



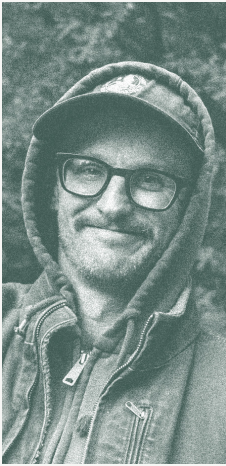
2025-2030

STRATEGIC PLAN

**Helping communities and landscapes thrive
through sustainable trails.**



Letter From Our Executive Director



We've been a successful trail stewardship for over 26 years, carving out our niche in sustainable trail development, maintenance, and top-notch volunteer events. Over the past two-plus decades, we've helped millions of trail users immerse themselves in the wonders of nature and form long-lasting connections with the unique beauty that only exists here in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Now, I'm proud to share our roadmap for the future. The work outlined here builds on our achievements to date and leverages our seat at the table to expand sustainable trails and create transformational change for our community.

Decades of personal experience and research show that trails provide multiple immediate benefits to improve public mental and physical health, curb screen addiction, and build resilience in the face of wildfires and climate change.

Over the next five years, our trails and programs will help both natural landscapes and human lives thrive as we work toward a future where the outdoors are at the heart of neighborhoods' strength and connection. Where that trail you hike with your kids is also maintained as a fire break to improve wildfire preparedness. Where cyclists and equestrians come together to clear poison oak and improve the safety of trails. Where bike commutes through open spaces are favored over car time on a busy highway. And where more community members have access to get out there and explore the jaw-dropping beauty of our natural landscapes.

Our strategic plan will serve as our guiding light in the coming 5 years so we can make the biggest impact in our community. We're grateful for the sponsors, donors, volunteers, and cheerleaders who have enabled all of the transformational trail work so far. Now, it's time to take our impact even further.

We believe that when you give folks access to nature, you can inspire them to care for it. Together, we will help as many people as possible enjoy the multitude of benefits that trails offer so we can steward our communities and open spaces for generations to come.

We hope you join us as we dig into the future!

Matt De Young,

Executive Director, Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship

2025-2030 Strategic Plan Overview



VISION:

We envision a future where outdoor adventures spark collective care for open spaces, helping communities and landscapes thrive together.

MISSION:

We build essential connections to our environment through high-quality trails and community-driven stewardship.

INITIATIVE 1



Create and Maintain High-Quality Trails

Expand & enhance local trail networks

Drive new trail planning efforts, lead the construction of trails, and reimagine existing trails to maximize user experience and sustainability

Advance our offerings as a regional trails leader

Expand our staff's technical skills and enhance our training offerings in trail construction, maintenance, and more

INITIATIVE 2



Foster Community Stewardship

Deepen collective stewardship

Increase meaningful community involvement and ownership of trails

Reach more of our diverse community

Deliver programs and projects to meet our region's recreational and cultural needs so that everyone can access nature

INITIATIVE 3



Improve Outdoor Access and Neighborhood Connections

Increase trail connectivity

Bring trailheads closer to homes and link open spaces together via new trails

Improve access to trails for transportation needs

Help more people leverage recreational trails as key connections for daily commutes



