



2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT



GOING DEEPER

Each young person we engaged through our outdoor in-person programs received more hours of education, hands-on stewardship, and staff mentoring than ever before. Thousands more people connected to nature and STEM remotely through our new virtual education offerings for all ages.

355
young people engaged through in-person outdoor programs

8-16
weeks of in-person programming provided per participant

6
fold increase in average volunteer hours per person

6,750
students served through remote STEM education

1,240
adults engaged through live remote education



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.

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT



Over the past year we have extended our roots deeper into the community, helping local lands and young people flourish through stewardship.

Heeding the call for safe in-person youth education and career development opportunities, we adapted our outdoor programs to serve small stable groups of students at as many sites as possible for as much of the year as possible—from after-school and summer programs for teens to internships for two- and four-year college students. By connecting a diverse array of students to the wonders of nature and unleashing their power to act as stewards of those resources, our programs helped students grow academically, socially, and professionally—often in profound ways—during a year when school was online at home.

We also made strides in strengthening our local response to the intersecting climate and biodiversity crises. We collaborated with local municipalities to refurbish green infrastructure, foster biodiverse landscapes in our parks and neighborhoods, and promote sustainable fire management practices that increase fire safety while preserving precious habitat.

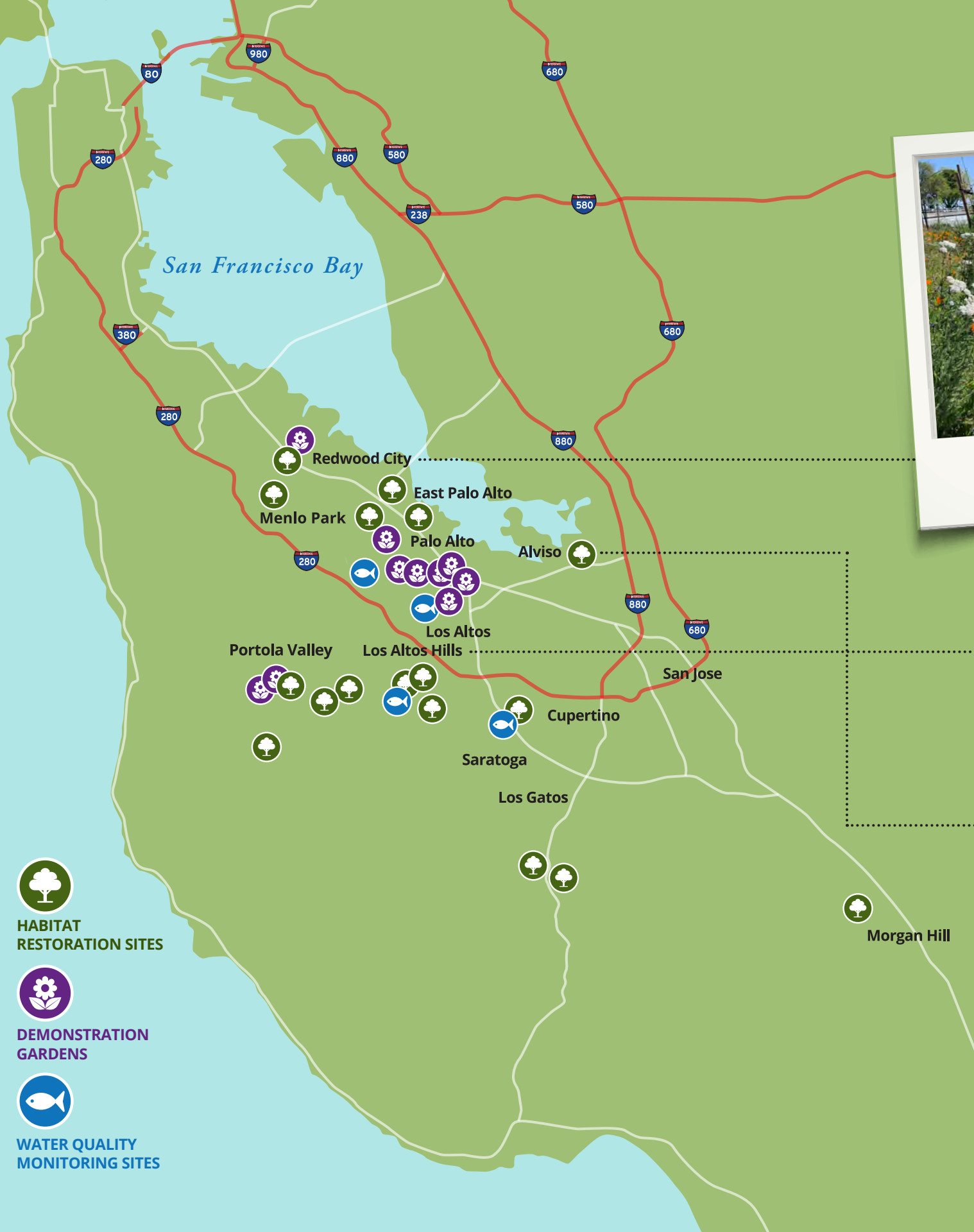
We have managed to do all this and more without cutting any of our staffing thanks to individuals in the community and federal PPP funds that filled the gap. Strong partnerships with local governments and fellow community organizations have also been key to our resilience. We are grateful to each and every one of you for your contribution to this collaborative and ever optimistic movement to protect, restore, and honor the extraordinary natural legacy of our region.

