



Friends of Stevens Creek Trail

2022 Annual Report

Message from the President

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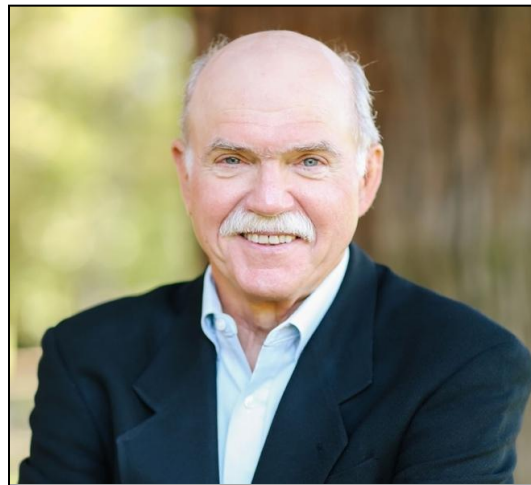
Executive Director

Rajiv Mathur

Advisory Board

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Art Takahara
Roy Verley

This year marked our 30th anniversary and was among our most consequential years since the founding of the Friends in 1992! We completed two multi-year initiatives, removing a barrier to fish passage along the creek and getting agreement from all jurisdictions for common signage along the entire length of the trail and actually installing this signage along several sections of the trail.



These initiatives are especially noteworthy because the Friends were the prime drivers behind both projects. In both cases, we worked closely with local cities and other local, state, and federal agencies to get their support and approval for these projects and then acted as the project manager to get them done.



As we resumed many of our in-person events this year, we are proud to say that the 28th Trailblazer Race was one of the stand out successes with over 450 participants between runners, walkers, and volunteers. We have already started to plan 2023 activities like our multiple Trail Clean Up events and the next Trailblazer Race.

Our advocacy for enhancement and extension of the trail has yielded results with both local governments and private landowners making strides in Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Cupertino. We do not design, build or fund these trails—the cities and other government agencies do. Our role is to educate and foster support in the community for these projects, provide feedback to the agencies on citizen issues and nurture communication with and between all the stakeholders to try to make these projects happen faster. The addition of multiple miles of new trail is within sight and we are highly encouraged by these developments, which is also supported by Federal funding.

We are fortunate to have twelve highly committed Board Members, all volunteers, who bring individual skills and passions to the table. Thanks to them, we continued to make progress on several of our key objectives, which you can read about in this report. They take leadership roles on trail development, signage, communications, the website, the Trailblazer Race, cleanups, fundraising, habitat enhancement, and database maintenance. The Board is what allows us to function like a well-staffed organization even with a bare bones structure. Although minimal, staff salaries are also our largest expense but well worth it. Our lone employee, Executive Director Rajiv Mathur, is instrumental in all we do. He is involved in nearly all of our projects and endeavors making sure there are no loose ends or missed details. He ensures the bills are paid, forms are completed, donations are acknowledged and deposited, and many other necessary details that are mostly invisible to the Board members. In 2022, we were able to keep working on our major projects by cutting all non-essential spending and expanding our outreach to keep our donors engaged.

We thank Steve Garrity for his six years of service as the Vice President on the Board and his willingness to step up a couple times as the interim President. We are grateful to Steve for his meticulous planning and his persistence at the helm of the signage project. On Trailblazer Race day he could be seen managing the registration desk. Scott Walker was elected to the FoSCT Board this year and has also been elected to the position of Vice President for 2023.

I am grateful for the support, both in time and money, of our members and Corporate sponsors that have made it possible to continue to promote these trails and advocate for their enhancement. I am looking forward to seeing many of you on the trails in 2023.

- Greg Unangst, Board President

Trail Development

Trail extensions to close the gaps are central to the mission of the Friends. There's significant progress to report.

Trail Extensions in Cupertino

As Stevens Creek winds through Cupertino, it passes through a chain of parks, recreation areas, and open space preserves where members of the public can enjoy the creek. However, there are gaps in the trail that prevent safe and convenient travel between these spaces and through the city. Connecting these segments to create a continuous trail is a central mission of the Friends.



This past summer, Friends of Stevens Creek Trail Board member Richard Lowenthal purchased a small property that lies along the creek from Varian Park to Stevens Creek Boulevard. Several volunteers from the Friends, along with over 30 volunteers from HP, Inc., cleared vegetation, removed fencing, and removed other obstacles to create an open pathway for trail users. A path was cleared to connect Varian Park directly to Stevens Creek Boulevard—across the street from Blackberry Farm and the existing section of Stevens Creek Trail.

