

A Plan for Resilience

5-Year Strategic Plan

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2028



A WORLD
WHERE THE
DIVERSITY OF
LIFE THRIVES

A WORLD

WHERE THE

DIVERSITY OF

LIFE THRIVES

AND NATURE

BENEFITS ALL



Resilient together

5-Year Strategic Plan

July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2028

Photo: Sarah Warnock

Despite decades of conservation work, the climate continues to warm, biodiversity is in a steep decline globally, and California has the most imperiled populations of plants and animals of any state in the contiguous United States. Our own research has revealed a sobering 66% decline in numbers of shorebirds on Tomales Bay.

In fact, during the very same 61 years that Audubon Canyon Ranch has operated, humans have become the single most influential agent of change on Earth, causing substantial impacts to our atmosphere, lands, and waters, and contributing to the massive loss of biodiversity. Yet we know that over the previous 12,000 years, the majority of the world's ecosystems were also shaped and cared for by diverse histories of human habitation and use by Indigenous peoples.

Audubon Canyon Ranch can be an agent of beneficial change. Our newly adopted five-year Strategic Plan not only acknowledges that people are part of nature but sets an ambitious road map for landscape-scale stewardship that engages a diversity of hearts, hands, and minds.

This Plan was collectively developed over the past nine months. We conducted 16 listening sessions, gathered ideas and feedback from board, staff, volunteers, community members, and partners, and looked at our place in local and statewide initiatives, including, *A Blueprint for Environmental Literacy*, *Pathways to 30x30*, *Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy*, and *California's Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire*.

More than 1,600 thoughtful responses were collected. If you contributed to these sessions, **THANK YOU.**

The result of our strategic planning process is a new mission, vision, and set of values that will guide Audubon Canyon Ranch for years to come, and key initiatives to guide us for the next five years.

Conservation work is hard work, it goes slow, and it can feel too big to tackle at times. Our 2023–2028 Strategic Plan will energize and inspire us to do our best work toward a more resilient world — *a world where the diversity of life thrives, and nature benefits all.*

We have already begun this work and we invite you to partner with us, dig in, and lead with your heart.

Tom Gardali, Chief Executive Officer

Carol Lynn Wood, President, Board of Directors

Collaborative action

We will include more people, with diverse world views and skillsets, who are motivated to make positive change.



Photo: Claire McMurtry

Our mission

Connecting nature, people, and science for a more resilient world.

Our vision

A world where the diversity of life thrives, and nature benefits all.

How we work

We work to meet our mission through the integration of education, science, and stewardship in a rapidly changing world.

Our values



HEART

We care about the work and each other. We approach our work with humility, generosity, and compassion.



BOLDNESS

We work for change, questioning assumptions. We take the right risks. We are adventurous and creative.



IMPACT

We aim to make a significant difference for nature and people. We set clear goals and work smart to meet them.

At the heart of our strategy

We put our values to work and focus on **collaboration**, **taking the right risks**, and **providing experiences that catalyze action**.



Durable conservation outcomes

We will work at several scales, from the preserves we hold to larger landscapes, within our organization and in partnership with others.

Photo: trail camera, Sonoma County

Strategic initiatives, 2023–2028

To make a difference most effectively for nature and people, our 2023–2028 Strategic Plan focuses on resilience at several scales and, specifically, across two strategic initiatives: **Resilient Lands and Waters** and **Empowered and Inclusive Communities**.

These initiatives include detailed outcomes for landscape-scale thinking and doing through strong collaborations, formal partnerships, and information sharing. Critically, they commit us to include more people, with diverse world views, who have the necessary skills and motivation to make positive change.

Resilient Lands and Waters



GOOD FIRE



SCIENCE FOR STEWARDSHIP



IMPACT STEWARDSHIP

Empowered and Inclusive Communities



EQUITABLE ACCESS TO THE LAND



ACTIVATED YOUTH



SKILL BUILDING & TRAINING



Resilient Lands and Waters

Good Fire • Science for Stewardship • Impact Stewardship

Photo courtesy Monan's Rill Community

Simply protecting natural areas and species is not enough to maintain biodiversity and the ecological functions that sustain us all.

