



HOW'S IT GROWIN'?

On tour with the Grassroots Fund and Cal Wildlands

By Tim Little, Megan Mubaraki, Laura Fernandez and Roscoe Escobar

“Here’s how we get the fifth graders to pay attention.” Kneeling on the dunes in a clump of native buckwheat, our guide coaxed a fat red ant onto her fingers, popped it between her teeth and quickly bit it in half. Grinning back at us, she offered the rest of us our own ant to try. “Tastes like lemons,” she said, “but you have to bite ‘em quick before they bite you.”

TOLOWA DUNES, HUMBOLT BAY

We’re on the third day of a field trip to the North Coast to meet with grantees and get a feel for the impact of the small grants the Rose Foundation’s twin grassroots grant funds – the Northern California Grassroots Fund, and its sister fund, the California Wildlands Grassroots Fund – provides. This afternoon’s tour leader is Sandra Jerabek, director of Tolowa Dunes Stewards, a dedicated group of volunteers who are helping restore sand dunes in Del Norte and Humboldt Counties – saving their local ecosystem, literally one plant at a time.

About a dozen of us are walking in the dunes near Humboldt Bay. Some are Rose Foundation staff and board members, others are part of the Grassroots Funding Board or help as donor-advisors. Most of us drove up from the Bay Area, and after walking through thousand year old redwoods, touring Humboldt Bay on a working oyster boat, and meeting with local activists, community leaders, and Yurok youth, the Rose Foundation’s office in Oakland feels very far away. And that’s precisely one of Sandy’s points: “The Regional Water Board office for the entire North Coast is in Santa Rosa – want to guess how often an

inspector actually drives up here to check for violations?”

Tolowa Dunes Stewards has been leading a decade-long struggle to end a failed development project on the shores of Lake Earl, the largest estuarine lagoon on the North American west coast. Lake Earl is home to hundreds of diverse species, including more than 40 threatened or endangered species like bald eagles, peregrine falcons, green sturgeon, and steelhead and coastal cutthroat trout. “We have to pull the invasive European beach grass because it chokes out all the native plants that provide habitat and anchor the food web,” Sandy explains. The native plants also allow the sand to move with changing winds and seasons, a resilient piece of natural design that thrived for millennia until European-Americans changed the landscape in an effort to grow grass for cows (which didn’t work, since cows don’t eat beach grass).

Unfortunately, we learned that the damage done by early European colonizers runs far deeper than the dunes. In Eureka, Crescent City, and elsewhere on the West Coast, the Tolowa, Wiyot, and other Tribes of indigenous people were systematically exterminated in the mid 1800s with the help and funding of California’s first governors. Under pressure from gold rush fortune seekers and white settlers, thousands of Native Americans were murdered on the North Coast. For decades, this genocide went largely unrecognized. However, over the past 20 years, numerous environmental and community organizations have forged strong relationships with Tribal members. “It’s become a central element of what we teach the students as part of the restoration days,” Sandy explains.

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Sandra Jerabek, Executive Director at Tolowa Dunes Stewards, gives a talk at a site taken over by European grasses (left) and at a site restored to include a diverse array of native plants (right). Photos courtesy of Megan Mubaraki.



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1. Tolowa Dunes Stewards

Citizens are helping to restore coastal sand dunes in Del Norte and Humboldt Counties.

Photo courtesy of Megan Mubaraki



2. Eel River Recovery Project

The Eel River remains one of California's most important salmon and steelhead trout runs.

Photo courtesy of Megan Mubaraki

3. Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities (CRTP)



Less than 4% of the original range of redwoods is occupied by old growth forests; the Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities strives to put these ancient trees before excessive road expansion.

A group of Humboldt and Del Norte County residents, Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities (CRTP) is shifting the transportation status quo in California's North Coast as it supports active transport emphasizing bicycling and walking, while opposing efforts to widen roads to allow for the passage of more

fossil fuel vehicles. Last year, CRTP used a Rose Foundation grant to oppose a large freight project that would cross Trinity and Humboldt Counties. Proponents of the project later abandoned the proposal.

Photo courtesy of Megan Mubaraki

Richardson Grove State Park features some of California's last old growth redwood trees.

