



SONOMA
ECOLOGY
CENTER

IMPACT REPORT 2022

Sonoma Ecology Center works to address challenges related to open space, rural character, biodiversity, energy, and climate change, and strives for a better quality of life for all residents.

Since 1990, we've worked to increase people's appreciation and stewardship of Sonoma Valley's natural heritage and created measurable benefits in areas of land, water, climate change, and biodiversity.

Our mission is to work with our community to identify and lead actions that achieve and sustain ecological health in Sonoma Valley.

We envision a future where people, land, water, and wildlife thrive.

Our work is done on the traditional lands of the Wappo, Pomo and Miwok peoples, who have stewarded this land for generations.





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We embrace and practice the following values in order to achieve our mission...

Education

Sharing science-based information equips people to make the best decisions for themselves and the earth. We provide education programs for youth, teens, and adults to support an informed and empowered community.

Collaborate

Most problems have common-ground solutions that can be discovered through open discussion and innovation. We strive to work with all stakeholders—including residents, government, agriculture, academia, and business—to help solve our community's complex problems.

Respond to Change

We are an alert and agile organization, recognizing and responding to the evolving opportunities and needs of Sonoma Valley and the world beyond.

Stewardship

Every action counts. Individual participation is essential to protect and restore our natural resources. We engage community members and other organizations as partners in our work.

Ecological Foundations

We value ecosystems, and the biodiversity and human systems they support. We are inspired by the beauty of Sonoma Valley. We work to protect and restore native species and habitats of our region for future generations.

Science

Watershed management actions should be informed by science and local empirical data. We conduct environmental monitoring to inform local and regional decisions. Adaptive management improves our effectiveness over time.

Sustainability

Economic vitality rests on a foundation of social well-being, which in turn rests on a foundation of ecological health. We seek multi-benefit solutions to the environmental, social, and economic challenges facing our community.

Lead by Example

We learn from others, and create and share models, techniques, and tools that others can use.

Land ...

Water ...

Climate ...

Biodiversity ...

Community ...



p. 8 **Increasing access for people and wildlife.**

Feature: Fence removal at Sonoma Developmental Center



p. 10 **Monitoring our watershed to inform decisions.**

Feature: The Return of Chinook to Sonoma Creek



p. 12 **Preparing for climate impacts and sequestering carbon.**

Feature: Biochar



p. 14 **Tracking wildlife.**
Feature: Biodiversity at Sonoma Developmental Center.



p. 16 **Engaging our whole community.**
Feature: Senderos Naturales.

“In this era of change, there’s never been a more important time for Sonoma Ecology Center, with our 32 years of experience helping our community take care of its ecological foundations.”

— Richard Dale, Executive Director

From the Executive Director

This is a time of profound change in our world, and more than ever it seems that places like Sonoma Valley, and organizations like Sonoma Ecology Center, find ourselves, like it or not, in the midst of these often-unsettling changes.

In this era of change, there's never been a more important time for Sonoma Ecology Center, with our 32 years of experience helping our community take care of its ecological foundations.

Here are some of the actions we are taking, as our team of scientists, land managers, restorationists, and educators do their work every day.

We're in the schools, adapting to the pandemic and to institutional changes that have left thousands of students, educators, and families with high levels of stress, always finding new ways to provide quality environmental science education for students of all ages.

We're connecting people to nature, in the parks, gardens, and preserves we manage, on outings, as volunteers, and virtually in our communications, knowing that

these connections are the foundation for healthy bodies, resilient communities, and a healthy world.

We're watching the natural world, monitoring our waterways and biodiversity, looking at trends, and bringing better data and analysis to our work and our communities so we can make more informed choices.

We're out on the land, creating model projects that restore degraded places, and helping homeowners and land managers improve landscapes to reduce fire risk and enhance biodiversity, reduce erosion, and increase groundwater recharge.

We're also helping land managers and farmers discover new ways to turn waste into biochar, a regenerative, beneficial soil amendment that sequesters carbon and helps us move toward being a carbon neutral community.

We're deeply engaged with the former Sonoma Developmental Center campus and its surrounding lands, ensuring that new plans and new development there will support nature, our community, and our collective future.



And we continue to lead our community in cross-sector collaboration, a healthy counterpoint to the divisions of these times, bringing multiple interests together to find and act on common ground issues that will help our community toward a more sustainable future.