Environmental stressors such as habitat fragmentation and loss, resource extraction and over consumption — and more extreme and episodic weather events — threaten the diversity of life that sustains us.

In particular, the increasing frequency, duration, and magnitude of extreme events like drought, wildfire, and flooding are impacting large areas of the environment and threatening our individual and collective well-being.

Without stewardship, conservation is an incomplete investment

Stewardship — assisting natural areas or species with positive human actions — is needed to arrest biodiversity loss and restore ecological functions.

The Resilient Lands and Waters initiative captures our investment in the ongoing stewardship of the

lands we hold and beyond. We will take the best care of the places we have direct responsibility for, and we will test, model, and share lessons learned with public and private land managers at the landscape scale.

We aim to enhance biological diversity and ecosystem function, while promoting additional societal benefits to increase ecological resilience at scales that are sufficient to create meaningful change.

Good Fire, Science for Stewardship, Impact Stewardship

The Resilient Lands and Waters initiative focuses our work in three distinct areas: Good Fire, Science for Stewardship, and Impact Stewardship.

For each, we have identified the resources, activities, and outcomes necessary to address the loss of biodiversity and ecological functions as well as the impacts we expect to see beyond the 5-year life of the Plan.

Good Fire

The ecosystems we see as natural today were lived in and shaped by Indigenous societies, using sophisticated fire practices for millennia. Prescribed fire — “good fire” — plays an important role in the health, maintenance, and restoration of many ecosystems of the West and, without it, many plant and animal species may disappear. Good fire can increase biodiversity, mitigate the impacts of wildfire, and protect fire dependent species. It is also important for community safety and effectively managing landscapes at scale. We use good fire in collaboration with fire management professionals, agencies, tribes, and rural communities.



Within 5 years we will:

- ✓ Improve capacity among diverse partners in the San Francisco Bay Area to plan, coordinate, and implement cooperative burns, especially those with ecological objectives
- ✓ Conduct and support larger, more complex, ecologically driven prescribed burn projects, furthering the *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy*
- ✓ Be a trusted partner and resource available to support cultural and non-cultural burns
- ✓ Increase the State of California's recognition of prescribed fire as a critical tool for use by practitioners outside the fire service

Impacts beyond five years

- ✓ Communities are safer from wildfire
- ✓ Communities are empowered and have the resources to independently implement prescribed burning as a land management tool
- ✓ All communities in the region can connect with landscapes through fire stewardship
- ✓ Use of prescribed fire as a stewardship and fuels reduction tool and practice is more widely accepted, financially supported, ecologically understood, and implemented
- ✓ Trust and capacity is improved for increased cultural burning; cultural burns help to preserve Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge, plant communities, and foodways
- ✓ Ecologically and culturally appropriate fire regimes (frequency and intensity) are restored to promote ecosystem function

Science for Stewardship

As climate and human land use continue to change ecosystems, we require continually evolving information to identify when and where stewardship is needed, how stewardship can improve ecosystem resilience, and which combination of stewardship tools are best suited to the chosen objectives. This requires bridging knowledge gained from western science, from Indigenous cultures who have tended these lands for millennia, and from the observations of contemporary stewards who work on the front lines of ecosystem change every day.



Within 5 years we will:

- ✓ Publish 8 peer reviewed papers or reports describing the response of natural resources to stewardship activities and identifying ways to improve connectivity and movement of wildlife
- ✓ Create reports for management partners describing status and trends of key ecological resources
- ✓ Design 3 management plans outlining how to steward for dynamic and resilient habitat mosaics
- ✓ Evaluate the resilience of the lands we hold and their response to stewardship activities
- ✓ Provide organization-wide, accessible data on ecological resources, stewardship activities, and response of ecological resources to stewardship activities

Impacts beyond 5 years

- ✓ The preserves we hold serve as places where knowledge on existing stewardship methods is shared and new methods are developed
- ✓ Knowledge to support ecosystems and increase biodiversity across multiple scales is co-produced through collaboration with a diverse set of community members
- ✓ We share what we learn about stewardship widely and rapidly
- ✓ We are recognized as having knowledge and information pertinent to a range of conservation issues and we engage our data, knowledge and expertise in policy discussions/decisions at local, regional, state, and larger scales

Impact Stewardship

Despite successful land protection efforts and halting unsustainable practices on the lands we hold, historic, large-scale disturbances and various forms of resource extraction have left a legacy of impacts including the introduction and spread of invasive species, a loss of native species, erosion, and abandoned infrastructure in our waterways. Our natural landscapes need thoughtful, ongoing stewardship to address the subsequent decline in biodiversity and degraded or lost ecological functions.