Photo courtesy of Megan Mubaraki

ON TOUR WITH THE GRASSROOTS FUND AND CAL WILDLANDS

The Rose Foundation and California Wildlands grassroots grants support the dune restoration events, and help pay for the educational materials that teach about both the natural and human history of the area. We could see the piles of grass that had been pulled, contrasting the monoculture of the invasive beach grass with the vibrancy of the restored swatches. It was great to see how much restoration our small grants had enabled.

As we got ready to leave, Sandy had saved her best news for last. "Because of the track record we showed with the Rose funding, Tolowa Dunes Stewards just earned a \$300,000 state grant." The funding will support a massive push in partnership with the California Conservation Corps to pull the invasive beach grass that has been obstructing the dunes for decades and allow the natural seed bank that has always been there to sprout a hardy carpet of native wildflowers and grasses.

1. The Lake Earl Wildlife Area and Tolowa Dunes State Park feature some of California's most well preserved coastal dunes. Since 2003, **Tolowa Dunes Stewards**, a nonprofit run by volunteers and scientists, has worked to protect this unique habitat and the diverse wildlife that live in the region. Over 320 bird species and 50 mammal species, including elk and porcupines, call this area home, making it one of the most biologically diverse areas in California. The Tolowa Dunes Stewards protect the land and the Tolowa Tribe sacred sites through advocacy, education, stewardship, and restoration.

2. The Eel River and its tributaries drain the third largest watershed in California. The **Eel River Recovery Project (ERRP)** works to inspire the community to act as stewards for the Eel River. Because much of the Eel River lies on private land, the ERRP relies heavily on educating local communities. The ERRP has cooperated with community members to install temperature measuring gauges along the river, watch for toxic algae, and organize clean ups. With these efforts, the ERRP helps improve the health of the river for the benefit of the people who use it as a water source and for recreation, as well as for the local wildlife.

THE EEL RIVER RECOVERY PROJECT

Trying to better understand the impact of our small grants was why we had left Oakland three days ago on the long drive north up the 101 highway. First we passed through the wine country in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties, where the Rose Foundation has been supporting local groups such as Russian Riverkeeper, Watertrough Children's Alliance, and Forest Unlimited to help local communities find a balance between the high-end "cash crop" growing on the grape vines and the loss of much of our remaining oak woodland habitat.

As we climbed up the grade along the Russian River, several members in our party remarked on how much water there was in the river – an unusual sight after years of drought. Later in the drive, we contrasted the relatively high water in the Russian River against the bare trickle we saw in the Eel River. When we sat down with river activists the next day, including Regina Chichizola of Save California's Salmon and Lynn Talkovsky from Friends of Outlet Creek, we learned why. Much of the headwaters flow of the Eel River is diverted into the Russian River.

"The Eel is drained to feed the big corporate wineries in the Russian River area," explained Regina. "It's the same thing on the Trinity," she added. "Lewiston Dam is where Trinity water gets pumped out and piped

into the Sacramento." You could practically see a big light bulb switch on over our heads as we understood this crucial aspect of California's statewide "plumbing." Here was a prime example of how water is sucked out of a remote watershed (without regard for the local environmental and economic damage) to irrigate water-intensive nut trees in the Central Valley and major SoCal metropolitan areas. The Governor's proposed "California Water Fix" Delta tunnels would do more of the same – sucking more than 100 billion gallons of water per year of out of the Sacramento River to ship south for big ag and big cities. Now we understood where some of this "extra water" would come from.

COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

As the wine country gave way to the Redwood Empire, we stopped in Richardson State Park for a late lunch. Grassroots Fund and California Wildlands grantee Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities is rallying community members throughout the North Coast region to oppose road-widening, highway-expanding projects that generate more fossil fueled traffic and damage local communities and the natural environment. Ground zero in their campaign is Richardson Grove, where Caltrans has been trying to get permits to widen the 101 highway here for the last 20 years. It's a small project in the scheme of a 1,500 mile highway that runs from Los Angeles to the Olympic Peninsula, but it would have a huge impact on this popular state park.