Sincerely,

Alex Von Feldt
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jerry Hearn
BOARD PRESIDENT

FROM THE FOOTHILLS TO THE BAY



Thanks to our habitat restoration efforts, beauty and habitat now abound along a downtown stretch of Redwood Creek once dominated by non-native palm trees and invasive weeds.

We completed a three year project along the creek at Westwind Community Barn to install berms and native plants that slow, filter, and sink stormwater runoff before it enters the creek.



We teamed up with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency to create forage zone test plots for Alviso's highly threatened burrowing owl population. The goal is to expand native vegetation that attracts the owl's prey base of rodents and insects.

PHOTO: TALON ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH GROUP

RESTORING YOUTH AND NATURE THROUGH STEWARDSHIP

We extended our popular Youth Stewards program to more sites and ages to reach as many youth as possible in small stable groups.



Guided by our staff Ecologist Shelley Pneh (right), Youth Stewards learn about California geology by examining rocks found in the dry stream bed of Adobe Creek at Redwood Grove.

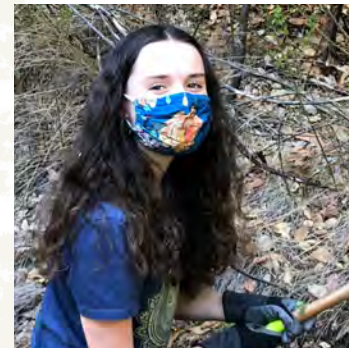
300+
youth ages 12-18
served from 23
cities and 47
schools

7
parks and open
spaces improved

89%
of students
experienced a
deeper connection
to the park they
stewarded

86%
of students said
they would
change or adapt
their personal
habits to help
the environment

81%
of students
reported that
they would share
information
on how to be
environmentally
conscious with
friends or family



I love being able to volunteer and spend my time outdoors doing projects that I can see directly impact my community.

Meera
Youth Steward at Stulsaft Park



I really enjoyed planting native plants, learning about the environment, and interacting with the other stewards. I'm gaining a better knowledge of ecology and the native plants around here from this experience, as well as some great memories.

José
Youth Steward at Foothills
Nature Preserve



I have improved my leadership skills because I have been speaking up more, asking more questions, and interacting with new people.

Olivia
Youth Steward and Assistant
High School Leader

LAUNCHING ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS



PHOTO: SEAN LEE

The hours I spent and the energy I put into trying to improve our natural spaces has sparked this desire and passion to keep the work going and makes me so very excited to see the positive changes that our acting locally can have on a larger scale.

Ethan Yan, College Intern

50 college students received job training and hands-on field internships, 14 of them first generation college students.



PHOTO: SEAN LEE

2 AmeriCorps Watershed Stewards Program Members gained 10 months of job experience and grew their environmental networks with Grassroots Ecology.

AmeriCorps Members Miles Brooks and Siena Watson help youth discover the organisms that live in our local creeks during their term of service with Grassroots Ecology. ▼



San Jose Conservation Corps members build green skills by working with Grassroots Ecology and City of Palo Alto staff to install high-efficiency irrigation and native plant landscapes. ▼

1,000+ hours of hands-on vocational experience with Grassroots Ecology helped San Jose Conservation Corps members learn the ropes of sustainable land management, fire prevention, and green stormwater infrastructure maintenance.

HARNESSING HABITAT FOR POLLINATORS

70+
species of insect pollinators and other arthropods have been documented utilizing our restoration site at Redwood Creek, one of many sites where we are improving pollinator habitat through native plant restoration.

Pollinators are essential to the health of every ecosystem on the planet. Locally we are working with communities to support our many native pollinators, including bees, butterflies, moths, birds, and beneficial fly and wasp species.



We expanded vital pollinator habitat at 6 community sites including parks, creeks, and neighborhood streets.



Our Native Plant Nursery propagated and distributed thousands of pollinator-friendly plants, including 185 different nectar and host species.



We created pollinator plant kits of native seedlings to help local residents improve pollinator habitat in their own outdoor spaces.

BOOSTING LOCAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE

From our open spaces to our neighborhood streets, we are preparing the local environment to withstand and rebound from the stresses of a changing climate.



