



Trailblazer

A Newsletter Published by the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail

2019

Last Year in Review

2018 was a benchmark year for us. We celebrated our 25th anniversary as a non-profit organization and had an incredibly full and productive year. We want to share a few highlights.

January started the year with our annual planning retreat. We modified our mission statement and vision statement to better reflect our expanded goals as an organization. While our core purpose remains seeing Stevens Creek Trail connected from the bay to the ridge, we also want to protect and enhance the entire wildlife corridor of the greater Stevens Creek watershed.

Updated Mission Statement: "The Friends of Stevens Creek Trail promotes community involvement and pride in the completion, enhancement and enjoyment of trails and wildlife corridors in the Stevens Creek watershed."

New Vision Statement: "Welcoming trails and healthy wildlife corridors that connect people from the bay to the mountains in the Stevens Creek watershed."

Saturday, April 22, continued our annual Stevens Creek Trail Cleanup with support of the Mountain View Parks & Recreation staff and generous volunteer participation especially from Mountain View Rotary. There was a great turnout with over 60 volunteers and city staff. Lots of work was done cleaning and pulling junk out of areas from bikes to plastic bags, after which we provided a delicious pizza lunch. Our 2019 event will be Saturday, April 20, from 9:00 am to noon. If you'd like to participate email us at exec-dir@stevenscreektrail.org.

May through September was especially busy for us, with staff, board members and volunteers attending over 25 events and community meetings. Community outreach and education is a crucial piece of what we do and in 2018, if you think



We hope you recognize our booth from one of the many community events we attended last year.

you saw us, you probably did. These events included Bike to Work Day along the trail, Art and Wine Festivals in Sunnyvale, Mountain View and Los Altos, Cupertino Earth Day and Fall Festival, the Trailblazer Race, Audubon Wildlife Education Day, and numerous city council meetings speaking up for our interests. If you would like to volunteer to help us at any of these events or know of other future meetings or events you think would help us, please email us at exec-dir@stevenscreektrail.org.

Sunday, July 22, was our official 25th anniversary celebration. The Friends of Stevens Creek Trail hosted a fun barbeque picnic to mark 25 years as a non-profit advocating for the trail and wildlife corridor.

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Executive Director's Corner

Dear Friends,

Our mission is to promote community pride and involvement in the completion, enhancement, and enjoyment of the Stevens and Permanente Creek Trails and Wildlife Corridors. We know that as supporters, you share our desire to get people out of cars and onto safe paths walking, running, or rolling, and we need your continued help to do that.

If you live or work in Sunnyvale, Cupertino, Los Altos, or Mountain View, please consider speaking in support of the trail at a meeting of your city council. There is an open mic period early in every meeting where people have three minutes to speak on subjects not on the official agenda, and council members pay close attention to what is said before them. If this is not an option for you, an email to the city council members is second in getting their attention.

In Sunnyvale, for example, residents need to reaffirm their strong support for the planned trail extension from the current Dale/Heatherstone terminus to Fremont Avenue. City officials previously agreed to make this a priority, but progress has been stalled for nearly two years as the city grapples with other challenges.

Meanwhile, Mountain View has already appropriated funding to begin joint efforts and is waiting for Sunnyvale to respond. Requests to the Sunnyvale city council from their residents to make this happen is the best way to get results—council members note what their voters care about.

In Cupertino, Los Altos, and Mountain View, work on improving and adding to safe bike routes in each city is currently under consideration. Their council members would benefit from positive feedback, encouraging them to continue this good work and do even better.

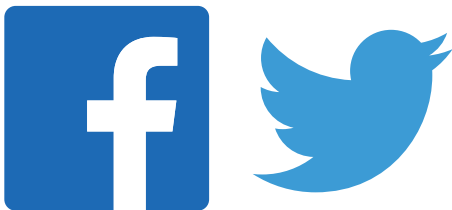
We always need volunteers at our information tables at all four cities' Art and Wine festivals and other events from April through October. It's easy and fun to pass out maps and bike bells, and answer questions about the trail, and shifts are completely flexible. Contact me if you are interested. Also let me know if serving as a board member interests you, particularly if you live in Cupertino or Los Altos.