Within 5 years we will:

- ✓ Stop the spread and reduce populations of targeted invasive plants and animals in grassland, wetland, and forest communities
- ✓ Enhance biodiversity in coastal prairie/grassland, wetland, and forest ecosystems
- ✓ Enhance or restore streams, riparian corridors, and watersheds
- ✓ Amplify impacts by collaborating, sharing, and learning from others
- ✓ Enhance connectivity of habitats

Impacts beyond 5 years

- ✓ Resources and partners exist to address stewardship concerns at scale
- ✓ Audubon Canyon Ranch preserves and Bay Area landscapes are more connected and resilient
- ✓ Biological diversity and ecosystem functions are enhanced and life in forests, riparian corridors, and grasslands are less threatened



Empowered and Inclusive Communities

Equitable Access to the Land • Activated Youth • Skill Building and Training

Photo: Paige Green

The work of conservation is a human endeavor. The quickening pace of biodiversity loss and degradation of nature is human-caused and hence humans have the responsibility to heal and restore the environment and all that it supports.

Including more people in conservation efforts will build more durable outcomes

Current conservation efforts need more hands, hearts, and minds to address issues at the scales necessary for change. But most conservation work has excluded Black, Indigenous, and People of Color — the very people who contribute the least to environmental degradation yet are disproportionately impacted by it.

Because of this exclusion, mainstream conservation efforts have not met the needs of all members of society and have not benefited from ideas generated from diverse worldviews and lived experiences.

Living-wage careers in conservation will empower local communities to make real and lasting change

The Empowered and Inclusive Communities initiative guides us in supporting and developing current and

future conservation leaders with knowledge of natural history, sensitive species, and restoration and stewardship practices.

We will engage members of our community with the lands we steward, to enhance our collective understanding of how the natural world sustains us all and how we can sustain it.

The Empowered and Inclusive Communities initiative focuses our work in three distinct areas: Equitable Access to the Land, Activated Youth, and Skill Building and Training.

For each, we have identified the resources, activities, and outcomes necessary for widespread environmental literacy, meaningful skill building, and equitable access to the benefits of nature. We also identify the impacts we expect to see beyond the 5-year life of the Plan.

Equitable Access to the Land

Positive, culturally relevant outdoor experiences can be sparks for life-changing connection to nature, and all people deserve these opportunities. Audubon Canyon Ranch holds 5,000 acres of “protected” Indigenous lands. This land was stolen, and its inhabitants forcibly removed, which means we operate within a legacy of exclusion that persists with inequitable access to — and positive experiences in — nature. Building our capacity for community collaboration is essential. It requires and makes possible more trusting relationships. Communities must be informed, consulted, and involved; and through deeper collaboration, we can unleash unprecedented capacity to develop and implement the solutions to our biggest environmental issues.



Within 5 years we will:

- ✓ Engage visitors to Audubon Canyon Ranch preserves with an experience that stirs their heart and deepens or rekindles their connection to nature
- ✓ Grow collaborative relationships with 10 strategically identified partner organizations serving people from historically excluded communities
- ✓ Increase people's experience of Audubon Canyon Ranch as welcoming to communities historically excluded from the outdoors

Impacts beyond 5 years

- ✓ Audubon Canyon Ranch preserves are community resources where collaboration is valued
- ✓ Participants feel and can exercise a sense of reciprocity with the land: caring for the earth and experiencing belonging and improved well-being from spending time outside
- ✓ More Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are engaged in and informing both conservation efforts and enjoyment of the outdoors at Audubon Canyon Ranch preserves and beyond

Activated Youth

Today's youth are living in a challenging social and ecological time. Many have reported experiencing grief and hopelessness about what their futures hold on a planet in crisis. Yet, youth around the world are working to dismantle harmful systems, inspire new ways of thinking — and acting — for a more balanced, healthy relationship with the natural world. Audubon Canyon Ranch has an opportunity to be allies and mentors to local youth, facilitating experiences that are relevant, accessible, and provide a pathway for deeper involvement in building a socially just, effective conservation movement.



