

KEY CONSERVATION THEMES MEMORANDUM

March 22, 2013



Rancho Cañada del Oro, June 2011. Photo: Santa Clara County Open Space Authority

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Rancho Cañada del Oro. Photo: Stephen Joseph

I. INTRODUCTION & ORGANIZATION

As a visionary document that endeavors to unite current regional trends and important scientific research, it is crucial that the *Conservation Vision* is based on a thorough review of relevant literature and robust public input. Thus, the *Conservation Vision* began with a dedicated phase to review existing conditions and consult experts in the field to set the foundation for the formulation of a refined and strategic direction for the Authority. This memorandum summarizes that work, highlighting the most prominent and compelling conservation trends and themes found in the literature as well as public input that the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority may consider in developing the Vision. The memorandum highlights those themes that may influence the overarching mission of The Authority and its efforts in the provision of open space, agricultural preservation, land management, recreation, and visitor outreach services.

This memorandum is organized into three parts: 1) Synthesis of Key Trends; 2) Review of Existing Conservation Plans and Studies, and 3) Findings of Public Input. These three summary sections form the body of the memo, while they are supported by attachments that give the detailed research behind each section.

Part I of this memo serves as an “executive summary” to present a clear synthesis of the most prominent themes and findings resulting from the literature review of prioritized documents and studies, and solicited public and stakeholder input. Findings are grouped into graphic tables to clearly illustrate the themes by category, or discipline of literature, and further by a more generalized theme that will help guide policy directives.

Part II of this memo explains the methodology used to prioritize and review related plans, studies and documents, and lists the commonly identified issues and opportunities associated with open space conservation and regional planning in Santa Clara County and the San Francisco Bay Area in general.

Part III describes the public input process which included key stakeholder interviews and the solicitation of public input, both from the www.CVW3.org website and the first Community Forum, held on December 5, 2012. This section is supported by a graphic table illustrating input by conservation category.

II. PROGRESS UPDATE & NEXT STEPS

This memorandum marks the final stage of the Existing Conditions phase and the launch of the Conservation Priorities phase in the *Conservation Vision* process. Next steps include the development of a prioritization framework to identify conservation priorities and strategic directions and the preparation of the final Vision document.

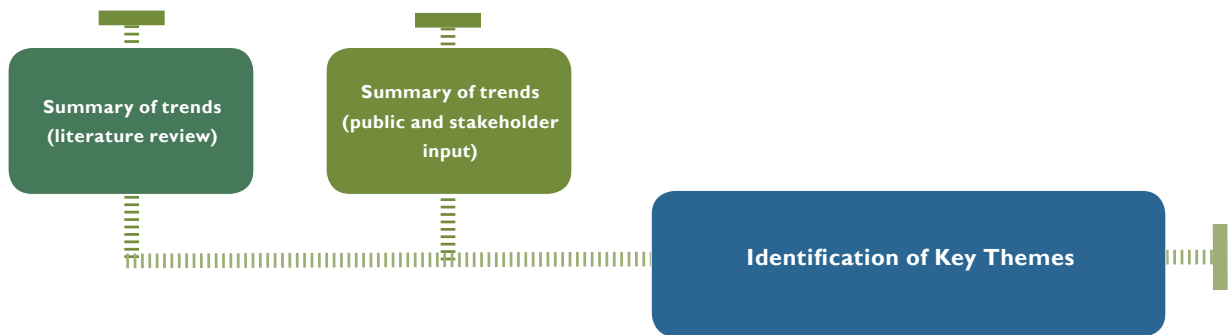
FIGURE I: CONSERVATION VISION SCHEDULE



III. PART I. CONSERVATION THEMES SYNTHESIS

The key conservation themes identified in this memorandum are an aggregate of the trends, issues, opportunities and threats identified through the literature review of priority documents and from stakeholder and public input that influence the development of the *Conservation Vision*. Identification of these key themes are the first step toward the development of conservation strategies and objectives.

FIGURE 2: IDENTIFICATION OF KEY CONSERVATION THEMES: METHODOLOGY



Key Conservation Themes

Table I.1 illustrates the overarching conservation themes and directives synthesized from findings collected from the literature review and the input from stakeholder interviews, the www.CVW3.org website, and the first Community Forum, held on December 5, 2012. These themes are representative of the array of issues and opportunities that inform the *Conservation Vision*. These themes were aggregated from the summary findings from the literature review and public input, respectively, in a manner that could be translated into policy recommendations, strategies, or programs of the Authority in subsequent phases of the Vision. Attachments A, B, and C show in detail how trends were revealed in source documents or public input.