Ronald Reagan once said, "If you've seen one redwood, you've seen them all." At the Rose Foundation, we don't agree with the Gipper. Ninety-eight percent of the redwood forest that used to blanket the coast from Big Sur to Oregon is already gone. Many of the remaining big trees are scattered in isolated "tree museums" like in Richardson Grove, where a small cluster of ancient trees stubbornly clings to a few narrow acres between the river and the road. Widening the road here so that bigger trucks can rumble through a few miles an hour faster would destroy a park that tens of thousands of people enjoy each year. That's a bad trade-off, and the Rose Foundation is proud to stand with Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities and help them hug these special trees by supporting research, analysis, and the mobilization of grassroots opposition to extensive road widening and realignment projects.

From Richardson Grove we caravanned on to Humboldt State Park. No tree museum here— it's 40,000+ acres of lush rainforest, including 23,000 acres of ancient trees, many of which have stood for over 1,000 years. As stiff gusts of wind blew up the Eel River canyon, making the tops of even the biggest giants sway gently 300 feet over our heads, we said thank you to the original tree-hugger, Laura Mahan, whose courageous direct action in 1924 stopped the Pacific Lumber Company from logging the heart of the ancient redwood forest along the Eel River and bought the time for Save the Redwoods League to purchase what eventually became the core of Humboldt State Park.

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Our group assembles by Founders Tree, a redwood that could look down on a 30 story building.

Photo courtesy of Megan Mubarak

By evening we were in Eureka, the North Coast's regional center for government, health care, trade, and the arts - and 270 miles from home. For centuries, Eureka's deep water harbor (the largest one between San Francisco and Coos Bay, Oregon) has been a welcome sight for mariners, and the city is home to a major commercial fishing fleet. Unfortunately, this fleet has seen hard times recently. Between the choking drought and water diversions, river temperatures have spiked and algae blooms are common - two key reasons why more than 90% of juvenile salmon in the Klamath and Sacramento Rivers die after spawning in many years. Commercial fishing is almost shut down, and as one of the major industries in the region, it affects the local economy and the subsistence for local tribal communities. The entire city is a state historic landmark, and Humboldt Bay is lined with the rusting remains of the logging industry - a mute counterpoint to the hundreds of stately victorians that have been repurposed into a vibrant old town district.

COMMUNITY BIKE KITCHEN

Like elsewhere on the North Coast, community really matters in Eureka, and we were excited to start the next day's tour at the Community Bike Kitchen at Jefferson School. Our guide, Emily Sinkhorn, proudly showed off their facility at the Jefferson School Community Center and explained how the Rose Foundation's funding had helped them provide 180 bicycles to the communities around Humboldt Bay, particularly in the under-served neighborhood of Westside Eureka. They especially focus their outreach towards homeless, low-income families (the median income in Eureka is 60% below the state average), and organizations serving the homeless. This population is particularly in need of reliable, affordable transportation.

The Community Bike Kitchen estimates that at least a third of the people they serve are housing insecure. Through free workshops, more than 650 people have learned how to repair their bikes, and a membership program allows their constituents to trade volunteer time for the hard costs of repairs.

Emily is especially proud of one of their programs that provides a safe and welcoming space for women and transgender people. The Women and Trans Open House program recognizes that tool shops and mechanical activities have traditionally been male dominated, and are often uncomfortable or intimidating, which results in a gender imbalance. By addressing the special needs of certain groups, the Community Bike Kitchen is creating a stronger, more inclusive and diverse biking community overall. Emily sees this as part of a leadership pipeline to build community capacity - a big part of her overall focus through her day job with the Redwood Community Action Agency. "You need to translate what is working in urban areas to what can work here," she advised.

4. Community Bike Kitchen

The Community Bike Kitchen at Jefferson School supports the local community's access to bike maintenance. Twenty-four percent of Eureka residents live in poverty according to the 2016 census, making accessing bike repair difficult for many. Community Bike Kitchen at Jefferson School has cooked up a plan to provide bicycles and bicycle know-how to all communities in the Humboldt Bay area, especially the underserved westside of Eureka. With a 2015 Rose Foundation grant, the Bike Kitchen helped provide 222 people with bike maintenance training in one year, and now more and more community members are able to engage in green, healthy transportation.