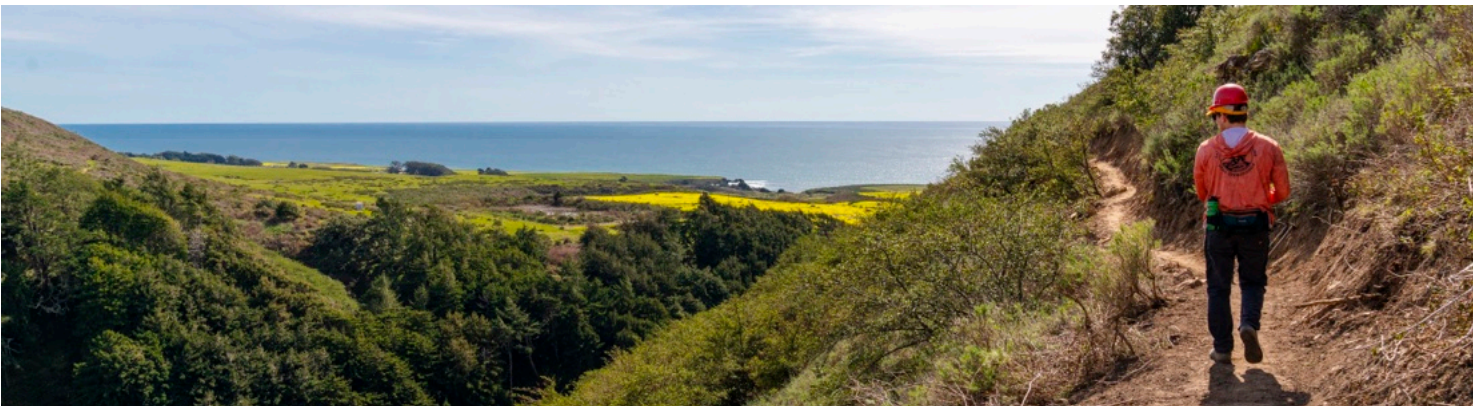
INITIATIVE 1

CREATE AND MAINTAIN HIGH-QUALITY TRAILS

For over 26 years, we've been building and maintaining high-quality trails that help folks get outside and explore nature. Our trails provide much more than 'just recreation'— they play an [essential role](#) in physical and mental health, community and climate resilience, and emergency response.

Between 2025 and 2030, we'll build and upgrade trails that serve all of these critical purposes in our community.

As a trusted partner of agencies like California State Parks, CAL FIRE, the Bureau of Land Management, and the City of Santa Cruz, we can meaningfully contribute to our local Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and initiatives like the California 30 x 30 commitment to improve equitable outdoor access and conserve natural landscapes. To achieve these goals, we'll invest in our staff's technical construction capabilities and provide education for the next generation of trail and environmental stewards.



GOAL 01

Expand & enhance local trail networks

HOW WE'LL REACH THE GOAL:

Incorporate forest fuels management into trail work across local networks to improve resilience, safety, and accessibility to open spaces

Build Southern and Phase 2 trail networks at Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument, including a wheelchair-accessible parking lot and loop

Reroute Wilder Ranch State Park trails to boost sustainability and improve year-round access to the park

Conduct pilot projects to encourage mountain bike trail development among local land managers

GOAL 02

Advance our offerings as a regional trails leader

HOW WE'LL REACH THE GOAL:

Expand Trail Academy classes and professional training curriculum for land managers and other land stewards

Invest in advanced Trail Crew training in carpentry, rigging, machine operation, and trail design

Launch our Stewardship Corps for underserved youth to earn a living wage while receiving trail and environmental stewardship training

Support the development of industry-wide best practices for sustainable trail construction so that builders may reduce impacts on natural resources





INITIATIVE 2

EXPAND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

Over the past 2+ decades, we've seen how Dig Days, Trail Academy classes, and events like National Trails Day instill a sense of place and purpose amongst our thousands of annual volunteers. We believe that it takes collective stewardship like this to create a thriving natural environment and community.

As part of our strategic plan, we'll expand our trail programs to reach new communities and ignite more trail users to take action. Through free classes and fun volunteer events, we'll strengthen neighbors' connections to one another and to local parks and open spaces.

We want our trails and programs to serve people of all backgrounds and abilities. So we're going to spend time listening, learning, and working with underserved communities currently detached from open spaces. Our work will bring the joy and benefits of the outdoors to a wider audience and grow a knowledgeable and engaged community that will support local landscapes for generations.



GOAL 01**Deepen collective Stewardship****HOW WE'LL REACH THE GOAL:**

Increase participation in public park planning conversations throughout the Peninsula and South Santa Cruz County so more voices are heard at critical decision periods

Introduce new advanced skills trainings so volunteers can complete more skilled and in-demand trail work

Expand our Trail Sage program to allow more volunteers to lead independent trail work events so we can get more trail work done

Expand Senderos para Todos and Trails for All programs throughout Santa Cruz County to introduce more diverse communities to the magic of stewardship