Last but not least, your financial support is always gratefully welcome to help us keep working to accomplish our mission. Additionally, if you can connect us with any additional corporate sponsors for the Trailblazer Race, our major annual fundraiser, please let us know.

Thank you and Happy Trails!

Arson Grossman

Follow Us on Facebook and Twitter!



This year, the Friends' presence on social media grew tremendously, thanks to all of our followers. We reached 3,600 likes on Facebook and 700 followers on Twitter. Our approach to social media changed a little this year. Before, we had focused mostly on notifying our followers of our events. Now, we have begun to post and repost everything from nature to hiking trails to trail mix recipes—things not focused solely on Stevens' Creek Trail but the big picture as well. We intend on using social media to promote community trails and remind everyone of the many benefits they bring to the entire community. Follow us on Facebook @stevenscreektrail and on Twitter @fosct. Thank you all for your support!





*Left: Guest Speakers Don Weden and Rhonda Farrar
Above: Former Mayor and City Councilman Darcy Paul of
Cupertino, Executive Director, Aaron Grossman and City
Councilman Rod Sinks of Cupertino*



Review from front

Close to 100 friends and supporters attended the outdoor gala, fittingly held right alongside Stevens Creek at Blackberry Farm picnic grounds in Cupertino. Executive Director Aaron Grossman served as emcee and presentations were given by our organization's founder Rhonda Farrar and by retired Santa Clara County Principal Planner Don Weden, who both continue to be strong supporters of our mission.

Former Cupertino Mayor Darcy Paul delivered an official proclamation commending the Friends for our efforts over the years to promote healthful activity and ecologically sound usage relating to the Stevens Creek Trail in Cupertino. Also in attendance to our good fortune was Glenn Lyles, former manager of Shoreline Park in Mountain View, where the trail began. He was the one responsible for getting the very first segment of Stevens Creek Trail paved in 1991, a year before the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail was established!

After much reminiscing and sharing, guests were treated to a delicious meal by Zuc's Frontyard Barbeque, culminating with a grand 25th anniversary cake. Many who attended remarked on the progress of the trail and expressed hopes for its future expansion from Mountain View through Sunnyvale, Los Altos, and Cupertino, southward into the mountains. A lofty goal indeed!

September 30 was our big 2018 Trailblazer Race. While the campus of our generous host and sponsor Microsoft has been our annual race location since 2002, their current complete rebuild necessitated finding a new location for the two- to three-year construction time frame. Fortunately the city of Mountain View stepped in and allowed us to establish and USATF-certify completely new 5 and 10K race courses in Shoreline Park and Permanente Creek Trail. Additionally, with federal permission a new walk course was also created, extending well out into Don Edwards Refuge. About 1,000 attended the event, with excellent support from Mountain View Shoreline Park staff in planning and execution, plus a fun guest appearance by Miss Silicon Valley. Free youth entertainment, snacks and water were provided. We want to return to Microsoft in a few years when construction is complete, but for 2019 the Trailblazer Race will still be at Shoreline Park on Sunday, September 29. We hope to see you there as a participant or a volunteer, since this is our biggest fundraiser of the year.





Stevens Creek Trail Progress

Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, Los Altos

Cupertino

Cupertino's big trail news is that Stevens Creek Trail may soon be extended southward from McClellan Road to Linda Vista Park, thanks to a Cupertino couple who recently purchased the Old Haul Road, a dirt road to a long-closed quarry in the hills. This road runs along the eastern edge of Deep Cliff Golf Course, through which Stevens Creek meanders on its way to McClellan Ranch Preserve. The generous couple is offering the land to the city for a Stevens Creek Trail extension if the city is "willing and able to design, fund, and approve construction of a trail project" by the end of next year. We'll keep trail supporters posted and request political support when needed.

More good Cupertino news is improved bicycle and pedestrian access coming to Blackberry Farm Park and the trail at the current steep, narrow, speed-bumpy park entrance road that for now must be shared by pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles. The city has purchased the property next to the park entrance at Byrne and San Fernando and has funded a feasibility study to consider options.