Table I.2 identifies which key themes are prevalent in each of the eight conservation categories used to organize the literature review. This table additionally shows the great commonality of themes and recommendations across disciplines. Part II describes the method for identifying these categories, and details the most frequent trends, issues, threats and opportunities that were identified through the review process.

Thematic Categories

As a means to further streamline key trends into focus areas that could further define policy, the key themes are organized into three thematic categories: (1) Human Communities and Experience, (2) Natural Resources and Systems, and (3) Hybrid Conservation Themes. These categories help organize the themes in Table I.1. Figure 3 shows the overlap of many of these themes between planning for human experience versus natural systems.

FIGURE 3: THEMATIC CATEGORIES OF KEY CONSERVATION THEMES

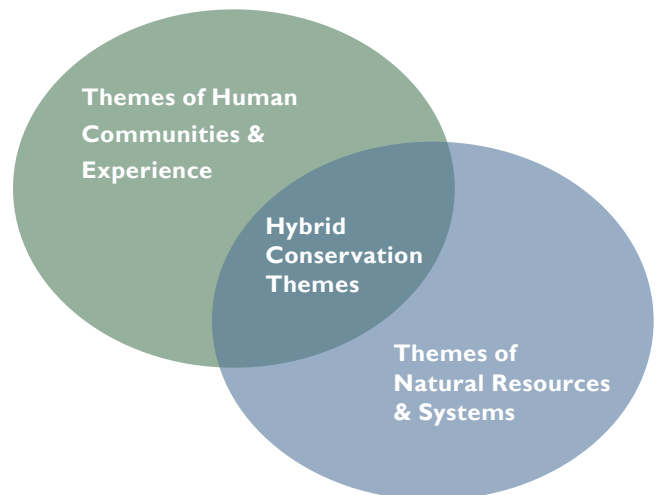


TABLE I.I: KEY CONSERVATION THEMES BY CATEGORY

HUMAN COMMUNITIES & EXPERIENCE	
Livable and Healthy Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the creation of healthy and livable communities that offer greater quality of life via universal access to open space, recreation, and promotion of public health policies, such as walkability, and access to healthy foods.
Public Health and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote healthy and livable communities through regulatory policy and land use considerations that improves quality of life and human health for Santa Clara residents. Foster community engagement in order to promote healthy and livable communities and encourage water resource protection. Connect urban communities to local and regional open spaces through recreational trails.
Parkland Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the variety of and proximity to parkland throughout the County, including open space elements in urban areas, in order to improve access to park resources for all populations.
Waterway and Creekside Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a regional planning approach to water resources management (including flood control and floodplain management) and to the development of creekside recreation and trails. Explore co-benefits of aquatic habitat preservation as a means for species and climate resilience, recreation, and educational benefit.
Universal Access to Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase access to open space for all populations to improve quality of life for a variety of ages, fitness levels, and those traveling by bicycle or transit. Consider overlapping benefits of open space and its proximity to urban areas, such as educational benefits, access to healthy food, and understanding of context and environment.
Regional Food Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote local farmlands, locally grown food, and support beginning farmers and ranchers to foster a sustainable agricultural system. Link local agriculture to community health through access to local food and bolstering of historic agricultural roots and pride in Santa Clara County. Support a continued reliance on agriculture as the basis for a robust and sustainable economy based in Santa Clara County's roots.
NATURAL RESOURCES & SYSTEMS	
Regional Conservation Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve ecological systems to protect wildlife habitat connectivity and linkages, ecosystem services, and to promote climate change resilient. Collaborate regionally to increase knowledge and streamline conservation prioritization. Establish greenbelts between communities to curb sprawl, preserve community and open space identity, and provide recreational and public health benefits.
Habitat Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support existing habitat restoration efforts (e.g. Baylands, Coastal Chaparral) to increase climate adaptation and habitat resiliency.
Climate Change Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support "ecosystem" based actions (e.g. establish habitat reserves, landscape linkages, foster watershed and water flow management, and strengthen aquatic and coastal ecosystems) to enhance climate change resilience. Collaborate with multiple agencies across sectors to anticipate extremes, support science, and early action planning efforts. Integrate "climate smart adaptation principles" into all conservation, open space planning, and land management efforts, focusing on the future and an adaptive and flexible approach.
Waterway and Watershed Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain watershed integrity to protect water quality, aquatic habitat, and long-term drinking water supplies. Increase ground water recharge and build resiliency to drought and climate change by protecting natural functions and promoting healthy creeks, watersheds and ecosystems.

