

Living Streams for the Santa Clara Valley

Vision Statement

Revised April 10, 2008

We, the undersigned, share a dream of restoring our Santa Clara Valley creeks to be “living streams”. Living streams abundant with fish, trees, birds and wildlife. Living streams enjoyed for their natural and recreational value by the residents of the many neighborhoods through which these streams flow.

Despite many efforts by many entities to improve our streams, their health remains in jeopardy.

We applaud the Santa Clara Valley Water District’s commitment to watershed stewardship through actions such as its efforts to restore healthy habitat conditions for steelhead trout, to provide funding for Healthy Ecosystems and Trails in its flood protection program and to establish in its policies that a watershed based approach is the framework for integrating flood control, water supply and stream restoration. We applaud the actions of some local governments to protect their streams.

However, we believe that a much more concerted community effort is needed by the Santa Clara Valley Water District in partnership with the cities, county, and private parties to remedy this situation.

There is a legacy of environmental degradation of our creeks that will require a major refocusing of resources to bring them back to health. There is a need to systematically develop habitat goals for our creeks – reach by reach, creek by creek - based on a scientific understanding of what we once had, what we now have and what can be recovered. Flood protection, water supply and land use decision making should enhance the environment for fish, birds, trees and other wildlife while protecting people, providing for their water needs and encouraging development in harmony with the natural environment.

In 2007 phone polls conducted by the Water District, 83% of voting age residents said that restoring creek and bay ecosystems should be a high priority. Residents of voting age polled between 1995 and 2007 have consistently indicated that healthy streams and bay ecosystems are just as important to them as flood protection. They want to enjoy the vitality and day-to-day benefits of living streams as well as protection from flooding. These goals are completely compatible. Therefore, the local governments’ and the Water District's financial priorities for stream restoration should be changed to be in accord with the high valuation for this activity expressed by the community.

It is time for the District to adopt a policy resolution which makes “Stream Restoration/ Watershed Stewardship” a third pillar of its Core Mission along with Flood Protection and Water Supply. It is time for the District budget to reflect the priority that the voters ascribe to stream restoration. It is time for local governments to develop Master Plans for Stream Restoration that provide a long term vision and a blueprint for protecting and bringing our streams back to life.

It is time to begin in earnest to transform our creeks into living streams and give every neighborhood the opportunity to have a vital personal relationship with the streams that run through it.

Santa Clara County Creeks Coalition (408) 358-6963 info@screeks.org