



# **Sutro Stewards Summer Internship Program Summary Report 2023**

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## **Overview**

Mount Sutro was absolutely buzzing with energy this summer! In its fourth year of the Summer Internship Program, Sutro Stewards welcomed ten high school aged students to Mount Sutro for a five week in-person outdoor educational internship. Bay Area youth participants explored Mount Sutro Open Space in San Francisco, gaining hands-on experience in habitat restoration, California native plant identification and horticulture, nature-based mindfulness and wellness techniques, urban trail stewardship, leadership development, and contributed to community science projects with supervision from Sutro Stewards staff.

The program occurred from June 21, 2023 to July 21, 2023 meeting every Wednesday, Thursday from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm and the first and third Saturdays led by Nursery Program Manager, Abigail Alfonso, with daily support and lessons provided by Conservation Manager, Kelly Dodge, and Health in Nature Program Manager, Bridget Llanes. Additional support and lessons provided by Trails Program Manager, Dan Bernards, and facilitation support by Sutro Stewards' Urban Ecology interns.

For the second year, Sutro Stewards partnered with a local workforce development nonprofit, Enterprise for Youth (EFY), to provide equitable wages and off-site job readiness training to all participants in this year's Summer Internship Program. This collaborative partnership is designed to give youth an overview of the growing field of California native plant habitat restoration and horticulture, supported by lessons in Mount Sutro ecology to cultivate connection with local open spaces inspiring the next generation of climate conscious stewards.

EFY also assisted Sutro Stewards with outreach and recruitment for the summer internship program. EFY's eligibility requirement for participants interested in paid summer internships through EFY's partners is the completion of their month-long Job Readiness Training program. This training program is offered to Bay Area youth who are enrolled in high school and are between the ages of 14 to 21 years old, with no minimum GPA requirement, and students with any immigration status are encouraged to apply.

This year's cohort consisted of ten youth participants ages 15 - 18 currently enrolled in San Francisco Unified School District such as Balboa, Lincoln, Gateway, Lick-Wilmerding, and Washington High Schools. Participants either walked, took public transportation, or got a ride from a parent or guardian to Sutro Stewards Nursery. Sutro Stewards tracks how our participants travel to Mount Sutro because transportation has been a barrier to access to nature for many, especially from disadvantaged communities. Of the ten participants, two have continued to volunteer for Sutro Stewards Nursery Program and Trails Program through December 2023.



## Schedule and activities

Interns were required to attend approximately seventy five hours of total work and maintain an attendance level of 90% or more during the five week program. In addition to this, interns were required to attend weekly online workforce development workshops provided by Enterprise for Youth. Online workforce development workshops helped youth develop resumes, cover letters, and professional emails while honing interview skills with HR professionals. Interns were also required to participate in two Saturday Trails program volunteer days.

Each week, interns participated in a nursery volunteer day on Wednesday and habitat stewardship volunteer day on Thursday followed by two hours of hands-on educational activities led by Sutro Stewards staff and environmental professionals. Hands-on educational activities included but were not limited to: a habitats and history of Mount Sutro hike, basics of plant identification and common Mt. Sutro plant species, sustainable seed collection hikes, nature based wellness techniques such as nature journaling, ethnobotany and environmental justice lessons, natural history field trip to Angel Island, and a Mt. Sutro Bio Blitz. By the second half of the summer program, interns were able to gain adequate experience and ecological knowledge to assist in co-leading nursery and habitat stewardship volunteer days. All interns successfully completed a capstone project working in small groups to create a landscaping design plan for Sutro Nursery's educational demonstration garden, plant installation, and group presentations as the culmination of the summer internship.