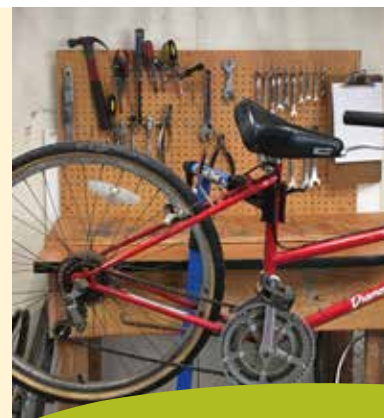
Photo courtesy of Cindy Tsai

FRIENDS OF OUTLET CREEK, MAD RIVER ALLIANCE & SAVE CALIFORNIA'S SALMON

Although we may call it the North Coast, like many generalizations, it's not very accurate. What is 100% true are the long distances between the inland headwaters of the Klamath River and Outlet Creek in the upper watershed of the Eel River, not to mention some rugged mountains in between. Despite Caltrans' best efforts, large swaths are still impenetrable to regular cars, and even where you *can* drive it's often windy and slow. There was no way we could cover it all on our short trip, so we asked local activists from Orleans, Crescent City, Arcata, and Willits to meet us in Eureka - a location of mutual inconvenience where we could have a conversation about what outsiders like us at the Rose Foundation need to know to make strategic grant investments in building local grassroots people-power for conservation and environmental justice.

We began our conversation discussing the popular media narratives of jobs vs. logs, and fish vs. ranchers. "A lot of people believe it," said Dave Feral from Mad River Alliance. "But you can find common ground around organic farming." Lynn Talkovsky from Friends of Outlet Creek stressed the need to understand the realities local communities face, stating, "This whole area is very resource dependant. When the crab or salmon fisheries shut down here, that's an annoyance for you in Oakland because you pay more for your fish. But on our end it's a real hardship." Yurok tribal leader Sammy Gensaw explained that the Yurok people count salmon and people as equal: "It's all connected - people, nature, fish, happiness, food, the economy - cut out any part and the damage cascades through the rest. Everything the salmon needs to survive is everything people need to survive." This deep interconnectedness is how Sammy gets Yurok youth involved in his new nonprofit, Ancestral Guard. Sammy stresses, "We organize around values, not ceremonies." As we heard Sammy's younger siblings Lena-Belle and Jon Luke talking about the permaculture projects they were building with their peers, we looked around the room and could see that others had the same thoughts as us - these kids could lead us to the future we all need, if only we can learn to follow them.

So, how to go forward? "Well, we can't turn back the clock," Dave observed. "When the Mad River was a wilderness, the forests were a huge sponge holding water and slowly releasing it into the river all summer. But that's gone now. So we need to keep Matthews Dam on the Mad River. We need to not only manage it, but we also need a way to hold back water to release in the dry months." As our panel of experts spoke, two things became clear. First, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. Dams might be helping maintain some of the Mad River ecosystem, "But they're not helping the Klamath," stresses

