

Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network

Preamble

The mission of the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network is to help cultivate a resilient, vibrant region where human and natural systems thrive for generations to come.

The Santa Cruz Mountains region has a long history as a place of significant cultural, biological, and environmental diversity which supports many native plant and animal species found nowhere else on Earth. Those who love and value this important region share a rare opportunity and responsibility to protect this unique ecological and cultural heritage and the ways of life it sustains.

The Santa Cruz Mountains region, as we define it, extends from the San Francisco Bay area, south to the Pajaro River and is bounded to the east by the Santa Clara Valley and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The region is comprised of a diverse array of ecosystems which include diverse natural features ranging from ridge tops to alluvial fans, old growth forests, saltwater lagoons, marshes, mudflats, and intertidal zones. Ownership and land use varies from park and open space preserves to privately held timber and agricultural lands interspersed with both rural and urban communities.

Good land stewardship occurs on both public and private lands, “preserved” and “working” lands. The act of stewardship toward land is based on the concept that landowners and land managers take good care of the land for its own sake and for the future, and not only for short-term personal gain. Effective stewardship of a large landscape or region requires an approach that promotes a wide range of beneficial uses or values, including but not limited to ecological, recreational, aesthetic, spiritual, cultural, and economic.

The Network will help coordinate stewardship efforts at the landscape and local scales. Some of the specific priority areas we agree are critical include:

- Enhancing Water Quality and Watershed Health
- Managing Invasive Plant and Animal Species
- Maintaining Biodiversity and Endangered Species
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Monitoring, Research and Education
- Access to Public Lands
- Strong Human Communities and Citizen Engagement

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Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding establishes the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network, a region-wide and cross-sector collaboration of independent individuals and organizations who are committed to practicing effective stewardship on their own lands and coordinating their efforts with other land stewards to enhance stewardship on a regional level.

Stewardship Network participants agree that effective land stewardship on a regional level is characterized by:

- Emulating or enhancing natural ecosystem functions
- An active, varied, “mosaic” approach that promotes a wide variety of conservation benefits, including the generation of responsibly produced resources and livelihoods from working lands.
- Experimenting with a range of stewardship practices as appropriate
- Consistent monitoring and evaluation, adjusting land practices to improve results
- Co-operative efforts and the sharing of critical information
- Identifying and communicating the acceptable and unacceptable thresholds of threat or hazard from activities or events such as fire, and the consequences of action versus inaction
- Responsible and responsive regulation that does not unduly hamper stewardship efforts
- The availability of sufficient resources to achieve long-term goals

Accordingly, participants agree that their primary objectives for forming and joining the Stewardship Network are to:

- Build trust and strengthen relationships within and across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries
- Value diverse perspectives and approaches to stewardship, exploring together what constitutes best current and future stewardship practices
- Sense and respond to emergent challenges
- Identify critical obstacles that hamper stewardship efforts and develop strategies for improving effectiveness
- Collaborate where individual and regional stewardship goals converge
- Leverage existing activities and resources and avoid duplication of stewardship efforts
- Share information in order to enhance knowledge and promote best practices that support long term sustainability
- Inform other landowners, the public at large, potential project funders, regulators, and legislators about the importance and value of effective stewardship for enhancing the health of the Santa Cruz Mountain region
- Recognize and support landowners and private businesses who are advancing stewardship goals and are using best practices
- Ensure adequate resourcing for long term stewardship efforts
- Educate and recruit future stewards of the land

The Undersigned, while not legally bound, share the intention to support the primary objectives of the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network as outlined above. Participating members of the Stewardship Network sign on behalf of their organization as an authorized representative, while also affirming and retaining the independence and autonomy of their organization, its mission, its authority, and its goals. Any participant may withdraw from this MOU at any time by providing written notice to the other participants within 30 days prior to their intended withdrawal.

September 30, 2015