Who we are and what we do

Founded in 2006, Sutro Stewards builds community, connects people with nature and protects and enhances Mount Sutro. We envision a thriving and biodiverse, nature oasis weaving through the fabric of urban life and accessible to all. Working with thousands of volunteers we have built and now maintain over 4.5 miles of trail, restore biodiversity and grow thousands of native plants every year. Our Health in Nature program provides healing nature immersion experiences to communities who have historically been marginalized by socio-economic disparities. Through our crew leader trainings, our spring nature walks and our paid youth internship programs, we educate our community about San Francisco’s local ecology, habitat restoration, and natural solutions to climate change.

In 2023 we:

We continued to expand biodiverse habitats on Mount Sutro and restore the Woodland Canyon Watershed. We kept our trails safe and accessible. We welcomed youth, seniors and those with mental health diagnoses to experience the healing powers of nature. We built community as we worked with volunteers on our trails, in our nursery and stewarding our habitat sites, and we jump started green job training for 6 interns from diverse communities.

Following is our impact by the numbers in our Trails, Conservation, Education and Health in Nature programs.
Expanding biodiversity through habitat corridors informed by data

Wildlife corridors are made by connecting isolated habitats with native plantings. Sutro Stewards is expanding our highest performing habitat sites towards each other building connectivity from the Clarendon Trailhead to the Summit of Mount Sutro along the Southridge corridor. At the same time we are monitoring our work to inform future conservation strategies.

In 2023 we:

- Planted 3,200 plants in the Southridge Corridor and expanded the habitat by 15,000 square feet.
- Removed 50,000 square feet of invasive plants
- Hand collected 720 grams of native seeds
- Engaged 1,450 volunteer hours in conservation and nursery work
- Tracked populations of 23 rare plants on Mount Sutro
- Monitored vegetation change over time after tree removal at 12 sites
- Collected data on fog drip and soil moisture
Restoring the Woodland Canyon Watershed

Woodland Canyon Creek is one of a few remaining above ground creeks in San Francisco. In 2022 we launched an ambitious project to remove invasive cape ivy and himalayan blackberry, to restore hydrological function of the eroded creek bed and to install native plants.

In 2023 we:

- Galvanized major stakeholders like UCSF, SFRPD and local nature nonprofits to come together with a unified vision
- Removed just under 25,000 square feet of weeds
- Steward the watershed with 950 hours of volunteer labor
- Increased our stewardship events from quarterly to monthly
- Raised over $100,000 for work in 2023 and 2024

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Maintaining World Class Trails

Without trails, we wouldn’t be able to enjoy the verdant, fog swept canyons and ridges of Mount Sutro. Without trails we wouldn’t have discovered plants thought to have become locally extinct, and without trails we wouldn’t be able to offer the healing benefits of nature to those with less access.

In 2023 we:

- Repaired and maintained ~20,000 linear feet of trail
- Engaged 950 volunteer hours brushing, tamping, reinforcing, retaining and sweeping trails
- Partnered with UCSF on signage for the new Sunset trail staircase
- Trained 6 new crew leaders in trail maintenance and volunteer supervision
Education

Sutro Stewards educational programs intend to open our eyes to the natural world that we are a part of and to the joyful responsibility to maintain the health of the land that in turn nourishes us. In this way, Sutro Stewards’ work extends beyond the weed that we pull today or the trail that we brush tomorrow.

In 2023 we:

- Offered educational scholarships to 10 high school students from diverse backgrounds for our Summer Stewardship Program.
- Held 8 natural history walks on Mount Sutro
- Employed 6 interns from diverse backgrounds in the growing fields of habitat restoration and native plant horticulture
- Two of our former interns have full-time employment in conservation organizations, including ours
Health In Nature

The dream of our founder, Craig Dawson, was to take children onto Mount Sutro for the healing and developmental benefits of free nature immersion and to partner with UCSF to offer health and wellness prescriptions to hospital patients. Now, finishing our second year of the Health in Nature program, this dream is becoming a reality.

In 2023 we:

- Offered nature immersion experiences for positive health outcomes to 297 seniors, children and those experiencing mental health diagnosis. 178 of our participants had never been to Mount Sutro before!
- Recruited a Health in Nature intern to support the program
- Data shows an improved sense of wellbeing by our participants after 10 months of continued programs.
- Planted the Quarry Trail connection on the Southridge of Mount Sutro with UCSF’s GROWTH program
- Offered a Spanish language nature immersion program in partnership with Garden for the Environment and Nature in the City
**Biodiverse Corridors**
- We will expand our Southridge habitat sites to form a continuous corridor from the Clarendon Trailhead to the Summit.

**Creek Restoration**
- We will plant over 2,000 plants in the Woodland Canyon Watershed.
- We will establish a healing garden in the canyon at the Northridge trail

**Trail Repairs and Access**
- We will repair the Northridge trail
- We will create a seating area at the Woodland Canyon healing garden with multi-lingual interpretive signage

**Community Gathering Space**
- We will work with UCSF to establish a new, accessible and welcoming community gathering and nursery space

**Education**
- We will add one more internship position in 2024
Mission

Our mission is to build community, connect people with nature, and protect and enhance Mount Sutro, one of San Francisco's wildest and most beautiful green spaces.

Vision

Our vision is a wild and thriving Mount Sutro that offers adventure and respite to the people of San Francisco. We envision the open space as a treasured place where well-maintained trails, expanses of restored locally native plant communities and a healthy and diverse forest support flourishing wildlife habitat and foster deep connections to nature.
After more than 20 years of dedicated advocacy, community building and conservation work on Mount Sutro, our founder, Craig Dawson has moved on from a staff position at Sutro Stewards. He began by galvanizing neighbors to build miles of trails so that all could access Mount Sutro. He worked with UCSF to win support for the long term stewardship of Mount Sutro, and he brought community stewards together who continue to care for this urban oasis we all have grown to depend on for personal rejuvenation and community connection. He passes on a scrappy nonprofit that does a lot for the Mountain with a little, and has big dreams for the future.
Our deepest thanks to all who have made 2023 GREAT! To our volunteers who have given their time to Mount Sutro. Sincerest gratitude to our donors for their generous contributions. Continued appreciation to our staff, Abigail Alfonso, Ben Pease, Bridget Llanes, Craig Dawson (transitioned May 2023), Dan Bernards, Geri Diaz and Kelly Dodge for their tireless commitment to Mount Sutro and our mission of connecting people to nature; and to our apprentices Kim Lee, Melani Ramirez, Malom Jaramillo, Christian Chingcuangco and Vincent Distrola. Heartfelt acknowledgement to our advisory board members, Adrienne Smith, Bob Seigel, Denise Chilson, Treasurer (joined July 2023), Karen Duderstadt, Advisory Board Chair, Kevin Ku (resigned February 2023), Kevin Seigel, Louis Blumberg (joined October 2023), Maryann Rainey, Secretary, Michael Grade (resigned March 2023), and Stephen Leonoudakis for their time, resources and wisdom. Special thanks to Micheal Sullivan for his enthusiasm and resourcefulness towards Woodland Canyon Watershed restoration and to Kirstin Weeks for her leadership and expertise in guiding our collective visioning process for the Woodland Canyon Watershed.
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