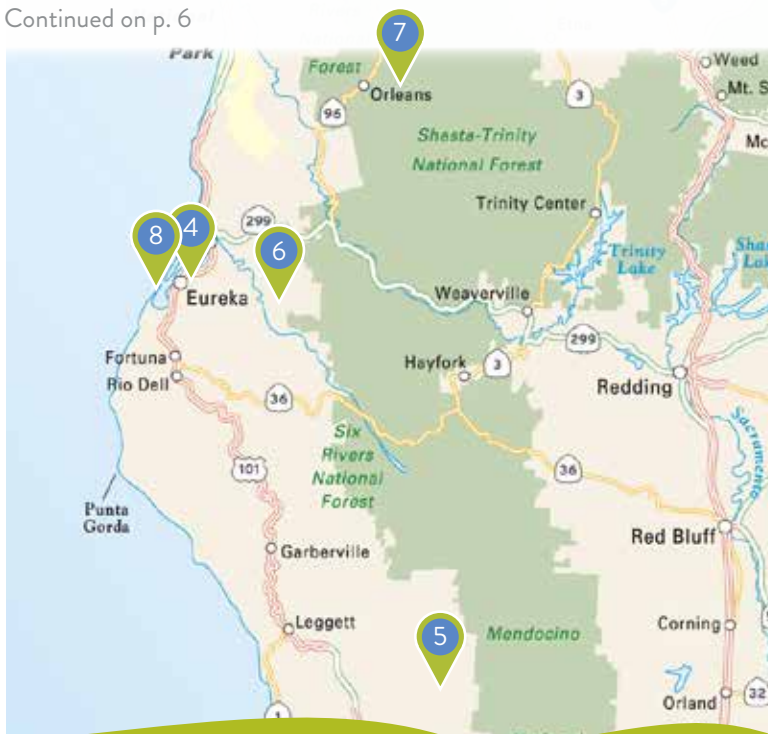


Regina Chichizola, a dedicated volunteer advocate for wild salmon and environmental justice for Tribal communities. She was an early leader in building the movement to remove four old and outdated dams from the Klamath River, which led to an historic water settlement between the dam operators, state and federal government, and some Tribal nations around the cooperative removal of the dams. Although the settlement was not approved, dam removal is still going forward through re-licensing and other federal processes.

Even though Regina works in a watershed that many Californians might have trouble finding on a map, her approach illustrates the interconnectedness between environment, economy, and community justice. Her group recently changed its name from Save the Klamath-Trinity Salmon to Save California's Salmon. Why? Because the rivers, salmon, forests, people, communities, and economy are all connected to each other – so we can't restore salmon runs in the Klamath without addressing fundamental statewide water supply and demand issues. That means California needs a coherent statewide approach to water use. But Regina argues that we don't: "Even though average Californians are being asked to cut their water use, corporate agriculture interests are expanding their acreage in the driest areas of California."

While local approaches may differ, it was clear that each panelist had deep respect for each other. "I'll tell you what Regina is too humble to say," said Pat Higgins of the Eel River Recovery Project as he praised Regina's outstanding record of combining community driven change within tribes and environmental litigation that has been successful in helping to remove four Klamath River dams and restore waters to the Trinity River. For Regina, "When you're fighting for clean fish, you are fighting for clean water for people." Everyone agreed that the 'we're all in this together' mentality isn't limited to the activist camaraderie. "I might see the guy I just filed a 60 day notice on at the bagel shop tomorrow," mused Humboldt Baykeeper's Jennifer Kalt. "We've got to find a way to talk with each other." For Dan Ehresman, Northern California Grassroots funding board member and Humboldt resident, "It's all about building relationships with landowners, trust with the people and – at a local scale – working with our local politicians."

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5. Friends of Outlet Creek



A tributary of the Eel River, Outlet Creek is home to four federally listed threatened or endangered animals, including two salmon species, steelhead trout, and the yellow legged frog.

Friends of Outlook Creek draws on the power of neighbors and local community members to protect Outlook Creek along with the people and wildlife who call it home. In 2015, the placement of an asphalt plant along the creek has been releasing huge plumes of emissions and polluting the air of the local community. The County Air District issued a permit to allow for the production of 500,000 tons of asphalt every year, although no environmental impact statement has been made for the plant to date. Friends of Outlet Creek works hard to draw attention to the unjust impacts of the plant and to call for proper environmental review of the project.

Photo courtesy of Megan Mubarak

6. Mad River Alliance



Dave Feral, Executive Director at the Mad River Alliance, oversees scientific research, monitoring, and education.

The Mad River Alliance fills the gaps in the biological and water quality monitoring of the Mad River, which flows through Trinity and Humboldt

Counties. The Mad River was added to the Environmental Protection Agency's list of impaired rivers due to the high amounts of sediments that flow into the river from human land use. In recent years, drought and rising temperatures have degraded the quality of the river for the steelhead trout that call it home. The Mad River Alliance is working to restore the river with citizen science, coupled with community outreach and education.

Photo courtesy of Dave Feral

7. Save California's Salmon

(formerly Save the Klamath-Trinity Salmon)



Regina Chichizola, Co-Director of Save California's Salmon, often takes her son, Malcolm, to protest in support of healthy rivers.