The Water District has been improving the creek bed habitat north of McClellan Road in McClellan Ranch Preserve by installing gravel and "large woody debris." Also in McClellan Ranch Preserve, within sight of the trail, the city will be improving the community gardens.

In addition, Cupertino may soon have two new trails. City council accepted the feasibility study for the proposed Regnart Creek Trail from Creekside Park to the library and on to Pacifica and voted to proceed with planning for it. The council will soon be considering the feasibility study for a proposed Junipero Serra Trail which will follow the drainage canal running along the south side of 280 from the Mary Avenue Burnett Bike Bridge to Vallco and on to Calabazas Creek, where the canal empties.

Sunnyvale

In Sunnyvale the FOSCT board has been a visible presence over this past year at a variety of events. The Earth Day event at the Sunnyvale Library, the Fit and Fun Fair at Columbia

Middle School, the Sunnyvale Art and Wine Festival, and the Sunnyvale Library Outdoor Expo all had FOSCT board members and volunteers present to pass out maps and bike bells and to answer questions. Local residents were encouraged about the potential for the trail moving forward and enjoyed receiving the maps and bells.

Sunnyvale's Safe Routes to Schools and bike plan development are moving forward with advocacy and support from FOSCT. Also, thanks in major part to a detailed presentation from our president Tim Oey, plans for the bicycle connector from Borregas to the Bay Trail were changed to continue to allow two-way bike traffic.

In trail news, the portion of Stevens Creek Trail in Sunnyvale still is not funded, as the city has faced a number of significant challenges including staff vacancies and budget issues. Planning to extend the trail in the next few years continues, including important discussion and cooperation with Mountain View.

Mountain View

Mountain View continues to improve and plan future extensions to both Stevens Creek and Permanente Creek Trails. Permanente Creek Trail is now connected to West Middlefield Road near the new athletic fields at Crittenden Middle School. The city, in cooperation with Google, has kicked off a project to close the short but irritating trail gap at Charleston Road. The end result will be a signalized, at-grade crossing of Charleston Road. Also, the city has funded the initial design to connect the Permanente Creek Trail to the east end of Colony Street. This will allow the growing neighborhood in that area to get to Shoreline Park as well as Crittenden Middle School more easily.

The major long-term repair to the creek cave-in of Stevens Creek Trail near Yuba Drive has been completed. The city staff from Mountain View has been funded to continue coordination with Sunnyvale, Los Altos and Cupertino to extend the trail

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south beyond Dale/Heatherstone. Next year, they are funded to start the design to extend the trail southward to Remington Drive and Mountain View High School. At the north end of the trail, the South Bay Salt Project is funded and will start soon. Included in this major multi-year project is over a mile-long extension of Stevens Creek Trail northward into the Bay, with an observation deck at the end.

Los Altos

Los Altos is working to better its city bike lanes and has been supportive of the trail extensions in Sunnyvale. Los Altos has also actively supported the Stevens Creek Deep Cliff fish passage project by contributing \$5,000 towards it. We consider that improving their own bike lanes is a kindred spirit to Stevens Creek Trail.

SF Bay Area

The Friends of Stevens Creek Trail may be a small organization, but it is very well connected and has had significant regional impact. Two of the top projects for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District are extending two different sections of the Stevens Creek Trail. We are also key partners within the Bay Area Trail Collaborative (BATC) and the Stevens Creek Trail is one of BATC's top 12 priority projects within the 2,700-mile (!) trail network this group is working on around the entire San Francisco Bay. You can read more about BATC at www.railstotrails.org/our-work/trailnation/bay-area-trails-collaborative/.



OuterSpatial



Online Maps

For years we have longed for good maps to guide our friends in their enjoyment of existing Stevens Creek Trail sections and to learn about where the future trail may be built. The city of Mountain View

has an excellent online map, but it covers only a portion of our whole mission. We tried to create a larger project back in the late '90s with the same map maker, but he retired before completion and the work languished.