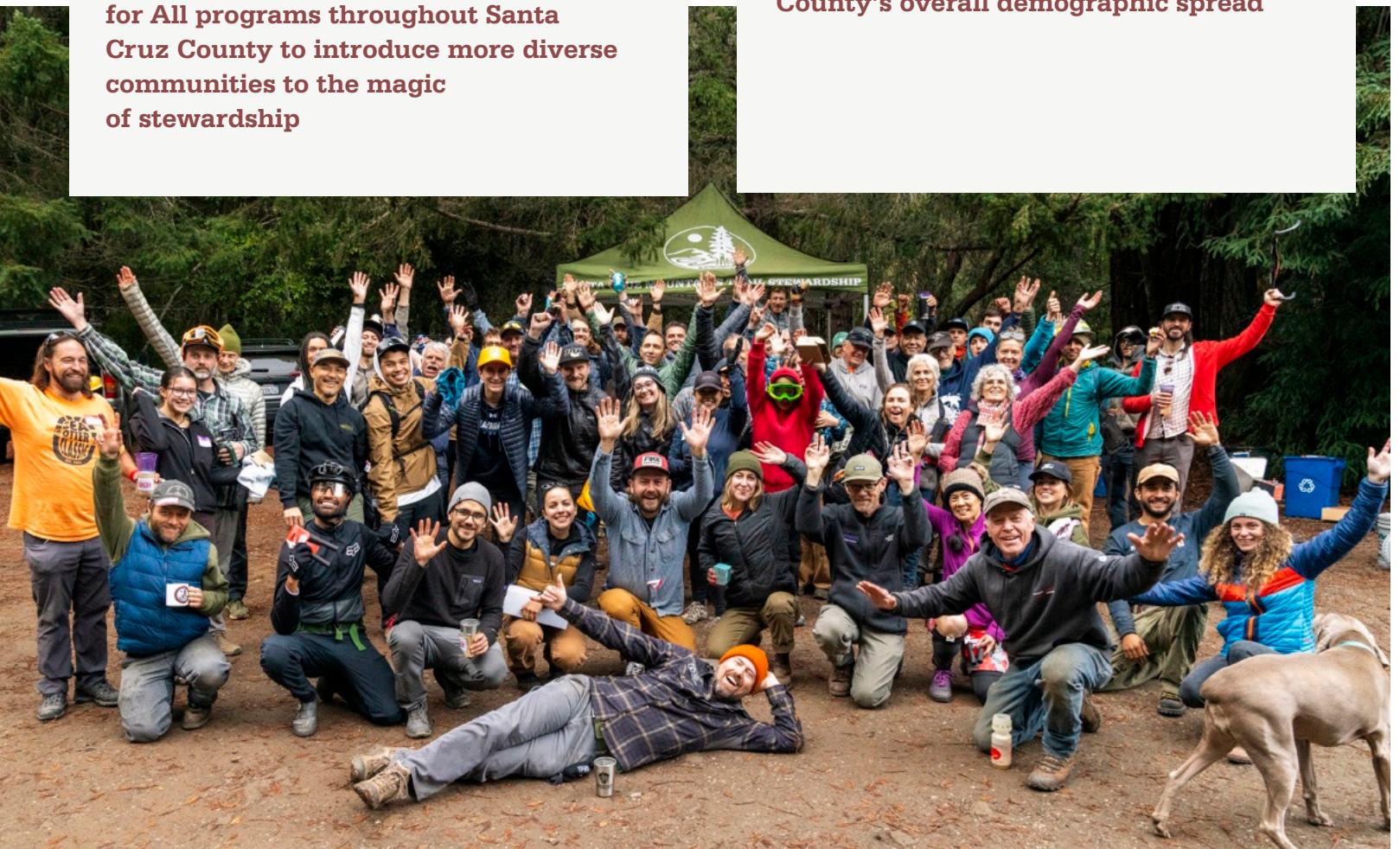
GOAL 02**Reach more of our diverse community****HOW WE'LL REACH THE GOAL:**

Translate all program materials into Spanish and provide Spanish-language Trail Academy courses

Perform accessibility assessments on key local trails and champion essential updates to meet more of our community's diverse needs

Advocate for and invest in transportation for volunteers without vehicle access

Develop programs that help participation rates mirror Santa Cruz County's overall demographic spread





