

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025



American Canyon Community &  
**Parks Foundation**

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## ABOUT THE PARKS FOUNDATION

Founded in 2015 as a grassroots, community-led 501(c)(3), the American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation has grown into the leading provider of community- and school-based outdoor science education in South Napa County. Today, the Parks Foundation serves more than 3,000 youth and families each year through hands-on watershed, conservation, and environmental education programs led by a dedicated staff of five professional educators, project managers, and community leaders.

Our innovative programs now reach students and families across Napa County and the greater North Bay, and demand continues to grow. Each month, the Parks Foundation receives inquiries from educators throughout the Bay Area seeking meaningful outdoor learning opportunities—requests we often cannot fulfill due to the lack of a permanent education and operations facility. To meet this growing need, the Parks Foundation launched the Napa River Ecology Center project in 2021. Envisioned as a central hub for hands-on environmental education, conservation, and community engagement, the Ecology Center will significantly expand our capacity to serve schools and families while deepening connections to the Napa River watershed. This transformational project represents the next phase of the Parks Foundation's growth, ensuring equitable access to nature-based learning and inspiring future generations to become lifelong stewards of our local environment.



## A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2025, I am proud of the momentum we have built together to connect people and nature in meaningful, lasting ways. This year, our Teen WILD Leaders stepped into their roles as environmental ambassadors leading peer education, supporting restoration projects, and building confidence and leadership skills that will shape their futures and our community. We also reached a major milestone by advancing the Napa River Ecology Center to shovel-ready status, with key permits secured and the vision for this transformative community resource firmly in place.

At the same time, we expanded our reach beyond our campus. The Outdoor Connection Mobile Classroom grew to serve more schools and neighborhoods, bringing hands-on environmental learning directly to children in summer camps and in-school programs throughout Napa County. We also launched a new Friday-afternoon Story Walk program that blends outdoor literacy, movement, and imagination to create welcoming spaces for families to learn and explore together. These programs reflect our commitment to meeting people where they are and fostering lifelong connections to the natural world.

None of this progress would be possible without you. To our donors, volunteers, partners, and supporters, thank you for believing in this work and for standing with us throughout the year. Your generosity, time, and advocacy strengthen every program, every young leader, and every step forward. As we look to 2026, we are energized by what lies ahead and committed to building on this foundation to expand access to nature, education, and community connection for years to come.

Janelle Sellick  
Executive Director

# ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS

## COMMUNITY

More than **850** neighbors have benefited from over **25 free community programs** that build environmental awareness through wildlife education, conservation, and accessible outdoor activities. Highlight programs like Discovery Walks, Coffee Mornings on the Trail, Wetlands Clean Ups, Earth Month education, and youth-friendly StoryWalks, which engage all ages with meaningful ways to connect with and care for our local environment.



### ANNUAL PROGRAMS

- Slow Stroll
- Naturalist Hikes
- Reindeer Run
- Earth Day/Month
- Teen WILD
- Coffee Morning
- Wetlands Conservation
- Story Walk
- Social Community Hikes
- Community Engagement Committee (CEC)

## EDUCATION

Our Environmental Education programs continue to spark curiosity and inspire young minds across Napa County, reaching **1,327 students** through meaningful, hands-on experiences in nature. Through guided outdoor exploration, ecosystem discovery, and activities focused on environmental stewardship, we delivered over **3,100 hours** of transformative learning this year. These experiences help students understand local ecosystems, empower them to be environmental stewards, and foster lifelong curiosity and responsibility.

### ANNUAL PROGRAMS

- Watershed Explorers
- Watershed Protectors
- Watershed Trainees
- Outdoor Connection
- Wetlands Academy
- Discovery Days
- All About Bugs
- NVUSD Nature Science & Art
- Students and Teachers Restoring A Watershed (STRAW)



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT



**WINE & WILD**  
WILDLIFE EDUCATION SERIES

In 2025, Wine & Wild brought together more than **150 attendees** to connect with local wildlife. This vibrant quarterly gathering has quickly become a standout of our Community Nature Programs — blending expert-led wildlife presentations with relaxed social time that help neighbors learn, mingle, and build community. Past sessions have explored native owls, the secret lives of opossums, and practical ways to coexist with coyotes, each drawing enthusiastic participants eager to deepen their relationship with the natural world. Looking ahead, we're excited to expand the series with upcoming presentations on otters and other fascinating flora and fauna of our region.