And most importantly, we work with you. Our amazing board, staff, and volunteers count on thousands of actions by people whose lives touch our Valley and region, to help make it the special place on earth that it is. We couldn't do our important work without you.

Thank you for being part of the change that makes a difference.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Dale'.

Richard Dale,
Executive Director

Land Impacts

"Sonoma Ecology Center scaled up operations at Sugarloaf Ridge State Park and Sonoma Garden Park, both in how we steward the natural environment and in welcoming underrepresented groups through Senderos Naturales and our new limited-mobility hiking program."

— John Roney, Sugarloaf Ridge State Park Manager

10,327 volunteer hours
& Glass Fire recovery
completed at Sugarloaf
Ridge State Park.

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, we finished most of the fire repairs needed after the 2020 Glass Fire on the 75% of the park that burned, and reopened the McCormick Addition and Goodspeed Trail.

165,000 people visited
Sugarloaf Ridge State Park.

2021 was one of Sugarloaf Ridge State Park's busiest years ever, with over 165,000 visitors and more campers than ever before, including 41 first-time campers in our Senderos Naturales program.

Increased ADA access trails,
campsites and events at
Sugarloaf Ridge State Park.

We launched a limited mobility hiking program and promoted access to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park for people of many different physical abilities.

195 guided & educational
hikes throughout
Sonoma Valley.

In 2021, we led 195 guided hikes throughout Sonoma Valley, including 75 forest therapy hikes, 42 hikes for fitness, and 67 yoga hikes at Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, 5 wildflower walks at Van Hoosear Wildflower Preserve, 4 outings at Sonoma Garden Park, and 2 outings at Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve.

20% more volunteers
at Sonoma Garden Park.

Thanks to a 20% increase in volunteer hours since 2020, Sonoma Garden Park's 6.1 acres thrived, bringing people, food, and nature together to enhance our beloved public educational garden.



Feature: Fence Removal at SDC

Wildlife corridors are a way for animals to move through areas where habitat fragmentation occurs because of development. Sonoma Ecology Center has worked to preserve, protect and improve the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor since we originally identified and championed this critical natural resource component of the Sonoma Valley landscape back in the 1990's.

Led by Senior Scientist and Research Program Manager, Steven Lee, the Sonoma Ecology Center Restoration crew embarked on a project to remove fencing identified as an impediment within the wildlife corridor. In partnership with the State Coastal Conservancy, it was determined that the majority of fencing on the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) property was unnecessary and fit for removal. We identified several hundred yards of old fencing that crossed the section of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor along Sonoma Creek and flagged it for removal. Our crew hand-cut vines, branches, and logs from fence wires, pulled wires from posts, and carried the wire out of the delicate riparian zone for disposal.

With the fences successfully eliminated, wildlife can now move easily and more safely between Jack London State Historic Park and Sonoma Mountain on the west and the Mayacamas Mountains on the east, and to life-saving water sources like springs and creeks on the SDC property.

Water Impacts

"All of the work we do at Sonoma Ecology Center allows us to better understand water and other resource limitations in Sonoma Valley to inform management actions that will allow species living here, including humans, to better thrive in the future."

— Steven Lee, Research Program Manager

Data collected
from 80+ water
monitoring stations.

Our Research team completed its sixth consecutive year of intensive streamflow and water quality monitoring, and its second consecutive year of dry-season temperature monitoring, at 80+ monitoring locations around the Sonoma Creek watershed.

180 volunteer hours at
5 community
creek clean up days.

We created 5 community creek cleanup days that removed hundreds of pounds of trash and debris from creeks at Nathanson Creek Preserve, Ig Vella Bridge, Larson Park and Verano Bridge.

2 pathogen hot spots &
sources identified.

Capping a 4 year study of bacteria levels in Sonoma Valley creeks, our researchers pinpointed two pathogen hot spots in Sonoma and Nathanson Creeks and their likely sources, which turn out to be related both to people and wildlife.

Completed
riparian modeling
study of Sonoma Creek.

Our science and GIS expertise are helping Sonoma County use its policies to better protect riparian areas from development and degradation. We worked with the County to create a computer model to map the extent of riparian habitats alongside streams, so it's more clear where County policies apply.

Secured over
\$1.5M to improve
Sonoma Creek.

With this funding, we are on our way to implement the Upper Sonoma Creek Restoration Vision. Sixteen creek restoration projects in upper Sonoma Creek, in various phases of planning and active restoration, are in the pipeline, to improve water flow, water quality, food and shelter for salmon, steelhead, beaver, and other at-risk species.



