

CELEBRATING  
**30** YEARS  
1990-2020



SONOMA  
ECOLOGY  
CENTER

IT'S A WONDERFUL VALLEY



# IMPACT REPORT 2020





# SONOMA ECOLOGY CENTER CELEBRATING 30 YEARS!

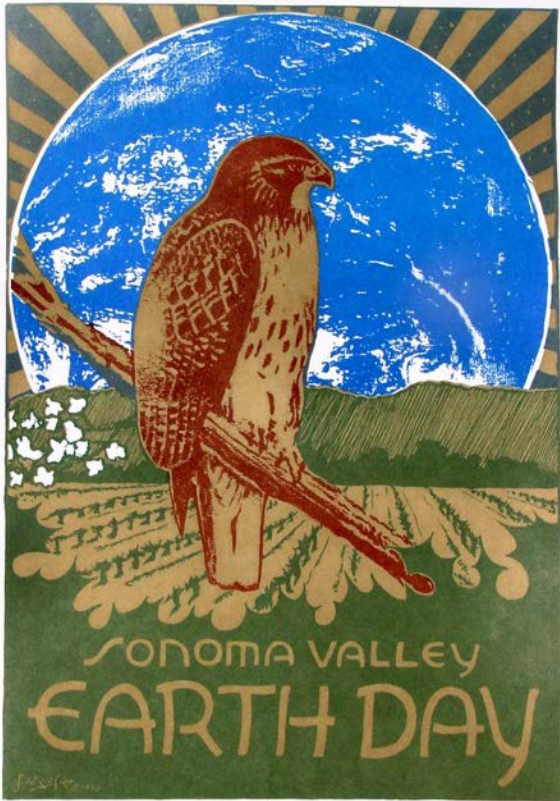
*It's a Wonderful Valley*



**Sonoma Ecology Center was founded in 1990 after that year's Earth Day celebration on the Sonoma Plaza.**

**Sonoma Valley's Earth Day drew thousands of people together around the idea that Sonoma Valley is a special place we live in and love, and it is worthy of our care. Parades, green technology demonstrations, music, films, food, dancing, and speeches marked this momentous celebration.**

**After Earth Day in 1990, we knew that something important had happened. We also saw that the real work still lay before us. Building on this momentum, Sonoma Ecology Center was founded to continue the celebration and bridge-building that Earth Day had launched, and help our community take care of this place we all love.**



Original artwork for Sonoma Valley  
Earth Day 1990 by Stanley Mouse

**Sonoma Ecology Center does its work on the traditional territories of the Wappo, Miwok, and Pomo peoples, who have stewarded this land for generations.**

**30** CELEBRATING YEARS

# Victory Garden Starter Pack

A Sonoma Ecology Center 30th birthday gift of Sunflower, Marketeer Cucumber, Moon and Star Melons or Rocky Ford Melon, Golden Wax Beans, Spinach, Carrot, Mammoth Melting Peas, Golden Scallopini Summer Squash.

**SONOMA ECOLOGY CENTER**  
IT'S A WONDERFUL VALLEY

**30** CELEBRATING YEARS

# Envoltorio para comenzar un "jardín de victoria"

Un regalo de 30 cumpleaños de parte de el Sonoma Ecology Center que contiene girasoles, pepino "Marketeer", melones "Luna y estrella" o melón "Rocky Ford", ejote amarillo, espinaca, zanahoria, frijoles "Mammoth Melting", calabaza de verano "Golden Scallopini"

**SONOMA ECOLOGY CENTER**  
IT'S A WONDERFUL VALLEY

**Sonoma Ecology Center launched its 30th anniversary year around Earth Day 2020, when much of the community was sheltering in place. We gifted 300 Victory Garden Starter Packs at a social distanced event on the Sonoma Plaza. Hundreds of people lined up in cars to receive plant starts, and planted them throughout Sonoma Valley and beyond. This was our way of thanking the community for 30 years of working together on behalf of Sonoma Valley. As we reflect on the past 30 years, we continue to help our community face new challenges and seize new opportunities.**





## As SEC Celebrates Its 30th Year, the World is at a Crossroads

By Richard Dale,  
Executive Director

Remember 1990? Sonoma Valley was a very different place. There was yet to be a Nathanson Creek Preserve, a Sonoma Garden Park, a Van Hoosear Wildflower Preserve, or a Sonoma Overlook Trail for the public to enjoy. Streams and groundwater were mostly ignored, environmental science education and field trips for all Sonoma Valley students was only a dream, and the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor was not yet envisioned. We loved our Valley, but we didn't understand how it worked or how to take care of it.

That year was pivotal for Sonoma Valley. The 1990 Earth Day celebration in the Plaza was revelatory—part of a historic, worldwide shift in perspective. Among other things, the movement gave rise to Sonoma Ecology Center, and we've been building on that momentum ever since.

