

# Tri Valley Conservancy

## Strategic Plan

adopted February 17, 2011

Updated July, 2013

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### **Introduction**

Tri Valley Conservancy's Strategic Plan was designed to take advantage of opportunities and respond to the challenges facing the Tri-Valley region. It is a Strategic Plan that provides the goals and objectives to guide our actions through the next three years (2013-2015). This Plan will be reviewed each year and updated if needed.

This Strategic Plan builds on over 15 years of work and includes new strategies for dealing with new and existing opportunities. This Plan has been developed with member input and participation including:

### **Board of Directors**

- Ryan Callahan
- Connie Campbell
- Jeff Cranor
- Matt Ford
- Michael Fredrich
- Art Jeannet
- Melody O'Shea
- Norm Petermeier
- Mary Roberts
- Chris Schlies
- Clay Widmayer
- Jeff Williams

### **Staff**

- Laura Mercier
- Kellie Hayes
- Andy Ross

### **Our Mission**

The Conservancy's mission is "to permanently protect the fertile soils, rangelands, open space and biological resources, and to support a viable agricultural economy, in the Tri Valley area.

The Conservancy accomplishes this mission by providing landowners with a flexible, voluntary alternative to subdividing or developing their property.

### **Our Vision**

Preservation of agricultural lands and natural open spaces in our area is vital to protecting our quality of life. The Tri-Valley Conservancy will be a leader in the permanent preservation of the area's rural and ecological environment. We envision a future that includes:

1. Population growth and development matched by a strong agricultural industry and a strong conservation ethic.

2. Sustainable communities. We recognize the need to protect land and to support a viable agricultural economy to provide food, recreation, and watershed for the long-term health and viability of our community.
3. Ecological Health. We are committed to the permanent protection of lands that are critical to the health of the environment.

TVC will foster the creation and maintenance of a productive and balanced environment for current and future generations of Tri-Valley area residents.

## Our History

The Livermore Valley has long been a premiere wine region. Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, vintners recognized the region's climate and soils as highly suitable for wine-grape cultivation. By the turn of the century, the Valley was home to more than 5,000 acres of vineyards and over 50 wineries.

However, the next era in the Valley's winemaking history ushered in an unfortunate sequence of grape surpluses, root louse, and Prohibition. By the late 1960's the Valley's viticulture production had dwindled to only 1,500 vine-planted acres and six wineries.

The following decade saw rapid growth in Bay Area population and economy and increasingly strong development pressures, both the Valley's remaining agricultural lands and its potential to revitalize agriculture were threatened.

In response, the South Livermore Valley Steering Committee was formed in 1987 and by 1993 had created a comprehensive South Livermore Valley Area Plan ( Plan ) to provide strong economic incentives and equitable development regulations to promote investment in viticulture and ensure that development limits be placed on agricultural lands.

The land trust was originally formed in 1993 to help implement a part of the South Livermore Valley Area Plan. Tri-Valley Conservancy (TVC) is the only Accredited Regional Land Trust located in the County of Alameda. TVC seeks to preserve land for agriculture, open space and recreational uses such as trails in the eastern and relatively rural portion of Alameda County, a part of the San Francisco Bay region.

The land trust began as a seven (7) member Board of Directors (BOD) and one part-time staff. Today TVC's BOD has grown to twelve (12) members and three full-time staff.

Since TVC's founding, the trust has partnered with thirty-two (32) property owners to save 4,229 acres of agricultural and open space lands in the Tri-Valley.

## Our Role

One facet of the Conservancy's work is **acquisition**. Working with willing landowners, the Conservancy acquires property development rights through purchasing of land in fee or making

alternative arrangements for a conservation easement. In doing so, the Conservancy ensures that a property will be protected from future development.

Another facet of the Conservancy's work is partnering with landowners for the ongoing **stewardship** associated with easements. This includes annual property visits and consultation with each property owner.

## **Our Core Values and Beliefs**

The members of the Tri Valley Conservancy are bound by certain common values. We believe we must take the **long view (looking 100 years ahead)** in protecting the rural and agricultural traditions of our community.

We have a vision for the future. As an organization this involves being **measured, fair and non-political**. We consider ourselves an **effective** group, **diligent** and **thoughtful** in our decision-making and **enthusiastic** and **committed** to our work to preserve the character of our landscapes and way of life.

The reasons we do our work are many and varied. Preserving this beautiful region gives us pride in where we live and a fresh perspective on our daily lives. We want our children to experience a connection with this land and way of life, at the same time as preserving the rich history and agricultural values of the Tri-Valley region.

## **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

Our new Strategic Plan is being developed at an interesting moment in time. The housing market collapse has presented land trusts all over the country with the opportunity to purchase land slated for development, while at the same time, the economic recession has forced many land trusts to cut staff, budgets and programs.