Feature:

The Return of Chinook to Sonoma Creek

The abundant rainfall that Sonoma County received in late October 2021 created ideal conditions for Chinook (King salmon) to return to Sonoma Creek. Our Executive Director Richard Dale and Research Program Manager and aquatic scientist Steven Lee documented the salmon as they made their journey upstream and began settling into their spawning habitats.

Much of the research Sonoma Ecology Center conducts is focused on streamflow and aims to ensure there is adequate water for fish, such as Chinook, year-round in our watershed. Healthy streamflow helps support healthy salmonids and creates a more hospitable environment where they reproduce and rear successfully and hopefully see their population sizes increase.

After the drought year that we still find ourselves in, it was a sign of hope to see these fish return. However, water must remain in our creeks to continue to support these impressive salmonids, an issue we tackle by helping local residents find alternatives to pumping water from Sonoma Creek and its tributaries in the drier summer months.

Climate Impacts

“Concerns about wildfire risk have caused some homeowners to remove most or all of the vegetation around their homes, but science shows that landscapes can have well chosen and placed plants that, if properly maintained, create effective defensible space while also providing food”

— Jon Kangy, Design and Implementation Project Manager

7 defensible space workshops reaching 300 landowners.

Our Resilient Landscapes program, as a partner in the Resilient Landscapes Coalition co-produced 7 defensible space workshops, including 1 in Spanish, reaching more than 300 homeowners and landscape professionals.

Created 6 fire-safe, water-wise, wildlife friendly landscape designs.

Sonoma Ecology Center’s landscape designer Jon Kanagy produced 6 landscape designs for homeowners that featured defensible space and sustainability elements, such as the use of California native plants to provide habitat and water conservation.

300 people educated in biochar field demonstrations & webinars.

Our Biochar Program continued its statewide leadership in 2021, demonstrating effective wildfire risk reduction and soil health improvement. We trained over 200 people via webinars and 100 people in field demonstrations on how to turn woody waste from forests and farms into carbon-sequestering, soil-restoring biochar.

12 acres of invasive shrubs removed from burned land.

Our Restoration Program removed 12 acres of invasive shrubs that had infested burned areas on private and public lands. Getting rid of brooms and similar invaders lowers fire risk, increases water in streams, and lets native plant and animal biodiversity bloom.



Feature:

Biochar

Biochar is truly a substance whose time has come. This form of charcoal is easy to produce, and it can responsibly remove woody waste from thinned forests and farm fields, sequester carbon in the soil long term, reduce air pollution, reduce agricultural irrigation requirements, and remove impurities from water and soil. Sonoma Ecology Center is proud to be a leader in testing, teaching, and promoting biochar, led by staffer Raymond Baltar and board chair David Morell.

One of our current biochar projects diverts 480 tons of wood chips from landfills and produces biochar instead. The biochar is created using pyrolysis technology from Advanced Renewable Technology International, based in Iowa. Our partner, A Plus Tree, a sustainably-managed tree care company based in Vallejo, California, provides the wood chips. They will use the biochar in their tree care activities, and also distribute it to local community and school gardens in economically challenged areas of the East Bay Area. The project will also plant 1,200 new trees, and mill larger trees into furniture that will grace public areas in the local community.

We hope this project will serve as a model for more sustainable use of urban biomass, as well as scaling up the use of biochar in landscaping.

Biodiversity Impacts

"Studying what wildlife is in Sonoma Valley, and where, is key to conserving it. We can plan restoration along Sonoma Creek because we know every inch of it, and what habitat it provides. Lions, bears, badgers, or butterflies, Sonoma Ecology Center's data makes us a valuable partner to the entire conservation community."

— Dr. Dan Levitis, Community Science Coordinator

300 native plants & trees planted along Nathanson Creek.

We planted over 200 native plants and 100 native trees along Nathanson Creek in the City of Sonoma, enhancing habitat for wildlife and reducing erosion.

46 acres of invasive species reduced with prescribed fire.

Our prescribed burns at Van Hoosear Wildflower Preserve in 2020 and 2021, totaling 46 acres, resulted in almost complete suppression of the non-native invasive grass called medusahead, leaving more room, sunlight, and water for the Preserve's remarkable diversity of native wildflowers.

1,000s of native plants propagated.