SUSTAINABLE FIRE MANAGEMENT

To reduce fire risk while preserving quality habitat in the wildland urban interface, we provided guidance to cities on fire fuel load

reduction projects such as grassland mowing, tree pruning, and woody invasive species removal.

GROWING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

We kicked off a multi-year project to revitalize a network of bioretention areas in Palo Alto's Southgate neighborhood. Together with local

residents and the San Jose Conservation Corps, we are improving native habitat and stormwater filtration in a residential area once prone to flooding.

PHOTO: SEAN LEE

ADVANCING EQUITY

Grassroots Ecology is committed to our role in addressing the barriers and inequities that exclude people from meaningful engagement with nature. Following are some of the steps we have taken over the past year to advance equity in our programs:



We allocated 28% of our funds and staff time to communities with less access to nature or environmental education because of social or economic inequities.



We made our college internship program more inclusive by giving community college and first generation students priority.



We met monthly as a staff to explore Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion topics and how we can advance these values through our programs, practices, and organizational culture.



We worked with a consultant to develop a detailed action plan to improve the cultural relevance of our programs and increase stewardship opportunities for those that might not otherwise have them.

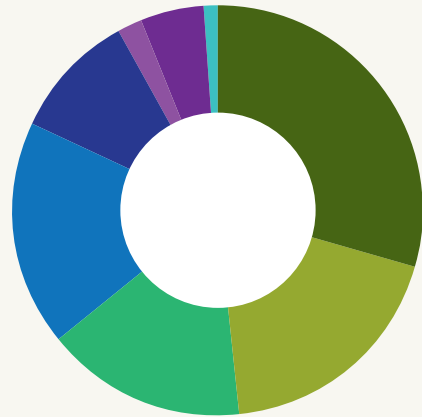
Next steps for fiscal year 2021-22:

- 1 We will provide paid internships to college students so that those who cannot afford to volunteer their time can participate and gain industry skills.
- 2 We will introduce a new position of Community Engagement Manager to expand and improve outreach to communities underrepresented in the environmental fields.
- 3 As land stewards on Ramaytush Ohlone, Tamien Nation, and Muwekma Ohlone unceded lands, we will work on becoming active allies to local Native peoples, retaining a consultant from a Bay Area Indigenous community to help us jumpstart this long-term effort.
- 4 We will offer new types of outdoor events that increase accessibility and relevance to groups with less access to nature.