*Photo on the left: Sutro Stewards staff leading summer interns in a natural resources workshop. Photo on the right: Health in Nature Program manager, Bridget Llanes, leads interns in nature based mindfulness activities while sipping mushroom hot chocolate.*



*Photo on the left: Interns help scrub and sanitize nursery tables to minimize the spread of Sudden Oak Death pathogen. Photo on the right: Interns planting in demonstration garden for their capstone project designing and installing intentional native plant communities endemic to SF Bay Area.*





*Photo on the left: California State Parks Interpreter showcasing wildlife specimens found on Angel Island. Photo on the right: Sutro Stewards staff and summer interns pause their nature hike to pose on Angel Island.*

Summer Internship Program Activity Schedule 2023		
	AM Shift	PM Shift
<b>Wednesday, June 21, 2023</b>	Opening circle, review program agreement forms, community agreement activity, nursery tour, intro to program	Document plants observed in the nursery, potting up plants to bigger pots, Phytophthora best management practices, learn how to write plant tags
<b>Thursday, June 22, 2023</b>	Presentation on basics of restoration, why it's important, restoration process, restoring ecosystem services. Intro to restoration tools (how to use safely, the purpose of tools). Restoration site walk	Health in Nature (HiN) Afternoons: Icebreaker Pair Share, Land Acknowledgement activity/lesson, Mindfulness activity + Walk in Place
<b>Wednesday, June 28, 2023</b>	Nursery Volunteer Program	HiN Afternoons: Ignacio Ercole shares mindfulness movement, History of Mt. Sutro and Ishi, Habitat walk and nature art activity
<b>Thursday, June 29, 2023</b>	Habitat Stewardship Program	Plant Family ID workshop: 5 main families and key traits that make each plant unique and native plant examples/plant discovery activity  Introduce capstone project
<b>Saturday, July 1, 2023</b>	Trails program	Hike & Discussion: "Elements of a trail and forces that work against them; how to design and maintain sustainable trails"

<b>Wednesday, July 5, 2023</b>	Nursery Volunteer Program	Sustainable seed collection best management practices, seed dispersal methods, cleaning seeds, sowing seeds
<b>Thursday, July 6, 2023</b>	Habitat Stewardship Volunteer Program	HiN Afternoons: Plant Drawings, Hang out with a plant, plant medicine collection, mindfulness activity
<b>Friday, July 7, 2023</b>	Angel Island Field Trip 9:00am - 3:30pm	
<b>Wednesday, July 12, 2023</b>	Nursery Volunteer Program	Special restoration activity followed up with flowers and leaf pressing. Introduction to herbariums and the role they play in conservation science
<b>Thursday, July 13, 2023</b>	Habitat Stewardship Program	HiN afternoons: Environmental Justice, Mapping activity and Jemez Principles
<b>Saturday, July 15, 2023</b>	Trails Volunteer Program	Trail building activity, joint program with 10 youth from Bay Area Climate Resilient Communities
<b>Wednesday, July 19, 2023</b>	Nursery Volunteer Program	Capstone project group presentations, planting and sheet mulching in demonstration garden, plant care tasks and/or weeding around nurser
<b>Thursday, July 20, 2023</b>	Habitat Stewardship Program	HiN Afternoons: Where are you from activity, sustainable sage harvest, talking circles ceremony
<b>Friday, July 21, 2023</b>	Mt. Sutro Bio Blitz	Appreciation lunch and party

### Weed/debris removed:

Date	Habitat Restoration Activity	Weeds Removed
<b>Wednesday, July 5, 2023</b>	Weeding invasive Cape Ivy on Clarendon Trail	275 sq ft
<b>Thursday, July 6, 2023</b>	Weeding invasive Cape Ivy on Clarendon Trail	725 sq ft
<b>Thursday, July 13, 2023</b>	Weeding invasive Himalayan Blackberry on South Ridge Trail	625 sq ft
<b>Saturday, July 15, 2023</b>	Weeding invasive Cape Ivy in Woodland Canyon	750 sq ft



<b>Thursday, July 20, 2023</b>	Weeding invasive <i>Ehrharta erecta</i> in Nursery Rain Garden	550 sq ft
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### Nursery tasks completed:

Date	Propagation Completed	Nursery Tasks Completed
<b>Wednesday, June 28, 2023</b>	115 plants transplanted	Conducted nursery walkthrough and integrated pest management
<b>Wednesday, July 5, 2023</b>	105 plants transplanted	Collected 25 grams of native plant seeds
<b>Wednesday, July 12, 2023</b>	19 plants transplanted, 4 flats of seeds sown	Scrubbed and sanitized 15 nursery tables
<b>Wednesday, July 19, 2023</b>	135 plants transplanted	Planted 50 plants in educational demonstration garden