Wine & Wild continues to spark curiosity, inspire stewardship, and celebrate the remarkable biodiversity found throughout our parks.



# WATERSHED EDUCATION



Our inaugural Watershed Protectors pilot program launched with tremendous enthusiasm, engaging three fifth-grade classes from Napa Junction Magnet Elementary School in a meaningful, multi-week journey through science, stewardship, and conservation. Designed to build on classroom learning, the program brings California Ecosystem and Earth Systems standards to life through hands-on, place-based environmental exploration. Students investigated local wetlands, studied biodiversity, and examined the impacts of invasive species—then turned learning into action.

Working alongside educators and conservation partners, students removed more than 2,500 square feet of invasive iceplant, spread native seeds, and helped establish a long-term plant-monitoring site to support ongoing restoration efforts. This winter, students will return to the site to observe changes, analyze results, and reflect on the lasting impact of their work as environmental stewards.



**270**

4th grade Watershed Explorers

**85**

Watershed Protectors

**630**

Summer Program Explorers

**150**

2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Watershed Trainees

**115**

High School - Napa RCD students

# TEACHER TESTIMONIAL



Where Kids Meet Nature

As a fourth-grade teacher, I have participated in the Watershed Explorers Program for the past four years with three classes each year, reaching nearly 400 students at Napa Junction alone. Without exception, it has been one of the most impactful and beloved learning experiences of my students' elementary years.

The program brings learning to life in a way that the classroom alone cannot. Through repeated visits to the wetlands, students engage in authentic, hands-on, place-based learning that deepens their understanding of ecosystems, water systems, and environmental stewardship. Walking the wetlands, observing birds, testing water samples, learning about water treatment, and using microscopes to examine samples transforms abstract science concepts into real, memorable experiences. Students are not just learning about watersheds—they are experiencing them.

What stands out most is how deeply engaged students are. They ask thoughtful questions, make real-world connections, and take pride in their scientific observations and journaling. Many students reference these field trips long after they are over, and families often tell me how excited their children are to share what they learned. The program fosters curiosity, responsibility, and a genuine sense of care for our local environment.

From a teacher's perspective, the Watershed Explorers Program is an invaluable extension of our curriculum. It aligns beautifully with science standards while also supporting critical thinking, collaboration, and environmental literacy. The organization, expertise, and passion the Parks Foundation brings to the program make it accessible, meaningful, and highly effective for both students and teachers.

Nanette Saucedo  
Fourth Grade Teacher  
Napa Junction Magnet School



**3,100**

Hours of  
Environmental Education



# Teen WILD

In May, the Parks Foundation welcomed 24 Teen WILD leaders to

the 2025–26 cohort. Working alongside Parks Foundation staff, these youth leaders played an active role in delivering nature-based programs and community events, including Outdoor Connection Trailside Learning Center activities, trail clean-ups, guided community hikes, the annual Reindeer Run, and more.

The Teen WILD year began with a team-building kayak adventure in the Napa River wetlands, fostering leadership, connection, and stewardship. Throughout the year, teens met monthly to collaborate on projects, learn about local wildlife, and develop skills in leading nature hikes and working with younger children in educational settings. Participants also had the opportunity to collaborate with local artist Blake Barrios to create an original art piece for the Parks Foundation’s annual fundraiser.

In addition, the Parks Foundation awarded paid internships to two outstanding former Teen WILD volunteers, creating meaningful opportunities for continued leadership development and professional growth.



**562**

**Volunteer Hours**



**3,300 SF**  
Invasive Iceplant  
Removed by  
Teen WILD

## TEEN WILD HIGHLIGHT

### Daisy Rizo Lopez

“Teen WILD has helped me become more confident in working with others and stepping up when needed. Through group activities and volunteer shifts, I’ve learned how important communication and teamwork are, and I feel more comfortable sharing my ideas and helping lead tasks.” Daisy Rizo Lopez, a sophomore at American Canyon High School, reflected.