Thirty years later, we find ourselves experiencing another historic, worldwide shift in perspective, and it is no less revelatory. Racial injustice is intersecting with the health and economic disparities laid bare by the coronavirus pandemic. Wildfire is threatening communities throughout California, including our own.

In response, as we celebrate our 30th year and pursue our mission through education, research, preservation, restoration, and partnership building, we are spending 2020 doing two other crucial things: listening and learning as a new era of social justice unfolds, and, helping our community cope with the pandemic.

Today, we are stewards of Sonoma Valley's hillside backdrop, streams, wildlife habitats, environmental education, and public access to open spaces. At the same time, we continue to innovate partnerships that can address persistent challenges like housing affordability and the deep inequities that exist in Sonoma Valley's communities.

In 2020, 30 years later, we find ourselves at another crossroads—a time of learning, and of acting. This is a time for us all to learn how to live with appropriate respect, both for people who are different from ourselves and for the planet we live on. Join us at this important moment in history, working to shape a Sonoma Valley our community will continue to love into the future.

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


Richard Dale, Executive Director

**“Thirty years later, we find ourselves experiencing another historic, worldwide shift in perspective, and it is no less revelatory. Racial injustice is intersecting with the health and economic disparities laid bare by the coronavirus pandemic. Wildfire is threatening communities throughout California, including our own.”**

—Richard Dale, Executive Director



# Beautiful. Sustainable. Sonoma.



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 appreciation and stewardship of Sonoma Valley's natural heritage and create measurable benefits in areas of land, water, climate change, and biodiversity.

## MISSION

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

## VALUES

### **Biodiversity**

We value natural ecosystems and the diverse animals and plants they support.

### **Sustainability**

We seek multi-benefit solutions to the environmental, social, and economic challenges facing our community.

### **Evidence-Based Action**

We monitor our work and the environment to continually improve our programs and inform local and regional decisions.

### **Education**

We have education programs for youth, teens, and adults to support an informed and empowered community.

## VISION

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

### **Stewardship**

We engage community members as partners in our work.

### **Collaborative Problem Solving**

We strive to work with all stakeholders—including residents, government, agriculture, students, and businesses—to solve problems and build community.

### **Be the Change**

Act locally to replicate globally. We learn from others and create and share models, techniques, and tools that others can use.

*"I've been a friend and supporter of SEC for over 25 years, and am impressed by how the organization evolves with the needs of the environment and the community. I've participated with staff and Board members as we respond to significant realities (fire, climate change, pandemic, housing shortages), and translate our understanding to action that will help the whole community. As we move through these challenging times, SEC will remain a big part of how our community copes with change and evolves together."*

—Ellie Insley, Vice Chair, Board of Directors



*Sonoma Ecology Center is truly proud of our ability to lead our community in responding effectively to important challenges as they emerge — from devising Team Sugarloaf to run our watershed's largest state park, to creating Sustainable Sonoma as a structure for the many voices of our community to come together to shape its future. We believe that we can continue to innovate and demonstrate actions here in Sonoma Valley that allow us to "act locally to replicate globally."*

—David Morell, Chair, CFO, Board of Directors



# Years In Milestones



**COMMUNITY**

- 2002**    **K-8 Science Education Program Launched**
- 2007**    **EnviroLeaders Program Launched**
- 2015**    **Sustainable Sonoma Created**
- 2017**    **Senderos Naturales Launched**
- 2018**    **Fire Recovery Walks Provided**
- 2020**    **Sonoma Valley Volunteers Launched**

**Sonoma Garden Park Established    1993**

**Sonoma Overlook Trail Established    2002**

**Jack London State Historic Park Expanded    2002**

**Van Hoosier Wildflower Preserve Established    2004**

**Sugarloaf Ridge State Park Saved From Closure    2011**

**Sustainability Principles for the Future SDC    2017**

**2009**    **North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative Founded**

**2012**    **Sonoma Biochar Initiative Launched**

**Nathanson Creek Preserve Created    1993**

**Stream Restoration for Steelhead Begun    1998**

**Emergency Watershed Protection Program Organized    2017**

**1997**    **Sonoma Wildlife Corridor Established**

**2010**    **Sonoma County Biodiversity Action Plan Co-Authored**

**2019**    **North Bay Bear Collaborative Formed**

**2020**    **Prescribed Fire Event Conducted**

**LAND****WATER****BIODIVERSITY CLIMATE**

# COMMUNITY

**Sonoma Valley is a community where people are interested in connecting with our beautiful surroundings and making our Valley ecologically healthy.**

**Sonoma Ecology Center builds on opportunities to resolve challenging local environmental issues and help other communities do the same.**