### Student Evaluation and Experience:

All program participants were asked to fill out entrance and exit program evaluation surveys to determine baseline knowledge and how participants' knowledge changed after participating in the summer internship program. The questions revolved around their overall experience, what they learned about themselves, what job skills they found most valuable, and what they would change. The surveys are each a page long and ask qualitative and quantitative questions. The program evaluation surveys and responses can be found here: [Summer Internship Program 2023 Post Program Skills Assessment](#)

For ease of reference, summarized below are highlights from the Summer Internship 2023 Post Program Skills Assessment:

***1) 88.9% of participants said this internship made the participants feel more job ready. Below are their comments on their job ready skills:***

“I’ve learned a lot more about what a job I want to have in the future”

“Communication (skills) with other interns/workers”

“Learned project planning, working in groups/teams”

“The program had a lot of things that you need to [do] like working in groups, showing up on time, doing work, and paying attention”

“Working in a team and managing”

“I have more experience working with plants”

“This job program hasn’t exactly helped me with job task in the future like everyday world, but if I were to pursue a career in this field, my knowledge of plants and daily nursery tasks would help me be more job ready”

“How to engage with coworkers and peers”

**2) *What have you learned about yourself in this program?***

“I’m more of a hands on deck type of worker.”

“I’ve learned more about what I like most about restoration and working in a park.”

“I am interested in nature and enjoy it.”

“I like to identify plants!”

“I like to be in nature; I don’t meditate often and there are a bunch of ways that I can.”

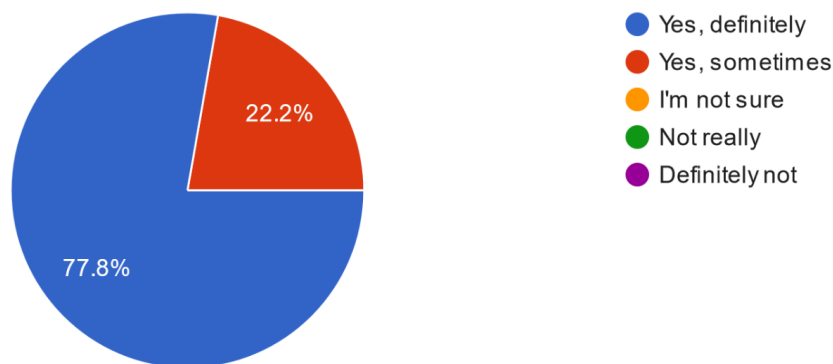
“I really enjoyed working outdoors and with nature.”

“I appreciate untouched nature, not urban parks.”

“I enjoy spending time outdoors and especially nature with others.”

“I really enjoy any work outdoors.”

**3) *Has the coming to our program at Mt. Sutro improved your sense of well-being? (Do you feel better after coming here?)***



**4) *88.9% of participants have learned mindfulness skills/techniques that they will use after the program. Participants mentioned using the following mindfulness techniques:***