INITIATIVE 3

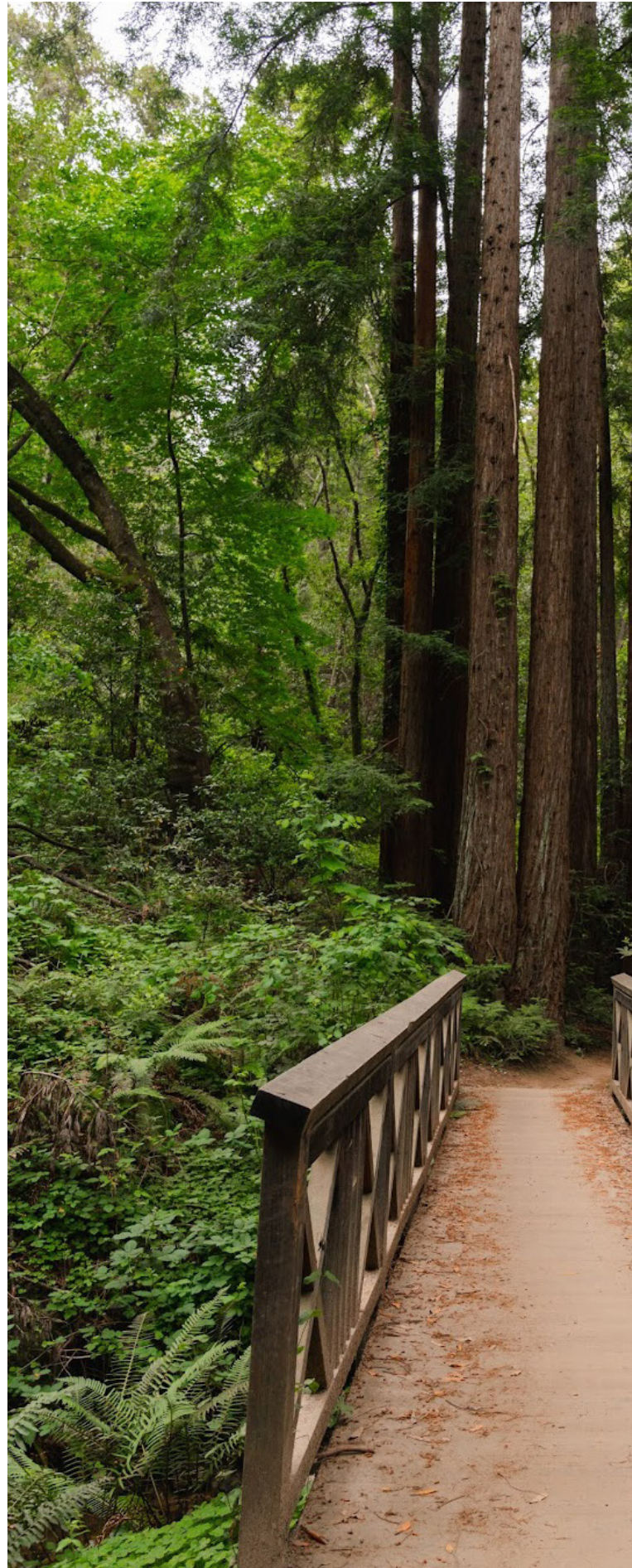
IMPROVE OUTDOOR ACCESS AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

Trails are a critical connection point for residents to engage with both their environment and one another. While Santa Cruz boasts amazing natural beauty, many neighborhoods in the county are far away from open spaces or are only close to fragmented, tiny trail networks. We want to change that.

Over the next 5 years, we aim to shorten the distance between front doors and trailheads.



We will work in partnership with other local organizations to link neighboring open spaces via trails and building trails and pump tracks in communities currently without those amenities. We'll also integrate recreational trails within key commuting routes to create convenient, enjoyable, and sustainable mobility corridors. Whether seeking a dirt commute or a day-long hiking adventure, we believe that fantastic outdoor access is a cornerstone of our community's long-term health and happiness.





GOAL 01

Expand & enhance local trail networks

HOW WE'LL REACH THE GOAL:

Construct the first pump track in the San Lorenzo Valley at Felton's Covered Bridge County Park

Connect isolated neighborhoods throughout Santa Cruz County to nearby open spaces through new trails

Link fragmented trail networks and create larger inter-park connections with new trail design and construction

GOAL 02

Advance our offerings as a regional trails leader

HOW WE'LL REACH THE GOAL:

Ensure local trails are safe and accessible year-round, so more community members can use them regardless of age or ability

Drive regional trail planning efforts with an eye toward both recreation and transportation needs

Expand urban trail networks at popular travel destinations across the Santa Cruz Mountains



Next Steps

DIG

Join us in the field at a volunteer trail work event. We host multiple events every week, and would love to see you out there. There's no prior experience required, and we provide all the tools and equipment you'll need.

See upcoming events at
santacruztrails.org/events.

DONATE

Make a contribution to support our work with a tax-deductible donation today. We'll use funds to build new trails, maintain existing ones, and get more trail users involved in the fun of stewardship.

Make your gift today at
santacruztrails.org/donate.

BECOME A MEMBER

Members are the foundation of our work. They provide either a monthly or annual gift to trails and allow us to leverage dependable income for trails' most urgent needs. Plus, our members enjoy some pretty sweet perks like exclusive giveaways and events.

Join us today at
santacruztrails.org/membership.

Get in Touch

Drop us a line to chat about upcoming projects and pick our brains about trail work. We'd love to hear from you!

Email us at
info@santacruztrails.org.

Newsletter

Stay connected with events, access guides, and real-time construction updates.

Join our mailing list today at
santacruztrails.org/subscribe.

Follow Us

See the latest trail updates and behind-the-scenes trail work.

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**SANTA CRUZ
MOUNTAINS**
TRAIL STEWARDSHIP

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