“One memorable moment for me was volunteering during the summer at schools with younger kids. Helping them with activities and seeing how excited they were to learn and participate made the experience really meaningful. It felt rewarding knowing that we were creating a positive and fun environment for them, and it reminded me how impactful it can be to be a role model and give back to the community. Having those interactions with the kids has made me realize I love being in Teen WILD and I will be coming back.

Teen WILD has made me more aware of how important it is to take care of nature and support my community. Being involved has shown me that even small actions can make a difference, and it’s inspired me to be more mindful of the environment and to stay involved in service opportunities.”

Daisy joined Teen WILD in 2025 and has quickly become a valued member of the program. She consistently volunteers for events, brings a strong work ethic to every project, and excels at engaging younger children in meaningful and positive ways. Daisy began her involvement during the Earth Day iceplant removal project and was inspired to apply to Teen WILD soon after, an involvement she has embraced with enthusiasm and commitment.

# CELEBRATING 10 YEARS



Founded by dedicated community volunteers to support local parks and open spaces, the Parks Foundation launched its mission in 2015 with its first project—a modern drinking fountain installed at the Wetlands Edge trailhead.

2015/2016

2017/1018



In 2017, we launched our first Newell Fireworks Hike, bringing over 70 people up the hillside for a unique July 4th view. By 2017, our growing community gathered again, with 30 families joining a Community Campout under the stars.



In 2019, the Screen Time to Green Time initiative encouraged families to trade devices for time outside. This mission came to life at Wetlands Edge, where volunteers installed Owl Boxes to support local wildlife and outdoor discovery.

2019

2020



During COVID, we pivoted to create Park & Play, a free outdoor program that kept families active and connected. We also installed the Wetlands Edge Fitness Center's exercise equipment, giving the community a safe way to stay healthy.



In 2021, Heart Your Parks showcased 21 heart paintings created by local artists. That same year, we debuted Napa County's first permanent StoryWalk at Shenandoah Park, inviting families to read and explore outdoors.

2021

2022



In 2022, Watershed Explorers was relaunched, giving 155 fourth-graders hands-on science education in the Wetlands. This immersive program brings learning to life and deepens their connection to the watershed.



In 2023, we unveiled the Outdoor Connection, a mobile trailside learning center. This new hub brings hands-on environmental education directly to the community, expanding access to nature-based learning.

2023

2024



In 2024, Teen WILD gave local teens a yearlong chance to build leadership skills, mentor younger students, and support outdoor events—gaining hands-on experience in conservation, community outreach, and environmental education.

# 2025 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2025 was a year of financial growth for the Parks Foundation with significant increases in grant, contract, and fundraising revenue. The campaign to build the Ecology Center was in full force, bringing in over \$800,000 to cover planning costs and build capital reserves needed for future construction.

## Revenue



## Expenses



# A DECADE OF COMMUNITY IMPACT

<p><b>12</b> StoryWalk Books Installed</p> 	<p> <b>\$108,000</b> In Park Improvements</p>	<p>Over <b>3,900</b> Reindeer Runners</p> 	<p>Watershed <b>74</b> Classes Served</p>
<p>Over <b>21,000</b> Community Members Served</p>	<p><b>5,500sf</b> Invasive Iceplant Removed</p> 	<p><b>29</b> Community Partners</p> 	<p><b>1,160</b> Summer Program Students</p>
<p> <b>18,000</b> Miles of Trail Explored</p>	<p><b>151</b> Teen <b>WILD</b> Leaders</p> 	<p> <b>980</b> Cups of Coffee Shared at Wetlands</p>	<p>Over <b>54,000</b> Hours Spent Outside</p> 
<p><b>\$36,500</b> Scholarships Awarded</p> 	<p><b>800+</b> pounds of wetlands trash removed</p> 	<p><b>\$20,850</b> Given In Community Support</p>	<p><b>OVER</b> <b>2,300</b></p> 



# NAPA RIVER ECOLOGY CENTER

The Napa River Ecology Center is a transformative initiative to repurpose the City of American Canyon's former Corporation Yard into a dynamic education and conservation hub focused on the Napa River wetlands. Envisioned as the future home of the Parks Foundation, the Center will dramatically expand our ability to serve youth, families, and educators across Napa County and the greater North Bay through hands-on environmental learning and stewardship programs.