**Our community increasingly understands that environmental, economic, and equity challenges must be solved together.**



## **K-8 Science Education Program Launched**

In 1991, we set out to bring environmental education to all Sonoma Valley kids. First, we created a lending library for schools. Later, we taught local teachers how to do their own locally-based environmental education. In 2002, we started putting our own educators in the classroom. That was the winning approach. Today, we are an integral part of the School District's system, reaching over 1,300 kids a year with multiple science lessons in the classroom and field trips to Sonoma Garden Park and Sugarloaf Ridge State Park. Building on long-standing relationships with teachers, we've created a network of environmental education teams that provide outdoor educational experiences to every child in Sonoma Valley at no cost to schools. We have reached an entire generation with environmental education that fosters local solutions to global issues, and will continue to adapt our programs to help the next generation deal with the challenges we face in the 21st century.

## **EnviroLeaders Program Launched**

Because the teaching structure that works for younger students doesn't work for teens, and because job training is a critical skill at that stage in life, we launched the EnviroLeader program. It creates an opportunity for local teens to gain essential job and life skills through practical, environmentally focused training in a semester-long paid internship that focuses on sustainable agriculture, community building and park stewardship. We are proud that for a period of time, Sonoma Ecology Center was the largest youth employer in Sonoma Valley, and proud that many of our graduated EnviroLeaders enter careers in the environmental sciences and become conscientious community leaders.





## **Sustainable Sonoma Created**

25 years after Sonoma Ecology Center was founded, we realized the need to engage the whole community in our vision of a Sonoma Valley where people, land, water, and wildlife thrive. We saw challenges in our community that no one organization could solve alone, but affect all of us. We saw that environmental, equity and economic issues intersect in ways that invite coordination and collaboration across those sectors. Just weeks after the October 2017 fires, we convened a group of 30 community leaders across the broadest range of interests in Sonoma Valley to form the Sustainable Sonoma Council, a coalition committed to working together around issues like emergency response, housing affordability and structural inequity. Since its formation, Sustainable Sonoma has played a critical role in the Valley's emergency response coordination, helped our community understand its greatest hopes and challenges, and fostered new ways of approaching community challenges.

## **Senderos Naturales Launched**

In 2017, we launched Senderos Naturales (“Natural Trails”), a Community Action Partnership, in an effort to make open space in Sonoma Valley more accessible and inclusive of the Latino community. We diversified our programs to include Spanish-language walks, hikes and overnight camping trips. To address barriers to open space, we created free garden plots at Sonoma Garden Park and provide transportation to some bilingual events. We partnered with La Luz Center and Vía Esperanza to do outreach in Sonoma Valley and Santa Rosa. Today, Senderos Naturales engages local Spanish speaking families at Sugarloaf Ridge State Park and Sonoma Garden Park.





## Fire Recovery Walks Provided

After the October 2017 fires burned 28% of Sonoma Valley, we realized how much our community would benefit from seeing the burned landscape through our eyes—that to understand how the land benefits and heals from fire helps us cope with its catastrophic impact on our communities. Our team of ecologists, biologists and educators led over 1,000 community members and nearly 400 students on a series of educational guided hikes through burned regions. We continue to deepen our understanding of Sonoma Valley's ecosystems and believe that this knowledge serves to empower and heal our community. Learning, sharing and acting together will be the foundation of how we adapt to future challenges.

## Sonoma Valley Volunteers Launched

In an unprecedented effort, Sonoma Valley's organizations—governments, businesses, and nonprofits—came together to recruit younger volunteers and meet evolving needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Led by Sonoma Ecology Center and Sustainable Sonoma, in partnership with the City of Sonoma and the Sonoma Valley Food Security Task Force, SonomaValleyVolunteers.org was launched to match local organizations with volunteers to respond to the COVID-19 crisis while our community's core 60+ volunteer force sheltered in place. This Valley-wide system of coordination will be a resource going forward in times of crisis, change and adaptation.



# LAND

**Without owning any land or finalizing any transactions, Sonoma Ecology Center has a long track record of quietly and gently bringing landowners, nonprofits, government agencies, philanthropists, and community members together to protect natural lands in Sonoma Valley through purchases or easements.**

**With our intimate knowledge of the land, our deep social connections, and our collaborative approach, we expect to foster the protection of yet more healthy habitat lands in the future.**



## **Sonoma Garden Park Established**

Sonoma Garden Park was established as the first subscription farm box program in Sonoma Valley, on a six-acre former prune orchard donated to the City of Sonoma by Pauline Bond. From the beginning, it was a unique place for Valley visitors and residents to experience local organic foods and learn about small-scale food production. Today, it is an interdisciplinary learning environment with demonstration gardens, community garden plots for rent, a native plant nursery, educational workshops, and paths that wind among berries, flowers, oak trees, and happy chickens. Each year, hundreds of local students come to Sonoma Garden Park for hands-on science education, and more than 200 youth and adults volunteer thousands of hours of community service.