Within 5 years we will:

- ✓ Increase engagement of low-income, communities of color, or otherwise marginalized communities in our youth programs to at least 60% of participating schools and other groups
- ✓ See 95% of participants recognizing ways the natural world helps them and ways they can help the natural world
- ✓ Increase the number of youth participants engaged in essential stewardship and conservation science work

Impacts beyond 5 years

- ✓ Youth are taking positive actions that support responsible stewardship
- ✓ Nature education is more impactful due to being informed by young people
- ✓ The conservation movement is expanded and strengthened due to a greater sense of belonging among youth
- ✓ Participants continue to integrate their learning into the way they live their lives

Skill Building and Training

Conservation without stewardship is an incomplete investment — lands and waters and all the life they support need ongoing stewardship by people with diverse worldviews and life experiences. Skill building, knowledge sharing, and leadership development are essential for people to be able to act on behalf of the earth and their community. Historically, these opportunities have been on a volunteer basis or via unpaid/poorly paid internships that are only accessible to those with the financial means to participate. Audubon Canyon Ranch commits to providing training and funding partnerships that facilitate meaningful jobs in conservation.



Within 5 years we will:

- ✓ Provide at least 700 people hands-on training and/or leadership mentoring; by the fifth year, at least half of participants are from historically excluded communities
- ✓ See people engaged in training and leadership development go on to obtain jobs, volunteer positions, or advance conservation and nature education in other ways
- ✓ Support more — and higher quality — land stewardship, conservation action, and environmental education on Audubon Canyon Ranch preserves and across the region
- ✓ Contribute to a practice in which knowledge of prescribed fire, ecological restoration and environmental education is held and shared by all

Impacts beyond 5 years

- ✓ At Audubon Canyon Ranch and throughout the region, there is more capacity for land stewardship and ecological restoration; as a result, the work is more effective

Putting our values to work

We will focus on collaboration, taking the right risks, and providing experiences that catalyze action.



Photo: Scott Jennings

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Sarah Allen, Ph.D., Vice President
Rebecca Simon, Secretary
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Gwen Heistand	Melissa Pitkin
Janet Klein	Jim Weigand, Ph.D.
Nancy Lilly	

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Gary Schick, Chief Financial Officer
Sasha Berleman, Ph.D., Director of Fire Forward

Catie Clune, Director of Education
Wendy Coy, Director of Communications
Jen Newman, Director of Philanthropy
Nils Warnock, Ph.D., Director of Conservation Science

Preserve and Program Staff

Bouverie Preserve

Nancy Trbovich, Preserve Manager
Susie Allen, M.F.K. Fisher Last House Program
Coordinator / Events Manager
Amanda Botsford, Land Steward
Kurt Heffernon, Land Steward
Jacqueline Levy, Education Program Manager
Jennifer Potts, Resource Ecologist
Jennifer Spangler, Administrative Assistant

Cypress Grove Research Center

Emiko Condeso, Ecologist/GIS Specialist
Scott Jennings, Avian Ecologist
Jim Jensen, Tomales Bay Land Steward
David Lumpkin, Avian Ecologist
Barbara Wechsberg, Preserve Manager

Martin Griffin Preserve

Nancy Trbovich, Preserve Manager
Steve Trivelpiece, Land Steward
Henry Inman, Resource Ecologist

Modini Preserve

Michelle Cooper, Preserve Manager & Resident Biologist
Kyle Doron, Resource Ecologist
Tomas Ruiz, Land Steward