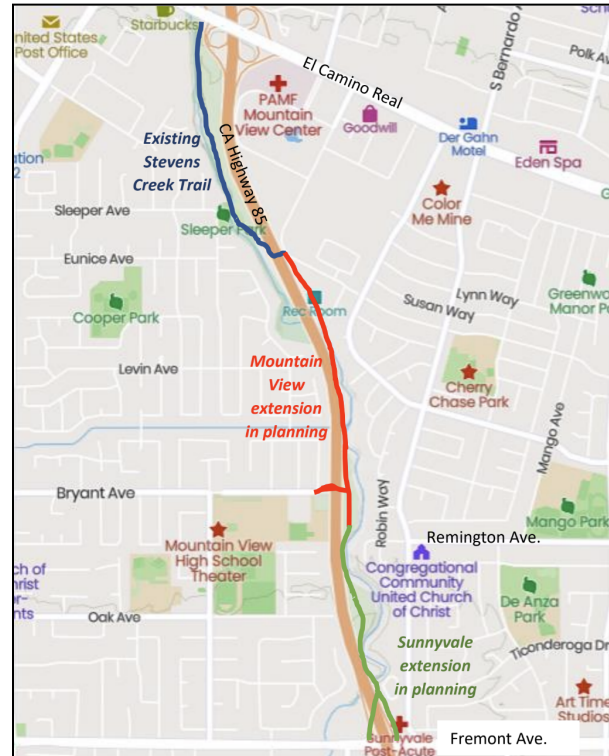
In addition, a study group is exploring how to extend the trail further south from Linda Vista Park to Stevens Creek County Park. The all-volunteer group includes former Cupertino City Council members, former Cupertino Parks and Recreation Commission members, and representatives of Walk-Bike Cupertino and of the Friends of

Stevens Creek Trail. That connection would provide Cupertino residents direct access to the County Park and Fremont Older Preserve, part of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, without having to use the heavily traveled Stevens Canyon Road.

Trail Extensions in Mountain View and Sunnyvale

Sunnyvale and Mountain View are coordinating plans to extend the trail to connect Fremont Blvd in Sunnyvale to Dale/Heatherstone Ave in Mountain View. See map alongside with the blue section indicating the existing trail, red to be built by Mountain View, and green to be built by Sunnyvale. This new trail segment would connect several schools and provide a bike- and pedestrian-friendly route for families in the area.

Both cities are starting the design phase. Sunnyvale has retained a contractor to conduct environmental and detailed design work for extending the trail from Remington to Fremont Ave. They have started a series of public meetings to collect community input. Mountain View is right behind and will be issuing requests for proposals for extending the trail from Dale/Heatherstone to Remington. The FoSCT is actively engaged with the cities and other agencies, and will continue to publicize public meetings on these developments. We have participated in public comment forums and provided feedback to the cities and design consultants on our preference for the safest and most accessible options for this extension where there are multiple options for the trail's termination and/or passage to the south past Fremont Ave.



Signage - Medallions installed in Monte Bello Preserve, Stevens Creek County Park and Mountain View

New Stevens Creek Trail medallions can now be found on trails in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, Stevens Creek County Park, and Mountain View. The medallion was developed in collaboration with a working group of public agencies through which the regional trail runs (Cities of Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, and Los Altos, Santa Clara County Parks and Midpeninsula Open Space District) and other regional trail partners (Bay Area Ridge Trail and San Francisco Bay Trail). All installations in Mountain View and Stevens Creek Park in Cupertino were done by Ross Heitkamp, our Board Member. Kudos Ross!

We are working to support installations in Cupertino in 2023. Sunnyvale has committed to include the medallions in their trail design project starting in 2023. Midpen and SCCP plan projects in 2024 to join trail sections in the upper Stevens Creek watershed that will also include SCT medallions.



Monte Bello White Oak Trail



Stevens Creek/Tony Look Trail

Other Trail Improvements

In spite of lingering pandemic complications, local governments continued to make progress on trail development in both visible and less visible ways. Mountain View improved the Crittenden Lane access point to comply with ADA requirements, while Google improved the Moffett Field side to provide access to their new Bayview Campus. Mountain View also expects to start the new Colony Street entrance to Permanente Creek Trail and to finish the project before the end of 2023.

Wildlife Corridor

Fish Passage Project

The most ambitious and expensive project in our history was removing a barrier to fish passage in the creek. In 2016, after gaining financial support from local governments and agencies we applied for a grant to discover and document all the barriers to fish passage along the creek. The study identified nine barriers. In 2018, the Friends chose one barrier as a project and hired Stillwater Sciences, a noted watershed consulting firm, to design a remediation project to

eliminate this barrier. The barrier was removed and the project was completed in October of 2022.

Steelhead, a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, and other fish species will now find it easier to pass through the section of Stevens Creek that runs by the Deep Cliff Golf Course in Cupertino. Contractors working for the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail have completed the removal of the concrete slab spanning the creek. Vegetation was planted to stabilize the banks of the creek at the worksite.