## **Sonoma Overlook Trail Established**

During the 1990's, locals began calling for both a Valley-wide trail system and the permanent protection of Sonoma's hillside backdrop, which in 1999 was threatened by resort development. Out of these concerns, the idea of building a public trail on the hillside took shape. SEC board members led efforts to create a trail network on the site—dubbed “Sonoma Overlook Trail” in a naming contest. It was built with community contributions and significant volunteer help. SEC also worked with the City to clean up an old dumpsite, and to form Sonoma Overlook Trail Stewards, a volunteer nonprofit group of which SEC is fiscal sponsor. To this day the trail and land—a sloping oak woodland that offers eye-popping views and includes the historic cemetery—are owned by the City and managed by volunteer trail stewards in an arrangement that benefits the entire community.





## Jack London State Historic Park Expanded

Sonoma Developmental Center once grew food for its own residents and employees, and needed a lot of land to do it. Over time, as the state facility shrank its services, it ceased using that land, and in the late 1990s part of the property was designated as “surplus,” at risk of being sold to the highest bidder. Seeing an opportunity to protect that land in perpetuity, SEC and partner Sonoma Mountain Preservation worked with Sonoma County Ag + Open Space to transfer 600 acres--encompassing deep forest, a historic fruit orchard, and steelhead-bearing streams--to neighboring Jack London State Historic Park—shifting the land from one state agency to another and guaranteeing its protection forever.

## Van Hoosear Wildflower Preserve Established

Muriel Van Hoosear left her three daughters an undeveloped 164-acre meadowland located west of the City of Sonoma that is home to dozens of native wildflower species including two rare flowers. Asked by the family to help preserve the meadows, SEC—particularly our current Board member Ellie Insley—worked with Ag + Open Space, Wildlife Conservation Board, and Community Foundation Sonoma County to make this possible. The value of the property meant the family could be paid for it to be put into easement, protecting Van Hoosear as wild forever—a welcome contrast to so much similar land now given over to houses and vineyards. As part of the arrangement, SEC manages the land and leads free wildflower walks each spring to share this land with the community. In 2020, SEC conducted a prescribed burn at the Preserve—assisted by numerous organizations promoting beneficial fire—to rejuvenate its native plant species and control its invasive ones.







## Sugarloaf Ridge State Park Saved From Closure

When the state budget crisis forced the closure of Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, Sonoma Ecology Center pulled together a team of skilled nonprofits to create Team Sugarloaf, which reopened the park in 2012 and assumed day-to-day responsibility for this local landmark. Since that time, we have welcomed over 1,000,000 visitors, led over 1,000 guided hikes and harnessed over 20,000 volunteer hours to improve and operate the park. In 2017, an incredible community of volunteers came together to repair infrastructure after 80% of the Park burned in the Nuns Fire. This year, we have adapted our numerous programs and the campsites to foster distancing and help people get outdoors safely. As the lead organization in Team Sugarloaf, we have carried Sugarloaf Ridge State Park through major changes, and look forward to keeping this vibrant open space open and accessible to the public for years to come.

## Sustainability Principles for the Future SDC Established

Repurposing the 200-acre campus of the Sonoma Developmental Center, within its 750 acres of open space, is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Our connections to this land run deep: we have monitored Sonoma Creek here for 15 years, partnered with State Parks to tame erosion in the upper forests, worked out of offices here for 20 years, and led fire recovery walks over its burned ground. We are clear that a redeveloped Eldridge can bring an array of benefits to Sonoma Valley: new kinds of jobs, a wide protected wildlife corridor, a climate-resilient water source, affordable housing in a socioeconomically integrated neighborhood, an incredible trail system, healthy wide riparian forests, and a huge, biodiverse, protected area of state-level significance. To assure that the community's highest standards are met as the site's future is plotted, SEC led many groups in writing a set of Sustainability Principles. These Principles stand for the community's intention that the future Eldridge will regenerate water, make its own energy, rebuild biodiversity, honor the site's many pasts, and help lead the community to a better future.