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Santa Clara County Open Space Authority Greenprint

Protect Working Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote working landscapes and agricultural resiliency to protect diverse habitats, sustainable food systems and regional cultural heritage. • Foster agricultural land preservation by protecting urban edge agriculture against the pressures of urban development.
Ecosystem Function and Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate regionally to create and share knowledge (e.g. historical ecology, land acquisition opportunities, ecosystem health indicators)

HYBRID CONSERVATION THEMES

Partnerships and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate partnerships and collaboration, and increase opportunities for outdoor education. • Reflect common goals in regional approaches to policy recommendations, land acquisition and stewardship.
Public Education and Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase outreach and education efforts to better inform the public, and plan for at-risk communities. • Incorporate educational recommendations across conservation themes in order to foster an appreciation of open space resources and validation for conservation policies.
Co-Benefit Strategies & Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support natural and working land conservation while ensuring water resource protection, stewardship, and habitat conservation and linkages. • Support water resource stewardship, aquatic habitat conservation and environmental enhancements to ensure water quality. • Promote co-benefit strategies to engage stakeholders in climate change adaptation and resiliency planning (including the connection between climate and health, the need to balance people and ecosystems, and the enhancement of ecosystem services).
Connectivity and Linkages: Wildlife and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study opportunities to promote regional trail connectivity and potential overlap of wildlife linkages.
Water Supply & Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance water resource management to minimize grazing impacts on water quality and to conserve habitats and ecosystem services provided by rangeland conservation. • Collaborate among agencies to promote efficiencies in water use and to conduct outreach and education. • Increase ground water recharge and build resiliency to drought and climate change by protecting natural functions and promoting healthy creeks, watersheds and ecosystems.
Curb Development Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster agricultural land preservation by protecting urban edge agriculture to counter urban sprawl. • Work with regional planning organizations (e.g. ABAG, MTC), the County, LAFCO, and Santa Clara County cities to mediate urban development through land use regulations that protect natural resources and meet shared regional goals.
Ecosystem Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue ecosystem services studies and resource valuation efforts to inform decision-making. • Collaborate with public and private entities to promote ecosystem services, and ultimately, more attractive, viable, and healthy communities. • Explore new markets or funding sources to incentivize land and water resource conservation that account for the economic value of ecosystem services.
People / Ecosystems Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve regional trail connectivity and linkages. • Engage in planning activities that support equity: housing, food accessibility, recreation, health and quality of life. • Increase outreach and education efforts to better inform the public, and plan for at-risk communities.
Ecological /Economic Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities for resource conservation financial incentives, including payments for ecosystem services (e.g cost share on private working lands).

IV. PART II. REVIEW OF EXISTING CONSERVATION PLANS AND STUDIES

As part of the existing conditions phase, the Project Team reviewed relevant plans, studies, and policies pertinent to current open space conservation and land management in the Authority's jurisdiction. This review ensures that the Authority's *Conservation Vision* is pioneering and informed by the priorities and knowledge of other stakeholders and potential conservation partners—in both the short and long-terms. Such consideration is vital to the practicality and successful implementation of the *Conservation Vision* and will foster future partnerships through the identification of shared priorities, goals and opportunities.

FIGURE 4: PLAN REVIEW: METHODOLOGY



Plan review methodology

The quantity of plans, studies, research and data related to open space and conservation in Santa Clara County is vast, covering a range of topics including local and regional land use plans, economic development forecasts, recreation demands, public health concerns, regional climate change impacts, biodiversity initiatives, various policy development, and local resident values—to name a few. Indeed, the business of conservation overlaps with each of these fields, and the eventual identification of conservation objectives requires due consideration of all related efforts and data. To most effectively determine common topics, issues and trends being discussed at large, the Project Team prioritized review of those plans most directly related to the Authority's mission. This methodology is shown in Figure 4.