Driving this project from inception to completion took six years; the last 3 years were particularly challenging as we navigated the maze of confusing regulations and government agencies whose approval was needed to execute the project. We appreciate that the agencies tried to help a small organization like ours pass the many barriers. The project was made possible by generous financial contributions from numerous private and public entities: Santa Clara Valley Water District, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Cities of Mountain View, Cupertino, Sunnyvale and Los Altos, Santa Clara County, Deep Cliff Golf Course, Bonneville Environmental Foundation, Google, Inc., Guadalupe Coyote Resources Conservation District, and Los Altos Community Foundation.



Special thanks to Mark Hylkema, Adjunct Professor at Foothill College who conducted a Historic Properties Survey Report for us; our technical consultant, Richard McMurtry, board member at the Santa Clara County Creeks Coalition and former Water Resources Control Engineer; and Rob Thoms of Stillwater Sciences who went above and beyond to help us navigate the regulatory approval process *and* find additional grants to complete the project. This has been an outstanding group effort!

Trailblazer Race

This September the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail celebrated the 28th running of the Trailblazer Race with 350 enthusiastic runners and walkers and over 120 volunteers. The 2022 Trailblazer was a gratifying success! The Friends, Microsoft, and the City of Mountain View had to relearn some forgotten skills and processes to restart the annual race in person. The 10K and 5K runs and a 3-mile walk started and finished our in-person event on the grounds of Microsoft's new Silicon Valley Campus.

This year's event attracted participants of all ages, from near and far. The youngest participant was 3 years old, and several were over 80 years old. Many runners and walkers were likely already familiar with the Stevens Creek Trail, as the cities of Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Los Altos were well represented. The popular event drew from across the wider Bay Area, and a few runners came from as far away as Massachusetts, Georgia, Texas, and Nevada.



Board members and other volunteers arranged logistical details and solicited sponsorships throughout the summer. The weekend of the race, nearly a hundred members of the community gave generously of their time to direct traffic, register participants, hand out cups of water, wave flags, and clean up after the event.

Events & Volunteer Engagement

Trail Cleanups

In June, the Friends worked with the City of Mountain View Parks and Open Space team to host a weed pulling event to remove Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*), one of the nuisance species found in many natural spaces in the Bay Area. The group worked on Reach 0 nearest to the Bay. We anticipate hosting a similar event on the trail in late Spring 2023.

The Friends of Stevens Creek Trail organizes both public and private trail cleanups of the trail and creek bed. For many years, the Friends has coordinated with the City of Mountain View and Valley Water for two annual public creek cleanups. These are synchronized with the National River Cleanup Day initiative in May, and California Coastal Cleanup Day in September.



Participation in Community Events

After the easing of the pandemic, the Friends have resumed its in-person participation at cultural events in the communities that the Stevens Creek flows through. These include annual appearances in Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Cupertino Art & Wine festivals. Through these activities, Friends is able to promote use of the Stevens Creek Trail, registration for the Trailblazer Race, and general community involvement. We anticipate the same participation level in 2023.

In 2022 we hosted two 'energizer stations' along the trail on Bike to Work Day in May and look forward to an even larger turnout next year.

Visitors to our booth on Watershed Day in Cupertino showed a lot of interest in barriers to fish passage and the work we were doing to remove one. We also helped Midpen celebrate their 50th anniversary. The event in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve coincided with a public introduction to the new Stevens Creek Trail medallions just installed in the park in June. Our newly produced "Friend" buttons and stickers were unveiled.

Company Events - Team Building

The Friends coordinate with companies and civic organizations for "private" trail cleanup activities. These are excellent team building activities that help the sponsor, the creek and the community. In 2022, there were 6 such cleanup mornings provided by groups as varied as Fortune 500 companies, an EV startup company, neighbors who met through NextDoor, and a teen religious group.

We plan on a similar number of trail cleanups during 2023. It is heartening that many of these activities are initiated by the organizations, not the Friends. We are very happy to publicize, facilitate and coordinate the activities.

New Committees

At the beginning of 2022 the Board identified the need for two new committees to contribute to the Friends' goals of sustaining our operations and improving outreach to our community.

The Communications and Fundraising Committees were chartered and assembled this year and both have already generated results. With a team of six volunteers, we were able to increase the frequency of Newsletters and Social Media outreach through the Communication Committee.



Financial Performance

Fundraising was one of the challenges we identified last year due to our limited ability to engage personally in community events and outreach. We held our costs down and reduced them overall. That coupled with the generosity of our sponsors, donors and supporters has made 2023 a successful fiscal year for us.