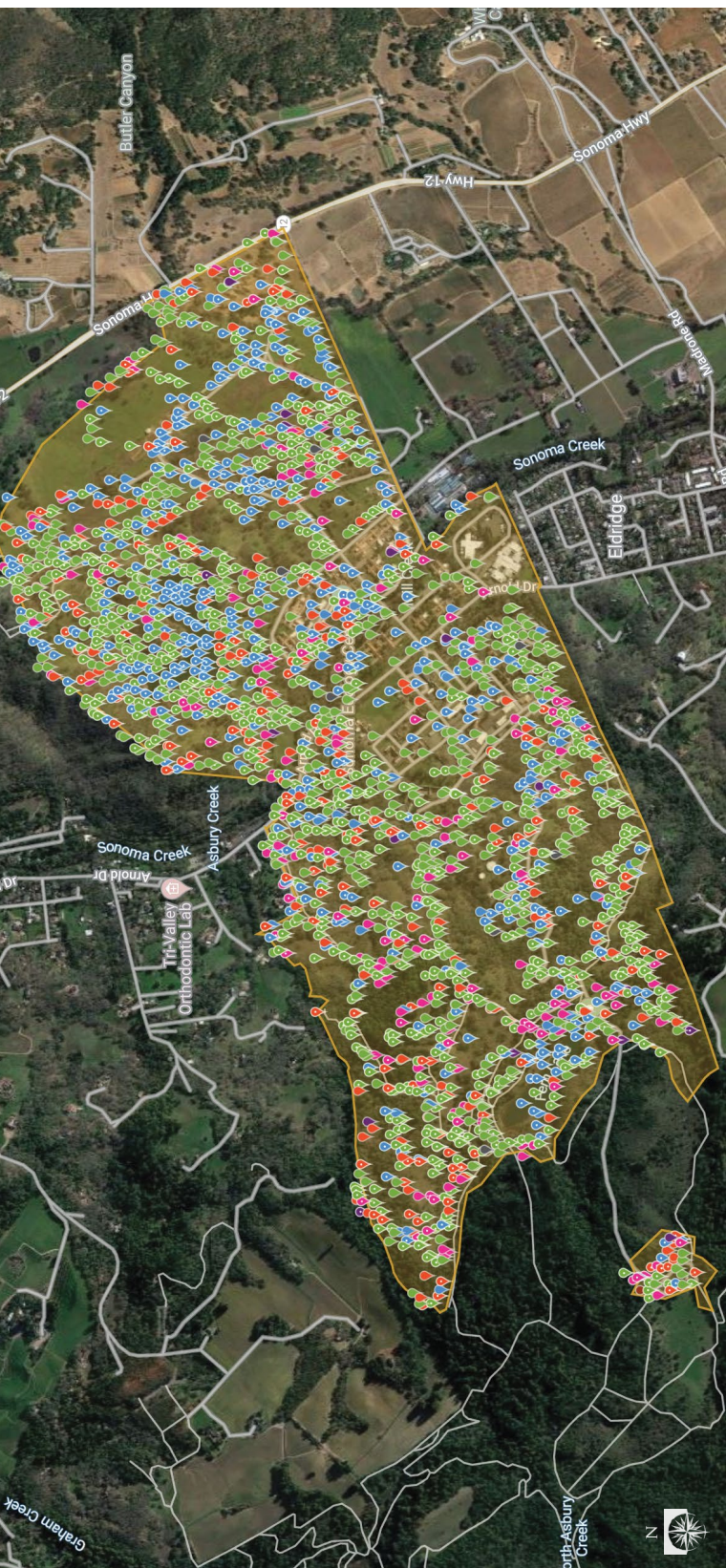
We propagated 1,000s of native plants at our Native Plant Nursery at Sonoma Garden Park. Among them were a couple dozen plants of the endangered Kenwood Marsh Checkerbloom. From these plants, we yielded and archived 1,000s of seeds that can help protect this species from extinction.

41 critter cams recorded wildlife.

Our 41 critter cams tracked and recorded wildlife movement across Sugarloaf Ridge State Park and participating adjacent private lands, growing our understanding of wildlife in Sonoma Valley and contributing 65,000 photos of animals to the Wildlife Insights website.

800 plants identified at Sugarloaf Ridge State Park.

Volunteers using the iNaturalist app doubled the number of known plants in Sugarloaf Ridge State Park from 400 to 800, vastly increasing our knowledge of the plant life in the park.