Save California's Salmon formed part of a broad coalition to forge an agreement to remove four outdated dams along Klamath River to restore the aquatic environment. The agreement brought together diverse groups, including dam owners, state governments, Tribal communities, and commercial fishermen. This cooperation exemplifies Save California's Salmon work to improve the river for the salmon and the commercial fishing and Tribal communities who have depended on the salmon for centuries.

Photo courtesy of Regina Chichizola



Photo
courtesy of
Jeff Powers

8. Humboldt Baykeeper

Founded in 2004, the Humboldt Baykeeper works to protect the unique resources of Humboldt Bay, the second largest estuary in California.

The Baykeeper challenges toxic water pollution on a case-by-case basis, encouraging residents to take action against dioxins, heavy metals, petroleum, and other forms of pollution. A healthy bay means healthy fisheries and wetlands, which support countless seabirds as well as the fishing community.

HUMBOLDT BAYKEEPER

“Google maps might not work too well for directions out there,” Jennifer (Jen) Kalt, Director of Humboldt Baykeeper, had warned. Tim insisted we’d be fine, since he had scribbled Jen’s directions on a scrap of paper after a couple of beers during an impromptu planning session the previous evening. What could go wrong? We soon found out as Tim led our small caravan on a wandering journey through Samoa looking for Hog Island Oyster Company. Samoa is a thin sand spit extending south from Arcata, and you get there by crossing a two lane bridge from Eureka. But 15 minutes from our hotel we found a world apart, where a decaying pulp mill is currently being repurposed into an industrial park and the forgotten village of Fairhaven crouches behind the seaside dunes. Road signs are scarce. By trial and error, we found Hog Island, a small, spirited science-driven outfit dedicated to growing the best-tasting oysters in Humboldt Bay. As we waved hello to Jen, our tour guide for the morning, we reflected on the synergies between scrappy science-driven on-the-water citizen enforcement and a homespun operation growing filter feeders that depend on clean water for health and market value.

Lucas Sawyer from Hog Island Oyster Company was happy to explain the process of growing oysters from tiny “seeds” and how the growing

bivalves were later transferred to pristine tidal areas where they improved their muscle tone (and market value) reacting to the water flows. Then Lucas handed out the life jackets and we were out on the Bay in Hog Island’s oyster tender. We hadn’t gone more than 100 yards when Jen offered her first lesson. “See that dock over there? That’s where the California Redwood Company discharges acidic storm water runoff from a wood chip shipping operation. The company’s self-reported storm water samples revealed some issues with pollutants in the runoff. Humboldt Baykeeper brought a Clean Water Act case against the facility and they responded with a number of improvements to the site, which should lead to improved water quality in the adjacent areas of the Bay.”

From our hotel in old town Eureka, we had seen streets of postcard Victorian houses and picturesque commercial fishing docks. On the other hand, from the water, you see Humboldt Bay’s industrial timber past and the looming hulks of former pulp mills. Jen is an optimist and she shows us the silver lining. “See those oyster racks in front of the old pulp mill? They can grow them there because the toxics from the old mill got cleaned up. It’s a brownfields success story. The cleanup didn’t just help the environment, it boosted our economy.”

The ending of the boat tour takes us back to our walk with Sandra on the Humboldt Bay dunes. Our group broke up after the walk was over. Three days is a long time to escape daily workloads, and we felt the pressure of what must be piling up on our desks back in the Bay Area. As we brushed the sand off our feet and soaked up a few more minutes of sun, sand, and wild nature, there was a piece of unscripted magic.

“My name is Lori Stamps, who’s in charge here?” a woman called, striding across the packed sand where we’d been saying our goodbyes and trying to process what we’d seen and learned. She told us that the nature center where we’d started our dune walk had originally been built from an earth shelter kit by her grandparents, Charles and Rachel Stamps, as a retirement home. They enjoyed sharing their home and access to the beach with family and friends and wanted to be sure that the property and surrounding environments could be enjoyed for generations to come. After Charles and Rachel passed, the Stamps family sold their property at a discounted price as a nature center to Friends of the Dunes so that it could become a home for people who loved the wild beach environment as much as they did.

Laurie asked us why we were there and we explained about the Rose Foundation’s commitment to building people power at the base of the environmental movement, and how that was expressed through the Grassroots and California Wildlands funds. “I just want to say, thank you,” she beamed as we all shook hands. “My grandfather did what he did, so that people like you could do what you do.”