Plan identification, categorization and prioritization

The review of plans and studies began with the organization of documents identified by the Authority and the Project Team into eight categories, which correspond to the areas of focus used during stakeholder interviews and the initial Community Forum held December 5, 2012. These eight categories further help define the key trends and theme as discussed in Part I.

The eight document categories are:

1. **GENERAL CONSERVATION**
2. **BIODIVERSITY**
3. **AGRICULTURE AND WORKING LANDS**
4. **WATER RESOURCES**
5. **RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**
6. **CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE**
7. **PLANNING AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**
8. **ECOSYSTEM SERVICES**

Plan prioritization is based on the expertise and general knowledge of the Project Team members and Authority staff. Specifically, priority plans and studies were identified using one or more of the following criteria: geographic relevancy, legislative influence, regional science and/or impact, social and/or public value, economic influence, timeliness, and relevancy to the Authority's mission.

Accordingly, plans and updates by Santa Clara County and by the five municipalities located within the OSA's jurisdiction (San Jose, Campbell, Santa Clara, Milpitas, and Morgan Hill) were prioritized, as were studies by regional and local conservation agencies and organizations.

Attachment B includes a summary of each of the plans reviewed for this initial phase. They are organized by the eight conservation categories, include a brief summary and highlight major topics and trends that were synthesized to identify key themes.

Summary of trends in the literature

The Project Team reviewed all priority documents and identified the most common trends by document category. Table I synthesizes these findings.

Each category has trends specific to its subject. A key issue in the Water Resources category, for example, is water supply. But interestingly, there were a number of key issues that spanned all eight categories. These include a general emphasis on regional conservation planning and prioritization, acknowledgement of data analysis and more frequent data sharing, the importance of interagency collaboration and partnerships, and the need for more public education and outreach. Table 2.2 helps illustrate this overlap.

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Santa Clara County Open Space Authority Greenprint

TABLE 2.1: COMMON TRENDS IN THE LITERATURE, BY CONSERVATION CATEGORY

General Conservation	
<p>ISSUES & THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing demand for water and land, regionally and locally. Imbalance in decision-making between ecological and economic priorities. Uncertain future effects from climate change. Lack of public knowledge about the health benefits of open space. Projected population increase of 750,000 in the County, and 2 million in the greater Bay Area, in 30 years 	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain watershed integrity to protect high quality habitat, drinking water supplies, and water quality. Promote working landscapes and agricultural resiliency to protect diverse habitats, sustainable food systems and regional cultural heritage. Conserve ecological systems to protect wildlife habitat connectivity and linkages, ecosystem services, and to become climate change resilient. Collaborate regionally to increase knowledge and streamline conservation prioritization. Contribute to the creation of livable communities to increase quality of life, universal access to open space, recreation and public health.
Biodiversity	
<p>ISSUES & THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertain future effects from climate change. Gaps in habitat connectivity. Development impacts on locally rare, threatened, and endangered species, and their habitats. 	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate regionally to create and share knowledge (e.g. historical ecology, land acquisition opportunities, ecosystem health indicators) Collaborate regionally to identify and achieve conservation priorities (e.g. Habitat Conservation Plan, habitat connectivity, watershed protection, ecological functions) Support existing habitat restoration efforts (e.g. Baylands, Coastal Chaparral) to increase climate adaptation and habitat resiliency Increase outreach and education efforts to better inform the public about local species and habitats and the importance of their protection. Participate in inter-agency partnerships to share knowledge, leverage resources, and develop regional strategies to protect biodiversity.
Agriculture & Working Lands	
<p>ISSUES & THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertain agricultural viability due to an aging farmer population, high production costs and status of the Williamson Act. Aging agricultural infrastructure is inefficient. Development pressure continues to threaten working lands and regional food security. 	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote local farmlands, locally grown food, and support beginning farmers and ranchers to foster a sustainable agricultural system. Explore incentive-based tools to reimburse the county for lost subvention payments and to promote renewal of Williamson Act contracts. Promote community health by protecting local farmlands and ensuring access to locally-grown food. Foster agricultural land preservation by protecting urban edge agricultural to counter urban sprawl. Promote and incentivize farm and ranch stewardship projects to protect water quality, habitat, and other ecosystem services. Increase outreach and education efforts to better inform the public about the value of agriculture and include “hands-on” practice to foster an appreciation of the land. Collaborate and form inter-agency partnerships to achieve implementable policies.
Recreation & Open Space	
<p>ISSUES & THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited park access in urban centers and unequal ability of diverse populations to travel to and enjoy recreational resources. 	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase park diversity and access in urban areas to work toward recreation equity. Promote healthy and livable communities to increase quality of life. Improve regional trail connectivity and linkages. Support natural and working land conservation while ensuring water resource protection. Cultivate partnerships and collaboration among cities and agencies, and increase opportunities for outdoor education through these networks.