# CLIMATE

**The dangers of runaway climate change that we see all around us—the fires, floods, droughts, and heat waves—call for two types of responses: readying ourselves for climate impacts, and drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions.**

**As our partners focus on reducing emissions, Sonoma Ecology Center has focused on preparedness, using science and outreach to better understand climate hazards and to spur action. We also pull carbon out of the atmosphere and sequester it, when we protect or restore natural lands, and promote the wise use of biochar.**



## North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative Founded

In 2009, Sonoma County had set bold goals for reducing climate pollution, but no one was talking about the impacts of a changed climate: increased wildfire, infestations, more deadly heat waves, less predictable rainfall, and more. To fill that gap, we co-founded and subsequently led the North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative. SEC was the lead author for the Initiative of Sonoma County's official climate vulnerabilities report, taught numerous workshops helping land and water managers across the North Bay translate arcane climate projections into practical management actions, and led creation of a Climate Resilience Roadmap for Sonoma County. In part based on the Initiative's work, most of our local governments now routinely make their plans based on future conditions that are different from those of the past. This keeps both people and the land more resilient and more prepared. The North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative was nationally recognized by the Obama Administration during a New York ceremony in 2016.

## Sonoma Biochar Initiative Launched

Sequestering carbon is an important part of climate change mitigation, which is why SEC promotes biochar, a kind of "super charcoal" whose production traps carbon from biomass (uprooted grape vines, for example) that otherwise would enter the atmosphere as greenhouse gases—a simple process resulting in an important, easily scalable drawdown strategy. Myriad co-benefits result from using biochar as a soil amendment, including extracting toxins from, and trapping moisture in, the soil, improving crop yields and reducing the need for irrigation. As interest in biochar grew, we organized a three-day international conference at Sonoma State University. Among other things, this gathering resulted in the formation of Sonoma Biochar Initiative, an SEC program. Since then, we've led efforts to document biochar's benefits, scale up production, promote low-tech kilns for making biochar, and make biochar from excess wood that would otherwise be burned.



# WATER

**The way we currently use and manage water in Sonoma Valley creates deficits in our groundwater aquifers and our creeks. Our surface waters are polluted by excess sediment, nutrients like yard fertilizers, and pathogens. A warming climate makes reversing these trends ever more urgent.**

**If we absorb more water into the ground during winter, when it is abundant, use less water and re-use it more during summer when it's scarce, and avoid chemicals, we could have more and cleaner water for ourselves, and more fish, birds, wetlands, and healthy oak trees and streamside forests.**

## Nathanson Creek Preserve Created

Nathanson Creek, running north-to-south through the middle of the City of Sonoma, had deteriorated over the years due to pollution and neglect. Inspired by volunteer Christy Vreeland, Sonoma Ecology Center began leading clean-up and restoration efforts along its banks. Today, with help from partners City of Sonoma, Sonoma Valley Unified School District, Sonoma Water and Ag + Open Space, Nathanson Creek Preserve is a beautiful and thriving greenway, accessible to the public by bridges and walking trails. Its waters are cooler and clearer, allowing Chinook salmon to spawn in wetter winters. Sonoma Valley High School and Adele Harrison Middle School use Nathanson Creek as a living outdoor classroom. Together with our Restoration staff, local gardening enthusiasts volunteer to keep the native plant demonstration garden at MacArthur Street flourishing. Across the street, a former empty lot now demonstrates a widened creek floodplain of the type that could, if replicated up and down Nathanson Creek, reduce flooding in town, and improve habitat for fish and other animals that depend on streams.



## Stream Restoration For Steelhead Begun

Our 1990's "Watershed Visioning Potlucks" evolved into the Sonoma Valley Watershed Council. Local scientists, restoration experts and other community members began to study and work for a thriving Sonoma Valley watershed—efforts that included research, creek cleanups, invasive plant removals, replanting and more. SEC then became a main driver for eliminating *Arundo donax*, a noxious invasive weed, in Northern California. As we started to better understand the importance of native species to stream health, we began designing and building better vegetative stream channels in Sonoma Creek, sharing this knowledge throughout the region. Along the way, we realized that steelhead trout are a key indicator species and began to use them as a measure of overall stream health in Sonoma Valley. Today, we're continuing our important work in Sonoma Creek and its tributaries on the issues of vegetation, fish barriers, erosion and debris, summer flows, groundwater recharge, water quality, and flooding—years of work centered around helping the fish, which ultimately helps the stream and the people living beside it.



## **Emergency Watershed Protection Program Organized**

After the October 2017 fires burned more than 28% of Sonoma Valley, we recognized the urgent need to protect the Sonoma Creek watershed from toxic ash and debris that threatened to wash from burned buildings and cars into creeks, threatening to contaminate the water and wildlife with heavy metals, asbestos, nitrates, and sulfates. We created maps showing where burned structures lay within 100, 200, and 300 feet of waterways and developed a system of prioritizing properties for containment. This priority system was adopted to sequence the work of at least some of the later federal debris cleanup contractors. Volunteer Nancy Kirwan organized dozens of volunteers to contact landowners and work with staff to surround burned structures with sandbags and straw wattles, keeping their toxins in place until cleanup crews could arrive. All told, 80% of the burned structures posing the greatest threat to local streams were contained, protecting all the burned sections of stream that host steelhead. This model has now been replicated in other communities after fires.