2025 was a year of continued progress and momentum. Building on critical approvals secured in 2024, the project advanced through detailed design, permitting, and partnership development. Early seed funding from the City of American Canyon, along with support from state and federal agencies, enabled the next phases of work and positioned the project for construction readiness. We remain deeply grateful to Congressman Mike Thompson for securing \$800,000 in federal Community Project Funding, a cornerstone investment that continues to advance this landmark project. With strong community support and major funding partners engaged, the Napa River Ecology Center represents the next chapter in the Parks Foundation's growth, creating a permanent home for environmental education, conservation action, and community connection along the Napa River. Learn more at [www.napaecocenter.org](http://www.napaecocenter.org)





# ECOLOGY CENTER CAMPAIGN DONORS

The vision and development of the Napa River Ecology Center were made possible through the extraordinary generosity of our corporate and community donors. Their leadership investments provided the foundation for transforming this ambitious idea into a fully permitted project and a future community resource for education, conservation, and scientific discovery. By supporting habitat restoration, watershed research, and hands-on learning opportunities for all ages, these donors played a pivotal role in safeguarding the health of the Napa River for generations to come. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and shared commitment to environmental stewardship. A special thank you to Congressman Mike Thompson's office for securing federal funding for the project.



## 2025 ECOLOGY CENTER DONORS

- |                      |                    |                   |                     |                 |
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## DONOR HIGHLIGHT - DR. JEFFREY NICHELINI

The Parks Foundation is deeply grateful for Dr. Jeffrey Nichelini, whose generosity, leadership, and commitment continue to make a strong impact on our community. A dedicated supporter of the Parks Foundation and the Napa River Ecology Center, he served on the Board of Directors and now offers guidance as part of the Ecology Center Advisory Committee. His support extends beyond financial contributions, giving time, expertise, and care that help connect people—especially young learners—to the Napa River and its wetlands. His belief in community projects, education, and conservation has helped shape a vision that strengthens our shared future. Jeff said, "I consider it a privilege to support and be a part of the [Parks Foundation] and the Napa River Ecology Center. As someone who feels strongly about the benefits of education, protecting the environment, and investing in your community, I am proud to see how these organizations have grown to be impactful to so many youth in a meaningful way, and know that I have been able to contribute to that success in a small way." We are thankful for his dedication and the heart he brings to this work.



## COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

The Parks Foundation is deeply thankful for our valued partnership with the Napa Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Their knowledge and guidance enhanced our Watershed Explorers program for 4th graders, informed our invasive iceplant removal work, and supported the successful launch of the Watershed Protectors pilot for 5th graders. Together, we are inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards while restoring and caring for our local wetlands. This collaborative effort strengthens environmental education and advances natural resource conservation throughout Napa County.





## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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We are deeply grateful to the grantors and sponsors whose generous support makes the Parks Foundation's work and the development of the Napa River Ecology Center possible. Your commitment to our mission allows us to deliver impactful school and community programs that create lasting benefits for our community. Through your partnership and belief in our vision, we are able to reach more people, strengthen connections to nature, and continue building a healthier, more vibrant community.



napa valley vintners



## Grantor Highlight

Redwood Credit Union has been a steadfast and generous partner of the American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation since 2019, playing a vital role in expanding access to parks, environmental education, and community connection throughout American Canyon. Their support has helped bring signature programs to life, including the Story Walk at Shenandoah Park, which encourages families to explore literacy and nature together; Watershed Explorers and the Outdoor Connection mobile classroom, providing hands-on outdoor science education for elementary students; and Teen WILD, which empowers local teens through leadership development and meaningful conservation service.

Redwood Credit Union has also been a valued sponsor of beloved community events such as Park & Play, Discovery Days, and our annual Reindeer Run, helping create inclusive, joyful experiences that bring residents together in our shared public spaces. Their long-standing commitment to youth education, environmental stewardship, and community well-being has made a lasting impact on students, families, and volunteers alike. We are deeply grateful for Redwood Credit Union's continued partnership and their enduring belief in investing locally to strengthen and enrich our community.



NAPA RIVER  
ECOLOGY CENTER

