, how can we expect the land to take care of us? It's a relationship based on reciprocity. And without that relationship, things get out of balance, which is where we are now.



Harbor seal pup at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve.

An interconnected network of high value lands, like forests that remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere,

provides environmental resilience and creates healthy communities. Placing land off limits to development, though, does not alone ensure that the land remains healthy or protected.

Critical to the success of 30x30 is partnering with indigenous people and indigenous-led organizations. Although they comprise less than 5% of the world population, indigenous people protect 80% of Earth's biodiversity. They have been stewarding the forests, deserts, grasslands, and marine environments for thousands of years. Traditional land stewardship practices can help heal the land.

As an example, for over one hundred years, the goal of state and federal agencies was to extinguish fire as soon as possible, not recognizing the importance of 'good fire.' Fire suppression has exacerbated the impact of wildfires because it allows the buildup of thick vegetation that dries out and

is quick to burn. This will continue to pose a threat until we learn how to manage our forests effectively.

And yet long before settlers arrived on the West Coast and effectively banned the practice, indigenous people used controlled burns to clear out underbrush and allow new plants to grow. They actively managed the landscape and knew that fire was an important part of the equation. By centering indigenous knowledge, leveraging new state funding and working together, we can create a resilient Bay Area; one that can withstand the worst effects of sea level rise, wildfire and drought.

And in healing the land, we have an opportunity to heal our relationship with each other. Everything is interconnected.

To learn more about 30x30, visit www.californianature.ca.gov

To learn more about the Conservation Lands Network, visit www.bayarealands.org

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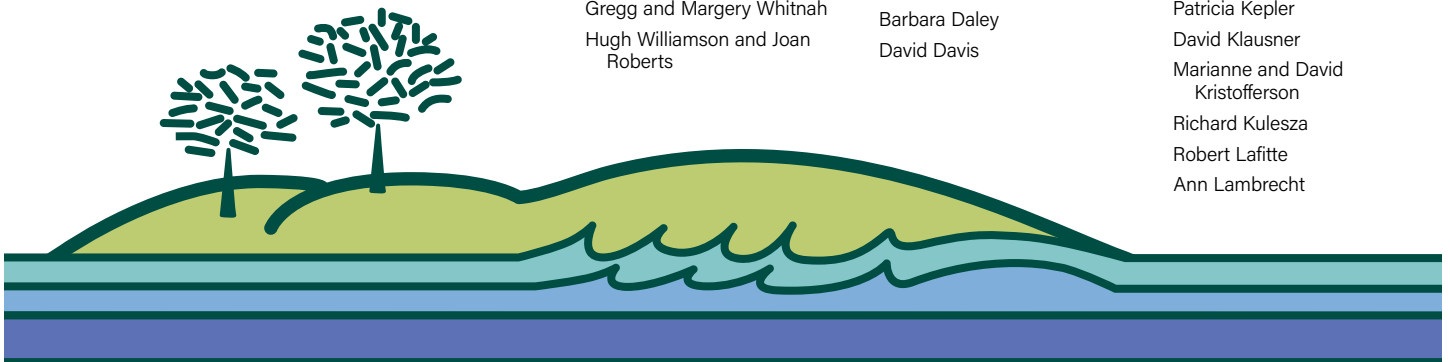
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people in parks



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For more information, please contact Michele Beasley, Executive Director, at Michele@SupportParks.org or (650) 321-5812.

Test Your Trail Knowledge!

1. The _____ Trail, just south of Half Moon Bay, has two different ecosystems: on one side is shoreline and open ocean and on the other is coastal scrubland mixed with agriculture.
2. The _____ Trail is the only trail in Wunderlich Park that can take you to Skyline Blvd and back to the parking lot without using other trails.
3. Choctaw, Modoc and Chinook youth camp areas are connected by _____ Road in this redwood park just outside of La Honda.
4. Look down upon The Cow Palace in Daly City from _____ Trail at this state and county park just south of San Francisco.
5. _____ Trail takes you past the route for Bicycle Sunday, Edgewood Preserve and right into Huddart Park.
6. The western portion of _____ Road has reopened, including access to Shaw Flat. Other areas to the south and east in Pescadero Creek County Park, which were burned in the CZU Lightning Complex fire, remain closed.
7. In the spring, flowers bloom densely along the _____ Trail, making this, along with the Serpentine Trail, the premier area in which to view Edgewood Preserve's famous floral displays.
8. The newly redone _____ Trail at Coyote Point takes you past a gorgeous sandy beach which is perfect for watching planes land at SFO.
9. One can follow the gently graded Skyline Trail, also a section of the _____ Trail, between Wunderlich and Huddart Parks and through redwood and Douglas fir forests.
10. The _____ Trail takes people past the remnants of the Smith-Dolger Estate which is marked by the three Canary Island date palms and continues south to the Seal Cove Beach stairs at Cypress Street.