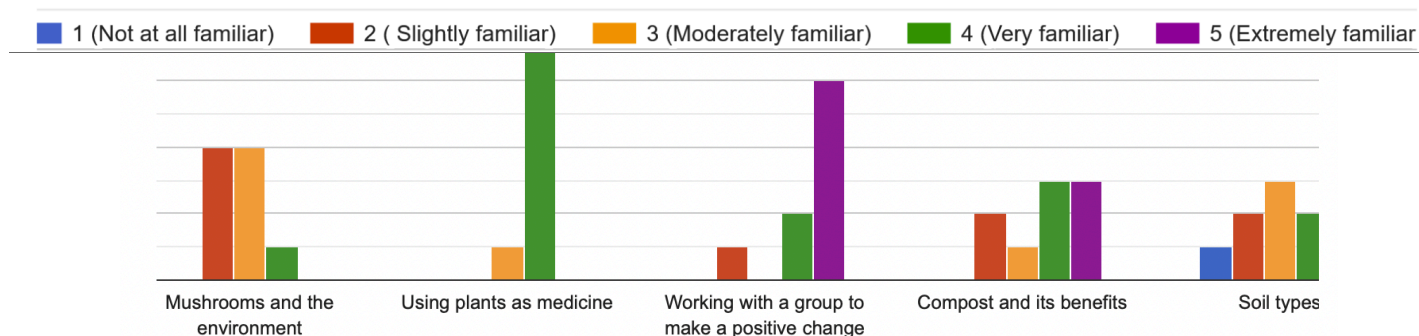
Breathing

Stretching

Meditation

Journaling

**5) On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your knowledge of the following:**



**6) What was your favorite part of this program?**

“Angel Island and the hike.”

“About the plants around me and the people here!”

“Being part of a close-knit community, seeing the before and after of the restoration.”

“Field trip to Angel Island, Bio Blitz, seed collection.”

“I really liked all of it. I liked learning about different plants, creating a salve, going on hikes and learning and doing propagation.”

“Working outdoors and making connections.”

“I enjoyed learning about plants, trails and history of Mt. Sutro.”

“My favorite part of this program was spending time/being around people and Sasha!”

“Angel Island field trip and rewarding feeling of clearing invasives.”

**Participant Testimonials:**

“Thank you so much for looking out for me during the internship. The kindness and knowledge from you, as well as everyone at Sutro Stewards spark my love and appreciation for Mt. Sutro and learning about plants. This internship impacts my goal to contribute something meaningful to nature, even if it is small, by maintaining the natural environment and educating others about conservation. If there is another chance, I would want to intern at Sutro Stewards again.”

- Thy H., age 16, Sutro Stewards Summer Program Intern 2023

“Thank you all for being so welcoming and teaching me all about Sutro and its native plants! I had so much fun propagating plants in the nursery and going to Angel Island, and loved seeing how much progress we collectively made at restoration sites - I’ll definitely be back for volunteer days!”

- Ariel F.C, age 17, Sutro Stewards Summer Program Intern 2023



## Incorporated lessons learned from previous years

Sutro Stewards Summer Internship Program had a successful 4-week summer program in 2022 supported by Miranda Lux Foundation and in partnership with Enterprise for Youth (EFY). Sutro Stewards staff incorporated lessons gained in 2022 into this year's program to continue to develop and improve best practices for successful implementation of the Summer Internship Program for years to come. Listed below are improvements we have incorporated into this year's program:

- Increased total amount of participants from 8 to 10
- Increased amount of program facilitation from 55 hours to 75 hours total included nature immersion for health and well being as well as urban trail building lessons
- Diversified facilitation coverage from 2 staff members to 5 staff members
- Capstone project requirements expanded to include project management, landscape design planning, and plant installation in Sutro Nursery native plant demonstration garden

## Lessons Learned

In this section, we list lessons learned by Sutro Stewards staff during this year's program. We will incorporate the lessons learned into future programming.

- Continue to offer free lunch options
- Continue to increase opportunities for personal reflection and group discussion
- Continue to adapt curriculum to meet participants' needs (e.g. increase visual and verbal communication when training)
- Continue to offer 1-2 field trips to local green spaces
- Add lessons in diversity of soil types and composting benefits
- Assign a designated education program coordinator to improve facilitation and staff capacity to continue to host a robust summer program
- While we continue to adapt to the learning needs and preferences of the students, we will seek to simplify our curriculum to focus on habitat restoration in order to provide a deeper, hands-on educational experience that offers the opportunity for interns to experience meaningful, tangible and impactful restoration results on Mount Sutro.

We have maintained a productive partnership with Enterprise for Youth and plan to continue working with them for the Summer Internship Program 2024 high school cohort. It has been invaluable to pair our on-the-ground habitat restoration and horticulture expertise, with their youth workforce development and mentorship support. We look forward to incorporating the lessons learned and building off of a very successful fourth year of summer programming.