Since 2011, the Friends has been funding the large VTA Bikeways print map, which includes a good inset of the whole of Stevens Creek Trail from Bay to Skyline. However, we wanted something broader, more detailed, and smartphone accessible. In 2017, we began working with OuterSpatial, a company that does online mapping for several neighboring trail organizations, including the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and Bay Area Ridge Trail. In 2018, that work produced a new online interactive map for us as well as a mobile app users can download that highlights Stevens Creek Trail in multiple segments that are complete and open between the SF Bay up to Skyline. We invite you to check it out at www.fosct.org/map.html and let us know how you like it!



Grassroots Ecology and Us

After eight productive and well-attended sessions last season, the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail will continue its collaboration with Grassroots Ecology, sponsoring habitat restoration events along Stevens Creek at McClellan Ranch Preserve the first Saturday of every month through April 2019. This is a wonderful opportunity for volunteers to do real hands-on work improving the habitat. If you would like to sign up for an event go to www.grassrootsecology.org.



Coyote spotted during a Grassroots Ecology habitat restoration event at McClellan Ranch. Photo submitted by Jeremy Merckling.



Volunteer of the Year

Rhonda Farrar

Rhonda Farrar, while serving as a Mountain View planning commissioner in 1992, learned of the county's 1960's vision of a trail along Stevens Creek. She then founded the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail late in 1992 to make the vision of a bay to ridge trail along Stevens Creek a reality. With her tremendous effort and leadership we were incorporated as a 501(c)(3) corporation in March of 1993, the fastest incorporation in California history. As president, Rhonda formed and led a focused advocacy group of key people to raise awareness and support for the development of the creek trail. The Friends gained the support of all four cities along the creek, Santa Clara County, the Water District, and many environmental groups.

During her tenure as president, significant progress was made in turning the dream of a trail into a reality. Rhonda moved out of the area in 2002 but has continued to be an avid supporter. We were honored to have her join us and speak at our 25th

Anniversary and are proud to continue the great organization she started. It only seems fitting that in our 25th year we honor the woman who got it all started. Many thanks!



Fish Passage Project

Stevens Creek was once a thriving habitat for steelhead trout, migratory fish that live in the ocean as adults, but spawn and spend their early life way upstream in freshwater creeks. Unfortunately, besides a major reservoir dam, road crossings and many other concrete structures now make it nearly impossible for any fish to get to the upstream areas of the creek suitable for spawning and rearing their young. In 2016, along with three local cities, the Open Space District, and the water district, we coordinated a successful study to analyze and find solutions to eight important Stevens Creek fish-passage barriers.

Follow-up work on many of these barriers was then seriously considered, but not on a major barrier to juvenile fish in Cupertino's Deep Cliff Golf Course. In early 2018, we decided to take the lead on that project ourselves. With financial support from Mountain View, Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Los Altos, the Open Space District, Santa Clara County, and the Golf Course, we were able to secure a \$120,000 Water District grant to address that barrier. Preparations and permit approval will take place in 2019, with construction planned in summer of 2020.

The Deep Cliff Fish Passage Project is the largest project the FOSCT has ever participated in, and we are very proud to be the lead agency in bringing it together. Helping restore the annual steelhead trout migration is an important and worthy goal, and one that we thank our supporters for making possible.



The Friends' study looked at six specific fish passage barriers to come up with improvements like this one at Central Avenue.



Before you recycle,
perhaps you have a friend who
would like to read about the
Friends of Stevens Creek Trail.
Please pass it on!

Many Thanks to Our Generous Donors

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Sunday, September 29th

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Mission: *The Friends of Stevens Creek Trail promotes community involvement and pride in the completion, enhancement and enjoyment of trails and wildlife corridors in the Stevens Creek watershed.*

Vision: *Welcoming trails and healthy wildlife corridors that connect people from the bay to the mountains in the Stevens Creek watershed.*

The Leadership Team



From left to right: Alan Ross, John Brazil, Ross Heitkamp, Aaron Grossman, Tim Oey, Chris Mendible, Steve Garrity, Andrea Stawitcke, Scott Trappe, Anne Ng

Not Pictured: Greg Unangst, Garth Williams

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