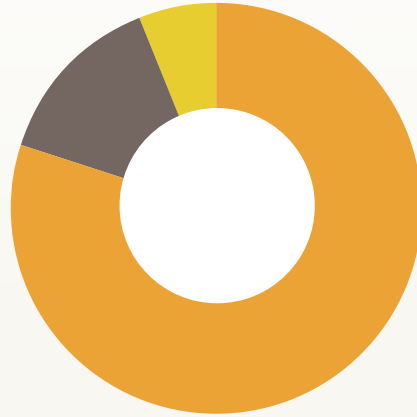
FINANCIALS

REVENUE SOURCES



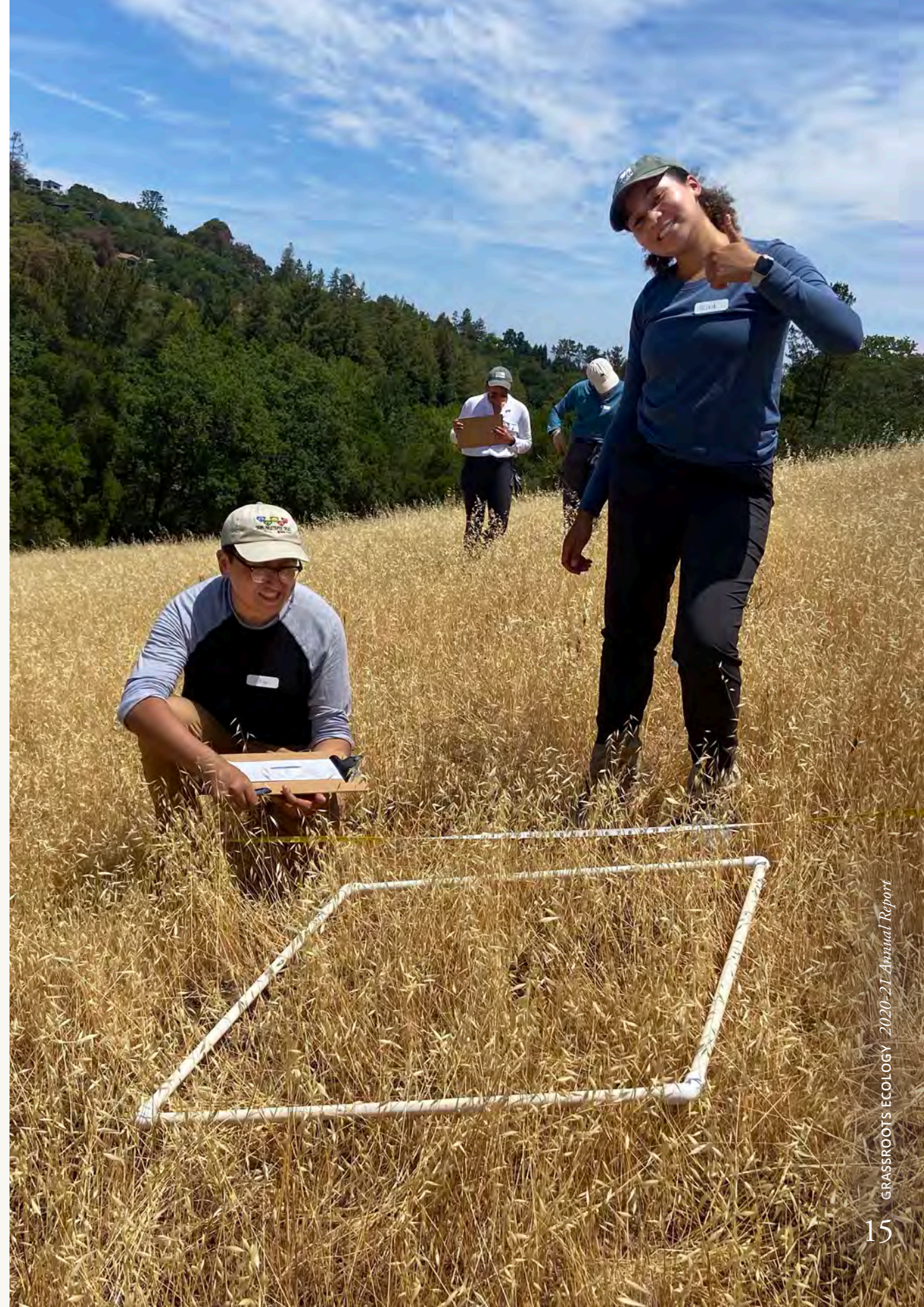
City Contracts	\$565,666
Government Agencies	\$361,393
Individual Donations	\$307,798
Foundation Grants	\$344,000
PPP Grant	\$185,095
Corporate Contributions	\$34,043
Nursery Sales and Service	\$102,238
Program Fees, Other	\$11,278
Total Revenue	\$1,911,510

EXPENSES



Programs	\$1,343,498
Fundraising	\$229,263
Administration	\$95,580
Total Expenses	\$1,668,341
Change in net assets	\$243,169
BALANCE SHEET	
Assets	\$1,187,190
Liabilities	\$284,059
Temporary Restricted Net Assets	\$202,333
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$700,799

▶ College interns assist with vegetation surveys to assess if our invasive plant reduction strategies are working (see page 19 for the answer).



SUPPORTERS

Thank you to our ecosystem of funders for all you do to make our lands and programs strong.

\$100,000+

City of Palo Alto
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
J. Vance Huckins Fund of the Tides Foundation
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Valley Water

\$50,000-\$99,999

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\$25,000-\$49,999

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\$10,000-\$24,999

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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 kate@grassrootsecology.org.



TURNING WEEDS TO WILDFLOWERS

At our Hawthorns restoration site in the foothills of San Mateo County, strategically timed mowing of invasive yellow

starthistle—followed up with hand pulling of resprouts by our staff and volunteers—resulted in a 98% decrease in average yellow starthistle density from 2017 to

2020. Areas once dense with prickly thistle now bloom with lupines, clarkias, milkweed, and native perennial grasses.

OUR TEAM

We welcomed two new members to our growing board!



I was first introduced to Grassroots Ecology as a college intern in 2018, and I quickly realized that I'd found a very special community. Their mission of ecological restoration, stewardship, and education is what drew me in, but it was the driven, committed, and compassionate people that caused me to stick around. I'm so excited to join a cohort that is making strides for both our planet and our communities as a member of the Grassroots Ecology board!

Casey Mullins
Board Member



I am very passionate about protecting the environment and educating the next generation, and Grassroots Ecology fits perfectly at the intersection of these two areas. Their mission of restoring our local natural spaces via hands-on volunteer engagement really drew me to serve on their board, in particular the incredible Youth Stewards program.

Michael Wu
Board Member



STAFF 2020-21

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Emily Repech
Emily Sharp
Kathleen Tarlow
Kristen Williams
Sara Witt

AmeriCorps Members

Miles Brooks
Siena Watson

Grassroots Ecology has an amazing network of people and I love how approachable everyone is and willing to help each other out with connecting people to resources and answering their questions.




Stephanie Austin
College Intern



3921 East Bayshore Road
Palo Alto, California 94303
grassrootsecology.org
info@grassrootsecology.org

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