# **BIODIVERSITY**

**Sonoma Valley is home to an amazing variety of species in a small place. A large proportion of California's species exist in this compact area, that is only a tenth of one percent of California's entire land area. Since the Valley is mostly privately owned over thousands of parcels, it needs all of us to be good stewards to sustain this amazing legacy for the future.**

**Biodiversity is in catastrophic decline around the world, with one in four species at risk of extinction. Sonoma Valley, in a similar decline, still has extraordinary biodiversity that supports numerous ecological services that we rely on. Sonoma Ecology Center takes strategic action to stabilize and strengthen biodiversity in our Valley.**



## Sonoma Wildlife Corridor Established

It all started when SEC volunteer Christy Vreeland pointed out that Sonoma Mountain was slowly but surely becoming a biological island, due to development of the land surrounding it. This meant that plants and animals on the Mountain were cut off, less able to migrate to and from it to find food, water, and genetic diversity. Ultimately this isolation would harm its viability as a native habitat. The solution was a habitat corridor—essentially a bridge of open space—connecting Sonoma Mountain through the Sonoma Developmental Center and hundreds of acres of additional protected wild lands on the other (east) side of Sonoma Valley. Working with the county’s Ag + Open Space and Sonoma Land Trust, lands around the corridor were acquired and made accessible to native species. This Corridor, Sonoma County’s first ever, later became formalized as part of the county’s general plan. Now this work continues as we help plan the future of SDC.

## Sonoma County Biodiversity Action Plan Co-Authored

Sonoma Valley is at the intersection of several biodiversity zones, making it an unusually rich place for biodiversity. For example, our county comprises just 1% of California’s total area, but contains 2,210 known native plant species. Realizing that a large and growing human population lives in and amongst this biodiversity, and that we need to better understand it in order to preserve it, SEC began an effort to more closely examine and codify the biodiversity found here. Working with others in the county, we produced a landmark Action Plan—co-authored by Karen Gaffney, now at Ag + Open Space, and SEC’s Caitlin Cornwall—that tells us what we’ve got to lose, and what we must do to keep it. Based on research and interviews with multiple biologists specializing in our region, the Action Plan continues to help us protect this ecologically rich region.





## North Bay Bear Collaborative Founded

In the late 2010's, proliferating critter cameras showed that black bears—including mothers with cubs—had moved into the Mayacamas Mountains full time. The North Bay Bear Collaborative was launched to get ahead of challenges that may arise from an increasing black bear population.

It is a working group of agencies, non-profits, landowners, and individuals committed to being proactive liaisons between humans and bears. Our aim is to make the North Bay safer for both bears and people.



## Prescribed Fire Conducted

A critical tool for managing fire in Northern California is fire itself. Historically, indigenous Californians used fire on a massive scale to promote the plants and animals they preferred. After native lands were stolen and occupied by European settlers, a culture of fire suppression replaced this tradition, resulting in conditions that reduce biodiversity, reduce carbon sequestration, and make catastrophic fire more likely. For the last decade, Sonoma Ecology Center has worked to reintroduce fire as a land management tool. This year, with Audubon Canyon Ranch's Fire Forward program, Good Fire Alliance, and many other partners, Sonoma Ecology Center burned part of the meadows at the Van Hoosear Wildflower Preserve. Scaling up and normalizing prescribed fire is one of the many ways Sonoma Ecology Center is keeping people safer while restoring biodiversity.

**We thank our  
community,  
partners,  
supporters,  
volunteers, and  
board members  
for making our  
work possible.**

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# THANK YOU TO OUR 2019 SUPPORTERS

## 12,500+ volunteer hours

*Your support enables our team of scientists, educators and community leaders to adapt our programs to Sonoma Valley's evolving needs.*

### *\$50,000 and above*

Anonymous  
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Yvonne Norrbom  
Jane Zimmerman  
Matt and Patresa Zwerling  
Carol Zychowski

## 2019 Grant Funders

California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
California State Parks Foundation  
City of Sonoma  
Community Foundation  
Delta Conservancy  
Department of Water Resources  
Eel River Watershed Improvement Group  
Fund for Ecology and Culture  
Goodman Foundation  
Kimball Foundation  
Manitou Fund  
Marin Community Foundation  
NOAA  
Patagonia  
San Francisco Regional Water Board  
Sonoma Clean Power  
Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space  
Sonoma County Permit Resource Management Department  
Sonoma County Water Agency  
Sonoma County Watershed Protection  
State Coastal Conservancy  
Wildlife Conservation Board