Water Resources

ISSUES & THREATS

- Climate change uncertainties and increasing demand on water supply.
- Water system infrastructure is in need of maintenance and improvement.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Support water resource stewardship, aquatic habitat conservation and environmental enhancements to ensure water quality.
- Increase ground water recharge and build resiliency to drought and climate change by protecting natural functions and promoting healthy creeks, watersheds and ecosystems.
- Collaborate among agencies to promote efficiencies in water use and to conduct outreach and education.
- Support a regional planning approach to water resources management (including flood control and floodplain management) and to the development of creekside recreation and trails.

Climate Change Resilience

ISSUES & THREATS

- Scientific data for the Bay Area and Santa Clara County anticipates sea level and temperature rise.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Support “ecosystem” based actions (e.g. establish habitat reserves, landscape linkages, foster watershed and water flow management, and strengthen aquatic and coastal ecosystems) to enhance climate change resilience.
- Increase outreach and education efforts to better inform the public, and plan for at-risk communities.
- Promote co-benefit strategies to engage stakeholders in climate change adaptation and resiliency planning (including the connection between climate and health, the need to balance people and ecosystems, and the enhancement of ecosystem services).
- Collaborate with multiple agencies across sectors to anticipate extremes, support science, and prioritize early action planning efforts based on well-informed scenario planning.

Planning & Livable Communities

ISSUES & THREATS

- Disparity in housing equity and affordability.
- Regional food security and affordability.
- Inequitable access to open space.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase universal access to open space to improve quality of life.
- Foster community engagement in order to promote healthy and livable communities and encourage water resource protection.
- Engage in planning activities that support equity such as: housing, food accessibility, and recreation, and provide urban open space amenities that meet needs of increasingly aging and diverse population to promote community health and quality of life.
- Cultivate partnerships and collaboration, and increase opportunities for outdoor education.
- Limit sprawl and implement other regional sustainable communities strategies by protecting greenbelts for urban-edge agriculture, parks, and open space.

Ecosystem Services

ISSUES & THREATS

- Limited public knowledge on the subject of ecosystem services.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Continue ecosystem services and resource valuation efforts to inform decision-making.
- Collaborate with public and private entities to promote ecosystem services, and ultimately, livable and healthy communities.
- Explore opportunities for resource conservation financial incentives, including payments for ecosystem services (e.g cost share on private working lands).

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Santa Clara County Open Space Authority Greenprint

TABLE 2.2: KEY THEMES BY CATEGORY

CONSERVATION CATEGORIES

GENERAL CONSERVATION	BIODIVERSITY	AGRICULTURE & WORKING LANDS	WATER RESOURCES	RECREATION & OPEN SPACE	CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE	PLANNING & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES	ECOSYSTEM SERVICES	STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	CVW3.ORG	COMMUNITY FORUM #1
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HUMAN COMMUNITIES AND EXPERIENCE

KEY CONSERVATION THEMES (BY THEMATIC CATEGORY)	GENERAL CONSERVATION	BIODIVERSITY	AGRICULTURE & WORKING LANDS	WATER RESOURCES	RECREATION & OPEN SPACE	CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE	PLANNING & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES	ECOSYSTEM SERVICES	STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	CVW3.ORG	COMMUNITY FORUM #1
Livable Healthy Communities	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Health and Recreation	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Parkland Diversity							✓		✓	✓	✓
Waterway/ Creekside Recreation				✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Universal Access to Open Space	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Regional Food Security			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓

NATURAL RESOURCES & COMMUNITIES

Regional Conservation Strategies	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Habitat Conservation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Climate Change Resilience	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
Waterway and Watershed Conservation		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Protect Working Lands	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ecosystem Function and Resilience		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓

SYMBIOTIC THEMES

Partnerships and Collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Public Education and Outreach	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Co-Benefit Strategies & Land Uses				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Connectivity and Linkages: Wildlife and Recreation	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
Water Supply & Quality	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Curb Development Pressures			✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
Ecosystem Services								✓	✓		✓
People / Ecosystems Balance	✓					✓		✓		✓	✓
Ecological /Economic Balance	✓					✓		✓	✓		✓

V. PART III. FINDINGS FROM PUBLIC INPUT

FIGURE 5: PUBLIC INPUT & STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS: METHODOLOGY



The collection of public input included in the existing conditions phase of the *Conservation Vision* was tri-fold. It included stakeholder interviews, a public input website—otherwise known as CVW3.org, and a Community Forum to kick-off the Vision and collect input. The public input portion concluded with presentations to the Authority’s Board and CAC for final validation of identified trends and themes. A combined summary of key themes and trends revealed through this process is shown in Table 3.1, grouped by the eight conservation categories used for the literature review.

Stakeholder Interviews

Key stakeholder input was collected through direct interviews during the first phase of the *Conservation Vision* process (in November and December 2012). The team identified representative leaders working in the fields of biodiversity, recreation and livable communities, climate change, agriculture and rangeland, and water resources, among others. Broad representation from key Bay Area organizations is intended to ensure that the input addresses the broad range of topics relevant to existing trends, issues and opportunities. Additional interviews may be conducted during later phases (Summer and Fall 2013), as well during Focus Group Meetings that are intended to engage more representatives from key conservation sectors and to develop and refine the goals and strategies of the Vision.

The following individuals were interviewed during Phase I, listed by the Project Team member that conducted the interview:

ICF

1. Ann Draper, Santa Clara Valley Water District
2. Julie Phillips, Professor, DeAnza College
3. Stu Weiss, Creekside Center for Earth Observation
4. Dave Johnston, Senior Environmental Scientist, CA Dept. Fish and Game (now Dept. of Fish and Wildlife)
5. Ryan Branciforte, Bay Area Open Space Council
6. Catherine Burns, SF Bay Bird Observatory
7. Tanya Diamond, Connectivity for Wildlife

SAGE

8. Sadie Clements, Regional Manager, South Bay, Community Alliance with Family Farmers
9. Dave Runston, Policy Director, Community Alliance with Family Farmers
10. Rachel Poplack, Director, Healthy Living and Director of Community Partnerships, The Health Trust
11. Aziz Baameur, Farm Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension Santa Clara County
12. Mark Mederios, Veggelution

WRT

13. Kirk Girard, Santa Clara County Planning Director
14. Neelima Pechacherla, Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
15. Melissa Hippard, Campaigns Manager, Greenbelt Alliance
16. Liz O’Donaghue, Director of External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy

The most common themes expressed in the stakeholder interviews included:

- Promote the OSA brand and continue outreach efforts
- Continue to form and foster partnerships and collaboration
- Enhance public education and outreach opportunities
- Promote locally grown food and food systems
- Protect working landscapes and heritage
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitat connectivity
- Increase parkland diversity
- Promote universal access to open space
- Manage for climate change resilience
- Acknowledge population diversity and equity

“All kids in Santa Clara County should have easy access to open space and spend time there every week. [We must] look at connectivity of the *entire* community.”

“Embrace connectivity as a core part of the OSA mission.”

“Keeping farmers on the land is critical.”

“Make infill easy and greenfield development hard!”

“Establish greenbelts to curb sprawl, preserve community and open space identity, and provide recreational and public health benefits in open space areas on the urban edge.”

“Identify areas that are resilient—not just areas that are at risk.”

Example of several public input comments from stakeholder interviews, CVW3.org, and Community Forum #1

Community Forum #1

On December 5, 2012, the Open Space Authority, with the assistance of the consultant team, convened the first of several public workshops to be conducted throughout the *Conservation Vision* process. The purpose of this initial workshop was to gather public input on key trends and issues from community members based on pointed questions from consultants on the topics of Biodiversity, Recreation and Livable Communities, Water Resources, and Working Lands. Approximately 120 community members attended the workshop and provided valuable input into the identification of key trends and initial priorities. Attachment A lists the extent of findings from the Public Workshop.