Feature: Mapping Biodiversity at SDC

The Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) property, in addition to its key role at the center of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor, is also a center of biodiversity. Because of continuous state ownership over the last century, it contains some of the least-disturbed habitat in Sonoma Valley. Since January 2019, community scientists and Sonoma Ecology Center have documented biodiversity throughout the SDC. Organized by biologist Dr. Dan Levitis, our Community Science Coordinator, community members have used a science networking app, iNaturalist, to record observations of species throughout SDC's 945 acres. The project has identified over 1,175 species of animal, insect, plant, and fungi, based on 14,805 observations.

These data reinforce the need to preserve the sensitive habitat and rare species throughout SDC. There is high biodiversity throughout the property. Several protected species live on the property that had not been previously documented. The data suggest that the under-documented wetland features on the east end of the property are significant; for example, we recorded observations of protected western pond turtles nearby. Much of the biodiversity found on the property was in riparian areas or wetlands, underscoring a need for special care to protect these sensitive, ecologically rich places.

We provided this data to Sonoma County planners so that the SDC Specific Plan can comply with CEQA and protect SDC's natural resources. We see this as our charge, as leaders in protecting and stewarding the environmental health of Sonoma Valley.

Community Impacts

“Sonoma Ecology Center has a duty to include people of color in green spaces. Community building around natural resources is ultimately what will drive change—for climate, land, water, and biodiversity.”

— Alma Shaw, Bilingual Program Director

**In-person
environmental
science education
for 1,092 students.**

Our educators navigated the challenging impacts of COVID on schools during the 2021-22 academic year to reach 1,092 students in every 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade classroom in Sonoma Valley with in-person lessons on land, water, and climate.

**18 EnviroLeaders
gained 250 hours
of environmentally
focused job training.**

18 EnviroLeader teens provided 250 paid hours of support for Sonoma Garden Park and local creek cleanup programs, gaining essential job and life skills through practical environmentally focused training through our semester-long employment program.

**163 youth attend
8 Science Camps
under 44 scholarships.**

Science Camps returned to Sonoma Garden Park and Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, providing 163 local youth the opportunity to connect and learn through hands-on science education. Thanks to donors and the Sonoma Community Foundation, 27% participated at no or reduced cost to families.

**30+ community leaders
acting together on
housing affordability.**

Sonoma Valley Collaborative, hosted at Sonoma Ecology Center, led 30+ community leaders from a wide range of sectors across Sonoma Valley to act together to make housing more affordable, based on strategies published in their expert-informed report, Homes for A Sustainable Sonoma: Strategic Recommendations for Our Community.



Feature: Senderos Naturales

In 2021, our all-Spanish hiking and workshop program, Senderos Naturales, grew significantly. We now reach people across Sonoma County, increasing access to the outdoors for Spanish speakers.

Many of the students and families who live within 15 miles of Sugarloaf Ridge State Park have never visited it. They face barriers to accessing the park, including transportation, entry cost, language, and a lack of culturally relevant outreach. Through the work of Alma Shaw, Sugarloaf Ridge State Park's Bilingual Program Director, we've seen an increase in visitation from Latino families.

A grant from Parks California helped the Senderos program provide transportation for people from underserved communities, supported our staff to create and provide Spanish-language educational and recreational events, and helped us reach one of our big goals: to have at least one event per month for Latino families. In total we had 16 events. Of these, 4 were summer campouts that welcomed 41 first-time campers.

Sonoma Ecology Center is especially proud of this program because it is the only Spanish-speaking nature-based program at a State Park in the North Bay. We hope this type of program inspires greater efforts at inclusion at other California State Parks.

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For the Year Ended December 31, 2021

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Danielle Wroblewski

Y

Michael and Lee Anne Yaeger
Haoyu Yeh
Yoga Community
Simone York
Alison Young
Robert Young
Barbara Yungert

Z

Suzanne and Abdi Zahedani
Jane Zimmerman
Sandra and Armando
 Zimmermann
Charles and Janet Zipkin
Matthew and Patricia Zwerling 22

Board of Directors

PARKER BACON
Student, Ecological Restoration,
Cal Poly Humboldt

ANNA BIMENYIMANA
Owner, Bon Marche Thrift Stores
International Nonprofit Supporter

PATRICIA FARRAR-RIVAS
Co-founder and Former CEO,
Veris Wealth Partners

MARK FLOCCO
Retired Business Owner

ELLIE INSLEY, MLA
Board Vice President, Secretary
Landscape Architect
Natural Habitat Restoration Specialist