# 2019 Volunteer of the Year

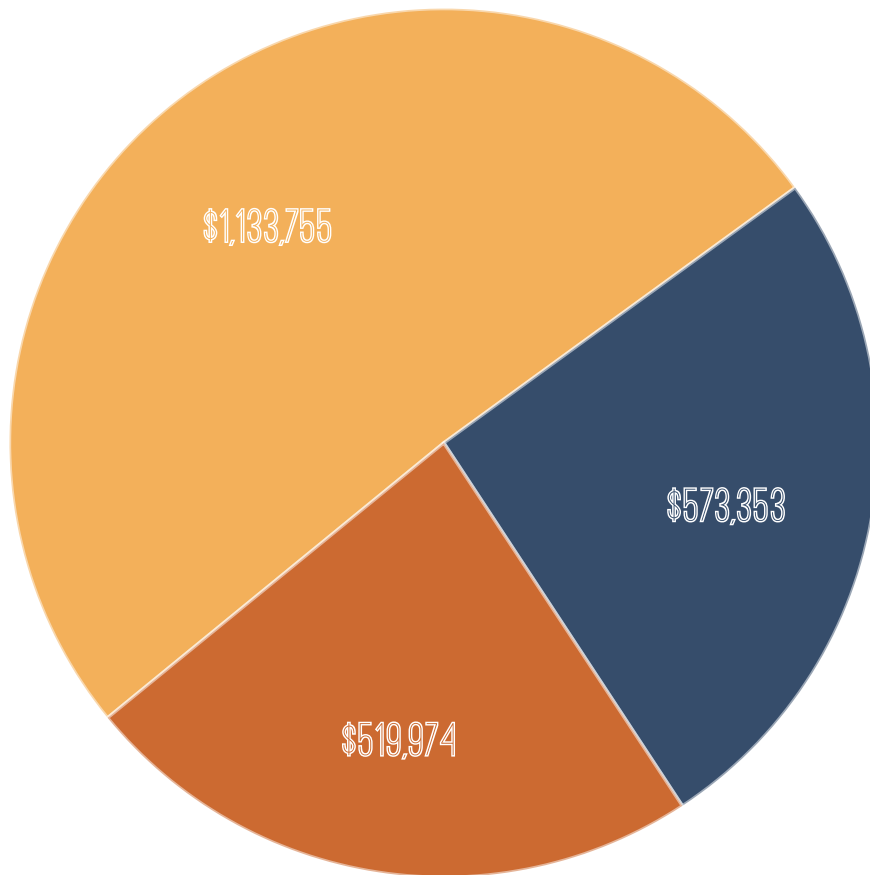
**We honored Nancy Evers Kirwan as the 2019 Volunteer of the Year for her contributions in many areas of Sonoma Ecology Center's work. She volunteered over 1,000 hours coordinating the Emergency Watershed Protection Program in 2017-18, co-authored the Sonoma Garden Park 10 Year Master Plan, advised Sustainable Sonoma, and is an active member of the Sonoma Garden Park Advisory Board and Leadership Circle. Thank you for all you do for this community.**



*“Before I even moved to Sonoma full time, I was aware of the restoration work that the Sonoma Ecology Center does. After I moved here, not quite five years ago, I was looking around for an organization that engages with the community; the environment, and the land. The more that I worked with SEC, the more aspects of the community I realized they were embedded in. When I think of all the impacts that Sonoma Garden Park, the Watershed Protection Program, Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, and Sustainable Sonoma have on Sonoma Valley, it is awe-inspiring. All are projects I have worked on personally, and are only a fraction of what they do for Sonoma Valley: Sonoma Ecology Center frequently recognizes problems and addresses them before others are even aware of them. Things like how to engage the full spectrum of our community, how to protect our watershed for the benefit of all of us, how to gauge the impact of changes in our environment so that we can address them, how to engage a cross-section of our community and encourage them to work together, how to rebuild after a devastating loss, and so much more. It is not difficult to give back to Sonoma Valley, for providing all of us with such a magical setting to live in, through helping at Sonoma Ecology Center.”*

—Nancy Evers Kirwan, 2019 SEC Volunteer of the Year

# 2019 Revenue Highlights



MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS \$573,353

PROGRAM FEES \$519,974

GRANTS AND CONTRACTS \$1,133,755

**We are honored to have received a Lasting Legacy Gift from Darlene Nye.**

**Building a foundation of legacy supporters is vital to our future, as it will provide the footing needed to grow and thrive for generations to come.**