Fire Forward®

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Dianne Dollente, Apprentice
Garrett Gradillas, Training Programs Coordinator
Hannah Lopez, Programmatic Partnerships Manager
Marty Malate, Apprentice
Claire McMurtry, Associate Director
Joaquin Pastrana, Apprentice
Brian Peterson, Fire Ecologist
Kira Rowan, Apprentice
Adam Sawicky, Prescribed Fire Module Leader,
The Nature Conservancy
Paul Sokoloski, Crew Lead

Living with Lions

Quinton Martins, Ph.D., Consulting Science Advisor,
True Wild
Liz Martins, Education Coordinator
Kate Remsen, Trail Camera Project Coordinator

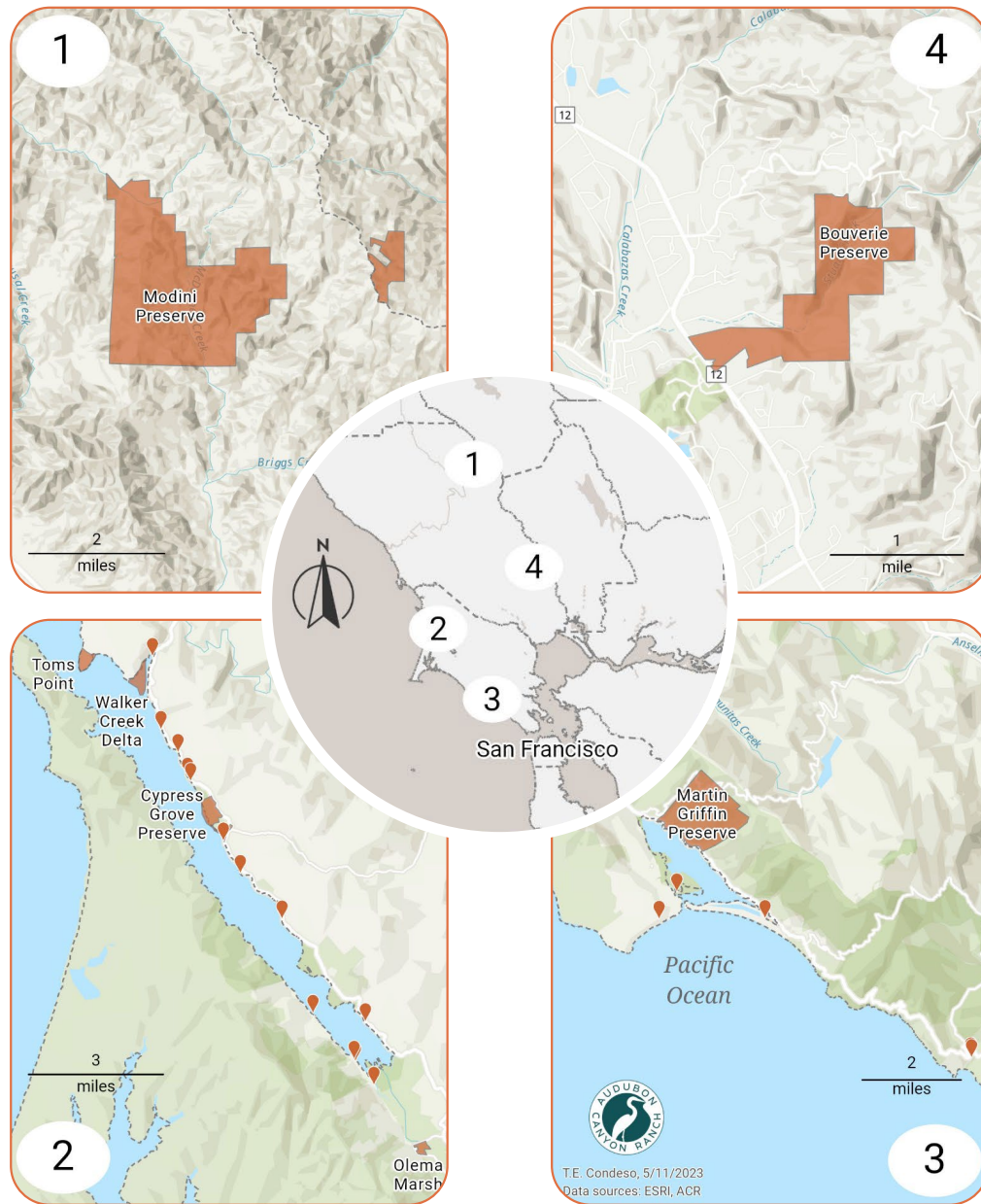
Philanthropy and Communications

Elizabeth Hollis, Development Manager
Erika Obedzinski, Development and Communications
Associate & Board Liaison
Katie Rogers, Communications Specialist
Sarah Warnock, Grants Manager

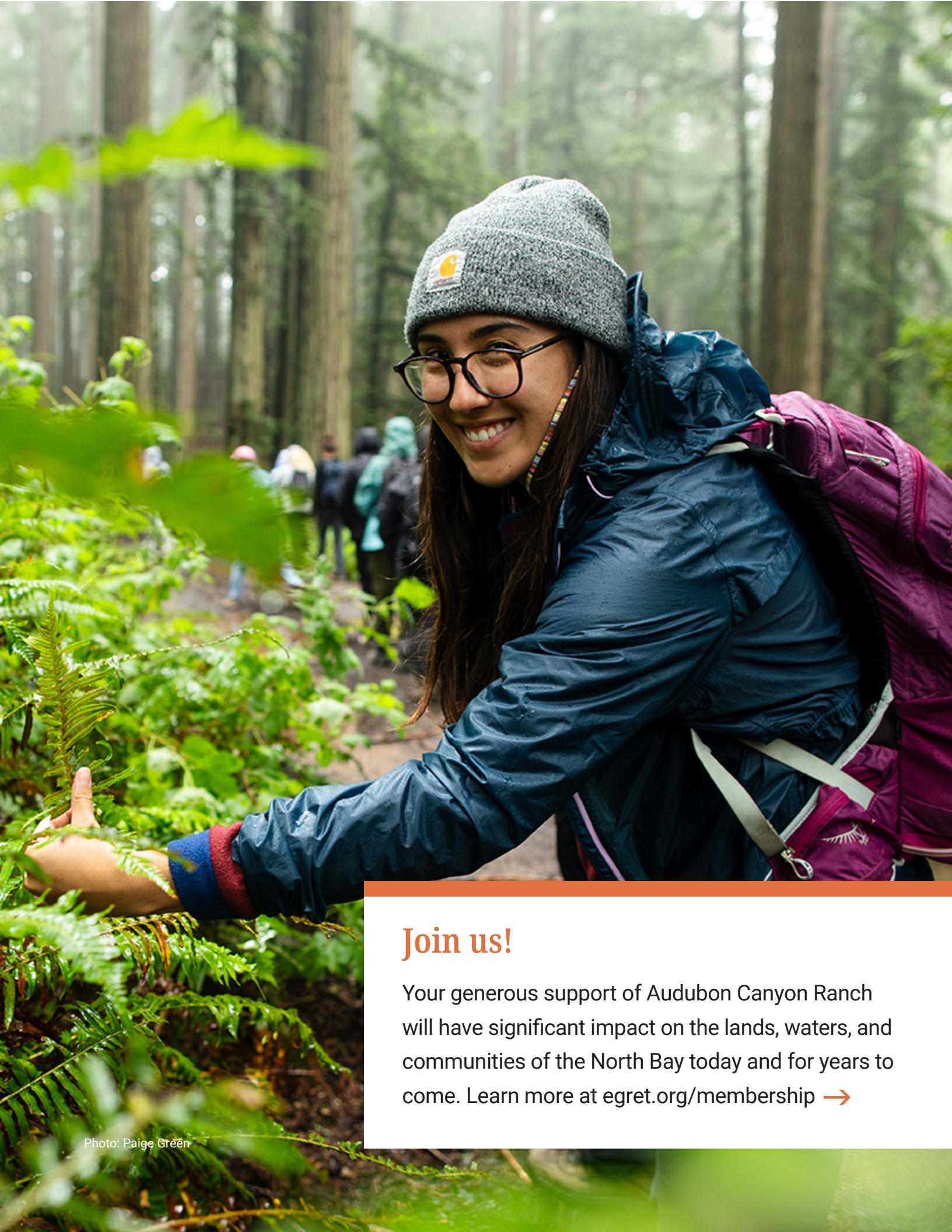
Parcels and preserves of Audubon Canyon Ranch