DAVID MORELL, PhD
Board President
CFO/CEO,
Specialty Technical Consultants
Retired Adjunct Professor,
Mae Fah Luang University
Retired Senior Director,
USEPA

NANCY PADIAN, PhD
Epidemiologist,
UC Berkeley School of Public Health

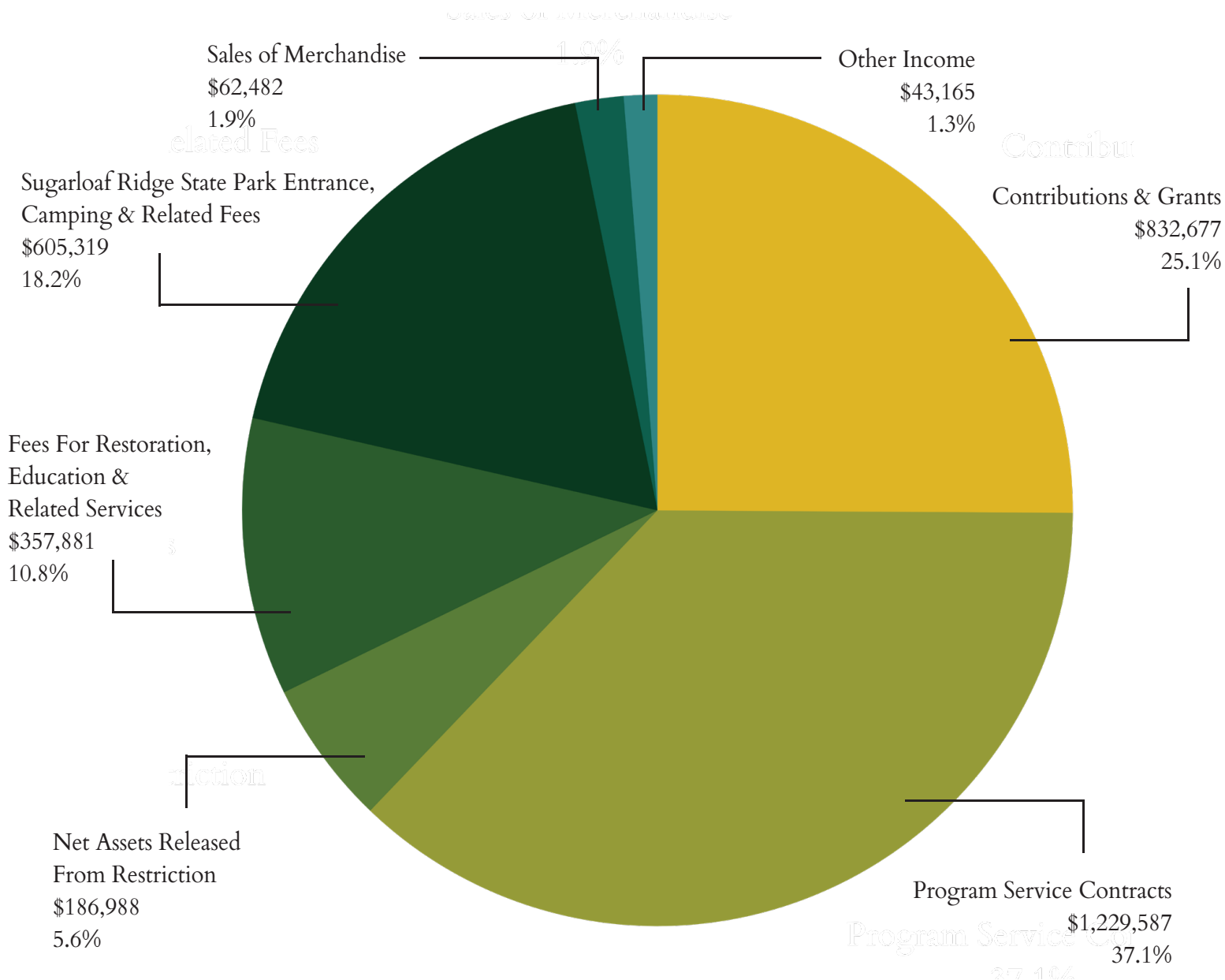
JENNIFER PALLADINI, PhD
Biology & Botany Instructor,
Santa Rosa Junior College