The most common themes expressed during the initial Community Forum on December 5, 2012 included:

- Conserve and maintain quality habitat
- Enhance trail connectivity
- Protect landscape connectivity and wildlife corridors
- Promote the health benefits of open space
- Foster health equity and diverse open space access
- Manage waterway and watershed conservation, including urban creeks
- Manage and mitigate development pressure
- Public education and outreach
- Promote locally grown food
- Balance restoration and acquisition efforts
- Enhance collaboration and forge partnerships



Community Forum #1 held on December 5, 2012 provoked much meaningful input



“Map Your Ideas” results to date, March 2013. Source: www.CVW3.org

CVW3.org Website

As part of the public engagement process for the *Conservation Vision*, the Open Space Authority is hosting an online engagement website at www.CVW3.org. The site is hosted by MindMixer, an online community engagement support tool that provides site hosting, moderation, data analysis and a personalized engagement platform. The domain name drew from the title of the Vision: *A Conservation Vision: Water, Wildlife, Working Lands*.

The CVW3 website launched in October 2012 and during the data collection portion of the Vision, served as a mechanism for collecting comments from the community and stakeholders outside the forum of the public meeting. By March 2013, the site had been visited by 655 individuals and viewed approximately 9,605 times. The site will remain active for the remainder of the project timeline in order to continue to gather input and engage the community throughout the development of the *Conservation Vision*.

The categories used on MindMixer were aimed at garnering input that informed the conservation categories of the *Conservation Vision*. Attachment C lists the extent of findings from CVW3.org to date.

The most common themes expressed to date on the CVW3.org site include:

- Focus on habitat conservation
- Create and promote a sense of place
- Enhance education and outreach
- Provide parkland variety
- Promote universal access to open space
- Increase urban ag programs and foster community gardens
- Manage for climate change resilience
- Enhance trail connectivity
- Protect and enhance wildlife linkages
- Continue to form and foster partnerships and collaboration

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TABLE 3.1: COMMON THEMES (FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS, CVW3.ORG, & COMMUNITY FORUM #1)

General Conservation

Promote the image of OSA Public at large should know what the OSA does. The OSA can serve as great unifier for geographic- and discipline-specific goals and strategies to realize a coordinated vision. (Stakeholder Interviews) (SI)

Establish best practices: OSA can execute regional best practices in conservation on the local scale and serve as regional model. (SI)

Create partnerships and build relationships between organizations that will help realize common visions. Include elected officials and City and County governments to provide political backing for conservation policies (i.e. Measure B and VHP). (SI)

Need for **public education across all themes**. Urban agriculture, biodiversity, public health. Hands-on programs are especially desirable especially for promoting physical activity and health. Identify grants for continued education, program creation. Use parks and open space to promote social interaction and physical activity. (SI)

Encourage **mutual prioritization** based on shared conservation sensitivity areas, (i.e. ranchlands and habitat). (SI)

Build on the opportunity to **educate the community about conservation** efforts. Explain to people why conservation is important to them. (SI)

Build partnerships and leverage work that is being done across constituencies and interest groups to maximize prioritization and shared funding resources. (CVW3.org)

Education and outreach is top priority for increased outreach to multicultural communities and a range of ages through educational programs. (CVW3.org)

Education and public awareness of the multiple benefits of open space conservation is critical to build a future constituency for conservation. The OSA can serve an invaluable educational role, including outreach to urban and rural residents about all kinds of farms, watersheds and water quality, biodiversity and species appreciation, and public health. (CFI)

Expand community outreach to get more people involved in conservation. Santa Clara County is very diverse with a multitude of different concerns/viewpoints. (CFI)

Focus as much on **enhancing existing protected lands** as on buying new lands. (CFI)

Knowledge sharing: coordinate with other land management and resource agencies with similar research agendas and overlapping geographies and identify opportunities to leverage grant sources. (CFI)

Establish greenbelts between communities to **curb sprawl** and **preserve community and open space identity**, and provide recreational and public health benefits in regional open space areas on the urban edge. (CFI)

Agriculture & Working Lands

Local food and agriculture are important for community health, the local economy, identification of food origin, and for public education. (SI)

Provide for a **variety of working lands**. Identify and appreciate the different roles served by large agricultural areas and rangeland (related to economy and way of life) and small urban scale farms (provide distinct community values and identity). (SI)