**A special thanks to Patagonia for our 2019 year end matching gift.**

**Together we raised an additional \$70,000 in support of Sonoma Valley's ecological health.**



# 2019 Statement of Financial Position

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2019

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
ASSETS		
Current assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 383,881	\$ 222,757
Accounts receivable	317,589	341,852
Prepaid expenses	37,056	36,475
Total current assets	<u>738,526</u>	<u>601,084</u>
Fixed assets:		
Furniture and equipment	101,575	89,068
Leasehold improvements	90,025	90,025
Vehicles	61,061	61,060
Subtotal	<u>252,661</u>	<u>240,153</u>
Less accumulated depreciation	(152,445)	(137,457)
Net fixed assets	<u>100,216</u>	<u>102,696</u>
Other assets:		
Restricted investments	391,965	330,082
Total assets	<u>\$ 1,230,707</u>	<u>\$ 1,033,862</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 113,233	\$ 115,314
Deferred revenue	248,400	370,446
Line of credit	-	84,472
Total current liabilities	<u>361,633</u>	<u>570,232</u>
Net assets:		
Without donor restriction	395,602	54,132
With donor restriction	473,472	409,498
Total net assets	<u>869,074</u>	<u>463,630</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 1,230,707</u>	<u>\$ 1,033,862</u>

# 2019 Statement of Activities

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2019

	Without donor restriction	With donor restriction	2019 Total	2018 Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUE:				
Government contract revenue	\$ 1,133,755		\$ 1,133,755	\$ 1,301,091
Memberships and donations	569,554	\$ 3,799	573,353	331,065
In-kind donations	104	-	104	1,135
Program fees	513,014	6,960	519,974	382,763
Investment income (loss), net of fees	10	71,959	71,969	(15,848)
Gain (Loss) on disposal of assets	1	-	1	46,281
Reimbursable income	270,851	-	270,851	358,569
Other income	73,705	-	73,705	36,772
Net assets released from restriction	18,744	(18,744)	-	-
Cost of goods sold	(40,989)	-	(40,989)	(21,498)
Total support and revenue	<u>2,538,749</u>	<u>63,974</u>	<u>2,602,723</u>	<u>2,441,828</u>
EXPENSES:				
Program	1,677,160		1,677,160	1,411,890
Management and general	349,423		349,423	849,005
Fundraising	170,696		170,696	108,459
Total expenses	<u>2,197,279</u>		<u>2,197,279</u>	<u>2,369,354</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	341,470	63,974	405,444	72,474
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING	<u>54,132</u>	<u>409,498</u>	<u>463,630</u>	<u>357,622</u>
NET ASSETS, ENDING	<u>\$ 395,602</u>	<u>\$ 473,472</u>	<u>\$ 869,074</u>	<u>\$ 463,630</u>

# Staff

*“Throughout the years, an incredible network of scientists, educators, community organizers, and administrators has worked on behalf of Sonoma Valley through Sonoma Ecology Center. These incredible people have applied their expertise to building the organization’s deep knowledge of Sonoma Valley’s land, water, biodiversity, and community. Our staff is the driving force behind Sonoma Ecology Center’s problem solving, actions and programs.”*

—Richard Dale, Executive Director

RICHARD DALE  
*Executive Director*

DON FRANCES  
*Communications*

JULIA MEGNA  
*Education Project Manager*

RAYMOND BALTAR  
*Biochar Project Manager*  
*Sonoma Biochar Initiative Director*

GARRETT GRADILLAS  
*Restoration Specialist*  
*Crew Leader*

JASON MILLS  
*Restoration and Fire Ecologist*  
*Restoration Manager*

JUSTIN BEACH  
*Restoration Technician*

WENDY HAYES  
*Research Project Manager*

IVANA NEDELCEV  
*Volunteer Coordinator*

JENNIFER BEARG  
*Staff Accountant*

MINONA HEAVILAND  
*Environmental Planner*

TONY PASSANTINO  
*Education Program Manager*

CELINA BRIGGS  
*Human Resources Specialist*

DEB HENNESSY  
*Staff Accountant*

JOHN RONEY  
*Sugarloaf Ridge State Park Manager*

STEVE CARARA  
*Sonoma Garden Park Manager*

JACK HINES  
*GIS Specialist*

ALMA SHAW  
*Sugarloaf Volunteer Coordinator*  
*Bilingual Events Coordinator*

CAITLIN CORNWALL  
*Senior Project Manager*  
*Sustainable Sonoma Director*

KIM JONES  
*Marketing*  
*Sustainable Sonoma Coordinator*

MARCOS VALENTIN  
*Restoration Technician*

JONNY EHLERS  
*Educator*  
*Naturalist*

STEVEN LEE  
*Senior Scientist*  
*Research Program Manager*

TIFFANY WING  
*Development Director*

JIM ELIAS  
*Operations Director*

DAN LEVITIS  
*Community Science Coordinator*

KRISTI ZURAUSKAS  
*Interim Operations and Finance*  
*Manager*



#### Contact Us

Phone: (707) 996-0712  
info@sonomaecologycenter.org


#### Mailing Address

Sonoma Ecology Center  
P.O. Box 1486  
Eldridge, CA 95431

#### Website

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