BRECK PARKMAN
Retired Senior State Archaeologist,
California State Parks

2021 Revenue Highlights

For the Year Ended December 31, 2021

"In 2021, we raised more money than ever before thanks to our donors and grant funders." — Tiffany Wing, Development Director



2021 Statement of Activities

For the Year Ended December 31, 2021

SUPPORT & REVENUE	Without Donor <u>Restrictions</u>	With Donor <u>Restrictions</u>	<u>Total</u>
Support			
Program service contracts	\$ 1,229,587	\$ -	\$ 1,229,587
Contributions	461,913	6,366	468,279
Grants	104,091	260,307	364,398
Net assets released from restriction	186,988	(186,988)	-
Total support	<u>1,982,579</u>	<u>79,685</u>	<u>2,062,264</u>
Revenue			
Fees for restoration, education & related services Park entrance, camping & related fees	357,881	-	357,881
Sales of merchandise	605,319	-	605,319
Cost of goods sold	113,780	-	113,780
Other income	(51,298)	-	(51,298)
Total revenue	<u>43,147</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>43,165</u>
TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE	3,051,408	79,703	3,131,111
EXPENSES			
Program services	2,189,281	-	2,189,281
Management	709,031	-	709,031
General Overhead	272,412	-	272,412
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>3,170,724</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,170,724</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(119,316)	79,703	(39,613)
NET ASSETS, Beginning of Year			
As previously stated	757,760	453,934	1,211,694
Prior period adjustment	-	(221,721)	(221,721)
As restated	<u>757,760</u>	<u>232,213</u>	<u>989,973</u>
NET ASSETS, End of Year	<u>\$ 638,444</u>	<u>\$ 311,916</u>	<u>\$ 950,360</u>

2021 Statement of Financial Position

For the Year Ended December 31, 2021

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 611,221
Accounts & contributions receivable	419,579
Inventory	<u>13,604</u>
Total current assets	1,044,404

Deposits

15,000

Property and equipment, net

103,712

TOTAL ASSETS

\$ 1,163,116

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$ 140,080
Accrued vacation pay	62,686
Deferred revenue	<u>9,990</u>

TOTAL LIABILITIES

212,756

Net Assets

Without donor restrictions	638,444
With donor restrictions	<u>311,916</u>

TOTAL NET ASSETS

950,360

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

\$ 1,163,116

Our Staff

HANNAH ACLUFI
Native Plant Nursery Manager

ROSS ADAMS
Restoration Project Manager

EVANGELINA AUSTIN
Restoration Technician
Fire Specialist

RAYMOND BALTAR
Biochar Project Manager

CELINA BRIGGS
Human Resources Manager
IT

STEVE CARARA
Sonoma Garden Park Manager

CAITLIN CORNWALL
Senior Project Manager
Sonoma Valley Collaborative
Project Director

RICHARD DALE
Executive Director

JONNY EHLERS
Education Project Manager

FRANCIS GATOS
Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, Operations
and Maintenance Lead

DESIRAE HARP
Sugarloaf Ridge State Park,
Event and Education Assistant

WENDY HAYES
Research Project Manager

DEB HENNESSY
Staff Accountant

MANUEL HERNANDEZ
Restoration Crew Leader

BARRY HILL
Restoration Program Manager

JACK HINES
GIS Specialist

KIM JONES
Development and
Communications Specialist
Sonoma Valley Collaborative
Coordinator

JON KANAGY
Design and Implementation
Project Manager

STEVEN LEE
Senior Scientist and Research
Program Manager

DAN LEVITIS
Sugarloaf Ridge State Park,
Volunteer Coordinator

MAYA LUONG
Marketing and
Communications Specialist

JULIA MEGNA
Education Project Manager

MATTIE MILLER
Staff Accountant

IVANA NEDELICHEV
Bilingual Volunteer Coordinator

TONY PASSANTINO
Education Program Manager

CALI PEARCE
Volunteer Engagement Specialist

ARSEL PEREZ
Sugarloaf Ridge State Park,
Special Events and Education

JOHN RONEY
Sugarloaf Ridge State Park,
Park Manager

ALMA SHAW
Sugarloaf Ridge State Park,
Bilingual Program Director

TOM WEBB
Restoration Technician

TIFFANY WING
Development and
Communications Director

Sonoma Ecology Center
is a 501(c)3 organization
Federal ID #94-3136500

Contact Us
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info@sonomaecologycenter.org

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