The lands upon which Audubon Canyon Ranch operates are within the ancestral territories of the Coast Miwok, Southern Pomo and Wappo peoples. We recognize that Indigenous communities are very much alive today and striving to protect and maintain relationships with cultural and natural resources on lands that we hold; we fully acknowledge that Indigenous lands are still occupied by us and others.

Audubon Canyon Ranch commits to putting our words into action by developing programs that exemplify our commitment to cultural and Indigenous equity, inclusion, and justice.



1) Modini Preserve near Healdsburg in Sonoma County; 2) Cypress Grove Research Center in Marshall + additional parcels on Tomales Bay in Marin County; 3) Martin Griffin Preserve in Stinson Beach + additional parcels on Bolinas Lagoon and Muir Beach in Marin County; 4) Bouverie Preserve near Glen Ellen in Sonoma County.



Join us!

Your generous support of Audubon Canyon Ranch will have significant impact on the lands, waters, and communities of the North Bay today and for years to come. Learn more at egret.org/membership →

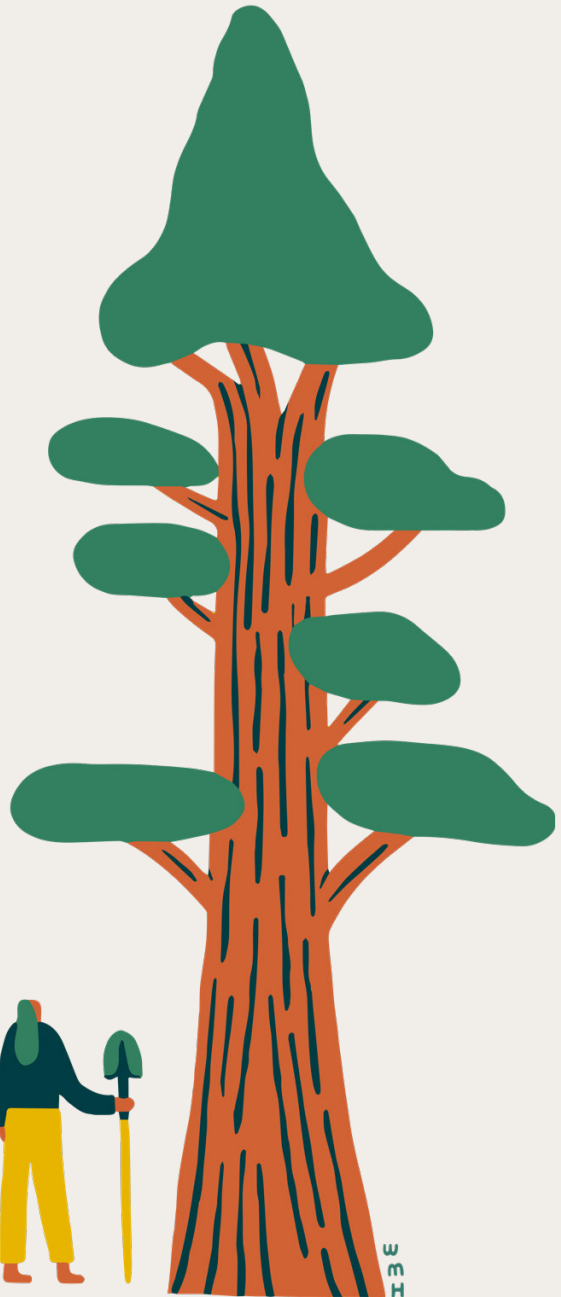
Photo: Paige Green



BOLDNESS



HEART



IMPACT



5-Year Strategic Plan

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2028

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This plan was prepared in consultation with
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Cover photo by Carlos Porrata

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