Community gardens and urban agriculture offer opportunity for community involvement and education on local food and public health. Local non-profits should be leveraged to engage with community. (CVW3.org)

Balance supply with demand for **local food**, and continue to promote health benefits of local agriculture. (CFI)

Water Resources

Watershed and creek preservation are essential for protecting habitat, and ensuring water quality and long-term provision of resources. Urban creeks and natural riparian corridors should be included in conservation priority areas. (SI)

Importance of **preserving natural areas** for watershed integrity, (i.e. undammed streams, upper watersheds (uplands), naturally functioning streams) habitat preservation, natural beauty, and resilience to climate change. (SI; CFI)

Long term quality and availability of **clean air and water** is a community priority. (CVW3.org)

Comprehensive watershed protection that includes limiting impervious cover via land use regulation, protecting natural watershed systems, maintaining connectivity, and considering climate change resilience and watersheds as natural infrastructure. (CFI)

KEY: SI = Stakeholder Interviews; CVW3.org = Public Input Website; CFI = Community Forum I,

Biodiversity

Prioritize **wildlife connectivity**, especially connecting Santa Cruz Mountains and Diablo Range. Leverage the adoption of the HCP with OSA land acquisition strategy to include connectivity issues. (SI)

Trail and habitat connectivity Aquatic and terrestrial habitat connectivity for biodiversity, as well as connectivity of urban areas to open space resources. (CFI)

Protect **Coyote Valley** and **Pajaro River** to retain the **linkage** between the Diablo Range and the Santa Cruz Mountains. (CFI)

Recreation & Open Space

Planning policy is crucial for the adoption of conservation goals. The Santa Clara County Health Element and General Plan demonstrate the need to include conservation in city and county-wide planning documents. (SI)

Diversity of parklands: Small parks as well as large regional parks are needed. Opportunities for urban open space include recreation, agriculture, and converting vacant land into open space for community benefit. (SI)

Trail and habitat connectivity Aquatic and terrestrial habitat connectivity for biodiversity, as well as connectivity of urban areas to open space resources. (SI) **Connection of existing open spaces.** More trails! Consider linking Grant Ranch to Sierra Vista, perhaps via a connection to the Bay Area Ridge Trail. Develop more dedicated trails to connect existing open spaces, particularly trails that follow riparian corridors where possible. (CVW3.org)

Preservation of greenbelts should be a top priority in order to limit urban development and maintain integrity of watersheds, habitat, and agricultural lands. (CVW3.org)

Need for a **variety of parklands**, from urban open space, to large naturalized parklands (i.e. Penitencia Creek County Park) outside of urban areas. (CVW3.org)

Climate Change Resilience

Sea level rise and climate change are unknowns. How will they impact tidal marshes? And is the money being spent on restoration effective? (SI)

Climate change and resiliency. Identify areas that are resilient—not just areas that are at risk. (SI)

Consider the effects of global warming on sensitive species, biodiversity and habitat, and agricultural land. How can OSA's jurisdiction protect areas that may be habitat in 50, 100, or 150 years? (CVW3.org)

Planning & Livable Communities

Promote the **public health benefits of open space** conservation. (SI)

Conservation and infrastructure: friends or enemies? High Speed Rail threatens priority areas, yet has the potential to be a demonstration project of how to do it right versus how to do it wrong. Also, conservation efforts can be coordinated with needed upgrades for infrastructure. (SI)

Universal access to open space. Offer access to open space and recreational areas via alternative transportation methods for those without cars and with disabilities. (CVW3.org)

Natural species protection, outdoor recreation, sense of place, and views of natural beauty are the most valued features of open space among community members. (CVW3.org)

Must **monitor high speed rail and development** which could divide agricultural lands and compromise sensitive habitat. (SI)

Ecosystem Services

Values of land and local economy need to be considered and weighed. High-value land is among the most important for land conservation. How can conservation values take a special place in the market? Carefully address how the needs of the local economy of Santa Clara County can be balanced with new economic drivers and development pressure. (SI)

Santa Clara County's diverse and dynamic population creates special considerations for different economic communities' experience with open space. Population forecasts provide a context for educating the public about the need to balance urban growth with open space preservation, highlighting the many values of open space. (SI)

Establish land trusts for stewardship practices and fulfillment of conservation monitoring priorities. (CFI)



Coyote Valley, June 2011 Photo: Santa Clara County Open Space Authority