ANSWERS: 1. Cowell - Purissima; 2. Alambique; 3. Youth Camp Fire; 4. Saddle Loop; 5. Crystal Springs; 6. Old Haul; 7. Sunset; 8. Promenade; 9. Bay Area Ridge; 10. Bluff

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation is now a team of three.

by Michele Beasley

Leslie Holzman joined the Foundation as our Membership and Communications Coordinator at a critical moment at the end of 2020 and was a quick study. She was already a big fan of the parks and had joined us for our 2019 Edgewood wildflower walk. Today, Leslie manages our Park Pics photo contest, social media and gift processing. Her professional background is in public art administration and real estate lending, and she has been an active volunteer with Peninsula Food Runners, Second Harvest Food Bank and the Peninsula Humane Society. Since 2018, she has also served on the Burlingame Parks & Recreation Commission.

Adriana Fernandez Arriaga was hired as our Program Coordinator in May. Adriana runs our youth environmental field trip program as well as our enhancing equitable access grant program. When I first met Adriana in 2018, she was a recent college grad with a passion for connecting her Latinx community to nature. She shared how she wanted to bring a Spanish-speaking mothers' group in North Fair Oaks to Edgewood Preserve. We partnered with the Friends of Edgewood to make a field trip happen and it turned out to be a magical experience for all involved. She went on to join the Foundation board of directors and worked for Nuestra Casa de East Palo Alto before joining staff this past spring.

The Foundation is so fortunate to have both Leslie and Adriana on staff. Read on to learn more about their love for parks in their own words.

Leslie

What drew you to working at the Parks Foundation?

I was ready for a career change and looking around at things that were personally important to me and where I could make a contribution to a mission-driven organization. I feel so fortunate to live in a place with parks and open spaces that add to the health and vibrancy of our community, and so I realized this role is a perfect fit for me.

What has surprised you the most about San Mateo County Parks?

Before working with SMC PF, my personal experience in the County Parks was more limited to the "headline" parks like Coyote Point, Crystal Springs, Edgewood or Memorial, so I've had so much fun discovering the many others. I've gained so much appreciation for the diversity of experiences that can be had in the park system and I've also loved learning how others like to enjoy the Parks in ways completely different from me.

Do you have a favorite San Mateo County park or trail?

Choosing a favorite park or trail definitely depends on the day you ask me! But recently I've been reflecting on the changes brought by the pandemic. I am reminded of how often I found a bit of refuge on the northern parts of Sawyer Camp Trail. The wide, paved trail was a near-by escape where I could comfortably spend time with a friend or listen to an audiobook while getting some much-needed sunshine and fresh air. I also rediscovered the joy of a relaxing weekend walk with a friend on the gorgeous Cowell-Purisima Trail. So right now, those 2 trails are holding a special place for me.



Leslie at Sawyer Camp Trail

Adriana

What drew you to working at the Parks Foundation?

After attending my first community event, which was cool, I realized there were hardly any community members that looked like me and I wanted to change that, so I joined the Foundation as staff where I know I can make a bigger difference. As the Program Coordinator, I enjoy talking to new partners and community members, especially those who have never visited a County Park and working with them to plan a visit to the parks.

What has surprised you the most about San Mateo County Parks?

I was surprised to know we have 24 beautiful county parks with scenes ranging from giant redwood trees at Memorial Park to feeling on top of the world at San Bruno Mountain to the fresh vegetables at Friendship Park. It amazes me to see the many activities and learning opportunities each park has to offer.

Do you have a favorite San Mateo County Park or trail?

Edgewood Preserve was my favorite, but then I got to visit Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and Memorial Park as part of my onboarding process and oh my goodness! I was in awe. From the beautiful giant redwood trees to the glistening Pacific Ocean. It's just gorgeous. All three are my favorites now.



Our new Program Coordinator, Adriana, with her grandmother, Maria Luisa, at Friendship Park.



Coyote Point Eastern Promenade



Two new amenities recently opened up in San Mateo County Parks — the Coyote Point Eastern Promenade and the Quarry Park pump track.

If you haven't already, you must add a Promenade Trail walk at Coyote Point to your San Mateo County Parks bucket list.

Improvements include a new sandy beach shaped as a crenulate bay, a sea wall with plenty of seating and a new restroom

building. The Eastern Promenade was designed with climate change adaptations.

A pump track is a circuit of rollers, banked turns and features designed to be ridden completely by riders "pumping"—generating momentum by up and down body movements — instead of pedaling or pushing. The community pump track came about when San Mateo County Parks began developing the Quarry Park Master Plan, a planning effort that is now back in motion.

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation contributed to both projects, thanks to you, our generous donors.



Quarry Park pump track