Because of TVC's strong and diverse board and excellent staff Tri Valley Conservancy has weathered the storm intact. Recently TVC completed the Land Trust Alliance's rigorous Accreditation process, allowing TVC to join a small, but impressive group of land trusts throughout the nation who have achieved this status. We have been vigilant about monitoring and stewarding our lands and have retained our programs. This will help TVC emerge from the economic downturn even healthier and stronger than before.

It is imperative; however, that we take advantage of the downturn in the economy and the temporary slowdown of development pressures to build our portfolio of protected lands and our organization. This period of opportunity will allow us to showcase our programs, our skills and our leadership. It also means that we have to ensure that, in this time of economic hardship, our organization is built sustainably, with a steady diversified funding stream, a well-trained staff and board, and a local community who is fully vested in our work. The strongest of land trusts thrive due to the roots they have in their communities and this is a good time to build our supporter-base. People may have less to give right now, but they still value and support the protection of places they love. While the recession will be temporary, the land we save will last forever.

The key questions facing us today are

- How do we seize the moment to protect as many critical resource lands in the Tri-Valley Region as possible?
- How do we maintain and increase financial sustainability of TVC over the long-term?
- How do we tap into the interests, values and needs of the local community to communicate our mission, our successes and the threats facing the area to build a stronger cadre of supporters?

Our strategies to deal with these questions are outlined on the next pages. We will monitor our progress to ensure our desired outcomes and make adjustments as needed.

The strategies listed in this plan are strategies that:

- Support our Mission.
- Enhance our reputation and delivery of our programs
- Are financially viable.
- Are consistent with our values.
- Support us in moving to the next stage of Tri-Valley Conservancy's development.

## Land Conservation and Stewardship

Paramount to the continued success of the Tri Valley Conservancy is ongoing monitoring of lands under easement. In addition, it is the responsibility of TVC to build and maintain strong lasting relationships with landowners to ensure ongoing stewardship and management practices to protect the land.

In September 2007 (updated 2011), Tri Valley Conservancy developed a comprehensive Conservation Strategy and Implementation Plan. Since then, TVC has successfully 1) protected 74 acres identified in the Strategy in “*help partners establish a regional trail corridor in the South Livermore Area Plan*” and 2) completed a “*Comprehensive Resource Conservation Study for North Livermore including Potential Trail/Wildlife Corridors to Mount Diablo.*” We will continue to work on key portions of the Strategy as follows:

1. North Livermore (NL)
  - a. Preserve the areas in and surrounding Doolan Canyon
  - b. Preserve Critical Habitat Lands in the Alkali Sink Area– 3 Phase Program
  - c. Assist Partners Establish regional trail connections and trail connection connecting existing regional parklands.
  - d. Create functional alliance with other organizations, e.g. Save Mt. Diablo, Rangeland Trust, Bay Area Open Space, EBRPD.
2. South Pleasanton (SP)
  - a. Protect Habitat and Range Lands
  - b. Help Partners Establish Regional Trail Connections through Developing lands in SP

3. South Livermore Valley Area Plan (SLVAP)
  - a. Pursue and acquire additional conservation easements within the SLVAP
  - b. Help Partners establish a regional trail corridor in the SLVAP
  - c. Continue to work with County of Alameda and Stakeholders to fortify and clarify SLVAP
4. Altamont Foothills
  - a. Continue to work with partners (i.e. City of Livermore, NRCS, RCD, EBRPD and many more) to establish Brushy Peak to Del Valle Trail in Altamont Foothills
  - b. Protect Habitat and Corridors and Range Lands
  - c. Maintain and Improve Wildlife Corridors and Connectivity
  - d. Participate in New Land Use Regulations; particularly regarding green energy, wind and solar power generation and transmission projects to ensure protection of open space and wildlife.
5. Tri-Valley
  - a. Continue to educate and steward landowners in the Tri-Valley region and be responsive to new opportunities as they occur.

### **Organizational Development**

Tri Valley Conservancy has to protect and monitor the lands it stewards in perpetuity. To do this, we need to ensure that Tri Valley Conservancy is a sustainable organization for many years to come. Many of the strategies listed above cannot be put into effect without new sources of funding, a strong board and excellent ways to communicate our work and our message to the local community and beyond.

### ***Fund Development***

1. Assess need to hire additional staff to establish diversified and sustainable funding for TVC.
2. Establish a strong individual and major donor base
3. Establish Planned Giving Program

### ***Communications***

1. Develop and implement an outreach plan targeting particular audiences in the community.
2. Develop materials to appeal to each audience.
3. Continue current outreach activities to increase visibility and support of Tri-Valley Conservancy.

### ***Board Development***

1. Develop Board Advisory Council to include former Board Members and other local people with an interest in land conservation and the ability to contribute to our financial health.
2. Ensure that the Board and Advisory Council are trained and equipped to lead the organization through a period of growth and increased interaction and involvement with the community.