Our Annual Appeal, which went out in November 2022 to individual donors, has already exceeded the collections for the previous year. Similarly, our sponsors not only renewed their contributions, some exceeded what they gave us the previous year.

In addition, we received a very generous gift of \$25,000 from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. FoSCT is one of a few local nonprofit organizations engaged in 'outdoor activities and education' chosen to receive this one-time contribution from the Moore Foundation's Community Fund.

Plans for 2023

Trail Development

The medallion signage project will continue in 2023 with completion of installations in Mountain View, planning installations for the McClellan Ranch/Linda Vista segments in Cupertino, and supporting trail developments in the new Measure B segments for Sunnyvale and Mountain View and the Midpen/SCCP SCT projects in the upper Stevens Creek watershed as needed.

We have teamed with Bike Sunnyvale and Walk Bike Cupertino in advising the city of Sunnyvale on proper routing of the proposed new trail segment in Sunnyvale. This includes participation in community outreach meetings and at city council meetings, and discussions with the Dept. of Public Works staff. The city of Sunnyvale is expected to begin detailed design on the new segment following City Council approval in spring, 2023.

In Cupertino we will continue to develop the newly-cleared section of the trail from Blackberry Farm to Varian park. While it is currently accessible, there are improvements to be completed. In addition, we are working with three landowners and Midpen Regional Open Space District to obtain the entitlements necessary to build a trail from Linda Vista Park to Stevens Creek County Park. We have drafted two of the three necessary easements and hope to get them signed by midyear 2023. Finally, we are working with the City of Cupertino for a bridge underpass from the Linda Vista Trail to McClellan Ranch for improved bike and pedestrian safety. When these segments are done, the Stevens Creek Trail in Cupertino will be continuous from Stevens Creek Elementary all the way past the Stevens Creek Reservoir.



Wildlife Corridor

With the construction of the Fish Passage Project complete, we enter the post-project monitoring phase. During 2023, our consultants will conduct the first annual monitoring of the project. This monitoring will demonstrate the stability of the project area streambed and the large woody features installed for deep pool creation and also measure the deep pools expected to be created by these features. This is the first of five years of annual monitoring required by our permit with the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Events

We look to build on the success of this year's Trailblazer Race. While 2022 registration was approximately half of our pre-pandemic peak participation, we strive to build back year-by-year with improved outreach and have a goal of at least 500 runners and walkers in 2023.

At present, there are three planned public trail cleanups in 2023: on April 22nd, on May 20th, and September 16th. With the heavy rains this winter, there has been a significant pileup of dead tree limbs and trash in the creekbed. We have already partnered with Google's GBike team and completed a cleanup in February 2023 that yielded over 260lbs of garbage removed from the creek & trail north of US101. There are already multiple requests for private trail cleanups in 2023. We expect 5-10 such activities during the year.

We are reviewing the year's event calendar and plan our usual participation in local Arts & Wine Festivals as well as other tabling events associated with community organizations.

Board

In the next year, we seek to add two to three members to our Board of Directors to better balance our workload and have an even greater impact in our community. A great way for a prospective Board member to see whether Board membership is a good fit for them is to find a volunteer project with Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, and we also welcome guests to our Board meetings to provide greater insight into our operations.

Our all-volunteer Board members bring a diversity of backgrounds, interests and profiles to the organization. They give their time in several ways - trail development, signage, outreach through communications, website and social media, engagement with cities and jurisdictions, strategy direction and planning, events, use of technology and fundraising. They love the trail and are a mix of avid bikers, walkers and runners.



How You Can Help

Do these projects matter to you, or do you have something you wanted added to our list? If so, get involved! We are a community organization, and our work is done primarily by concerned citizens like you! Reach out to us through any of the means listed below.

Donate

We welcome contributions by check, credit card or through PayPal. We also accept stock donations. For any inquiries or additional information, please send an email to Rajiv Mathur, our Executive Director at exec-dir@stevenscreektrail.org.

Our grateful thanks to our donors. Many of them went the extra mile to secure matching contributions from their employers. We will not share names without specific prior consent. We are, however, very appreciative!

Volunteer

Those who are passionate about the trails or the wildlife corridors and would like to volunteer please contact us at volunteer@stevenscreektrail.org.

Sponsor

Sponsorships have been an integral part of the fundraising efforts at Friends of Stevens Creek Trail. Here's more information on sponsorship opportunities.

Social Media

Please visit and subscribe to our social media pages for more information about FoSCT and interesting content for trail enthusiasts of all types:



facebook.com/stevenscreektrail



twitter.com/fosct



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We encourage your feedback on social media. If you have content suggestions or information you would like us to share, please email comms@stevenscreektrail.org.



We thank our 2022 sponsors! Please help us thank them with your support.



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