California Wildlands Grassroots Fund

California’s natural beauty continues to come under threat from powerful interests which don’t value wild nature. Since 2002 the California Wildlands Grassroots Fund has awarded over 320 grants totaling over \$1.26 million. These grants support conservation groups advocating for the permanent protection of California’s natural treasures and to groups dedicated to stewardship and restoration of local habitats. [Learn more at rosefdn.org/calwildlands](http://rosefdn.org/calwildlands)

Northern California Environmental Grassroots Fund

Though large philanthropy often ignores small community based-environmental justice groups, the Grassroots Fund operates under belief that these groups are best equipped to deal with today’s environmental problems. With over 750 grants averaging \$3,800 awarded since 2003, as well as the awarding of small training scholarships, the Grassroots Fund continues to support groups on the frontlines of California’s most challenging environmental issues, including toxic pollution and urban sprawl. Our grantees often live in the areas they protect, allowing them to use on-the-ground experience to create solutions that benefit local communities and the environment. [Learn more at rosefdn.org/grassrootsfund](http://rosefdn.org/grassrootsfund)

Each school year, the Rose Foundation takes on several high school Fellows who want to deepen their involvement in environmental justice. Fellows work with us for 4 - 6 hours each week, acquiring professional skills at our Oakland office and taking on projects to engage the local community and their classmates in environmental issues.



Rosesanie Phan is a senior at Oakland Technical High School. She is a talented writer with a gift for telling compelling stories. Nervous speaking in front of groups, she nonetheless can silence a room when she tells of her grandmother rescuing four of her children from Kmer Rouge work camps in Cambodia, or leading the family to safety through minefields along the Thailand/Cambodia border. Rosesanie first joined New Voices as a student in the 2016 Summer Climate Justice Leadership Academy, and returned in 2017 as a peer leader. “New Voices helped me deal with my anxiety. It forced me to do things – like speak at public meetings – that I hated at the time; but now I can talk in front of people without freaking out. New Voices gives students a chance to be involved in shaping policy and to actually have a voice.”



Jada Delaney likes to be the “go-to person” in any group she’s in. As a competitive golfer in her senior year at Oakland Tech’s Engineering Academy, Jada explained that being dependable and helpful is “something that we stress in my golf program... regardless of your skill set or abilities you can always provide something for someone else.” Jada is aiming for a career in architecture after she finishes college. “Working with New Voices, I realized you can advance environmental justice through architecture and green infrastructure. Sustainable housing shouldn’t be something that’s just for the wealthy. There are ways we can apply sustainable design to affordable housing and low-income communities.”



Artkinlee Sulit was nine years old when he moved to Oakland from the Philippines. Now a junior at Oakland’s Skyline High School, Artkinlee would like his city to be cleaner and healthier than the Oakland he sees around him. “The Philippines is a poor country, so pollution there is not surprising. But here in Oakland there’s too much contrast between the clean professional buildings and the trash on the streets right outside.” A fan of hands-on activities, Artkinlee says, “I like New Voices because it’s a way to actually do something, not just sit in a classroom.”

From the Reservoir to the State Capitol: The 2017 Summer Academy Experience

“Through New Voices Are Rising, I realized that environmental work is what I want to do. I like doing field work.” This is what Andrea Pineda, a 17-year-old student enrolled in Skyline High School’s Green Academy, said to us during her summer exhibition for the Oakland Unified School District’s internship program. Summer 2017 marked the eleventh year of the Rose Foundation’s Summer Climate Justice Youth Leadership Academy, an intensive summer leadership program that introduces Oakland youth to environmental justice issues and fosters young environmental leaders. Andrea, a 2017 Summer Academy member, embodied the goals of the program. She delved deep into the local environmental justice issues the Academy introduced, and in the process uncovered her passion for environmental work and community engagement. Andrea plans to return as a youth leader in the 2018 Summer Academy.

The 2017 Summer Academy was a rousing success. This summer, we introduced a new leadership position in the program. Four returning students—Mykela Patton, Rosesanie Phan, Marlen Escobedo, and Kierra Johnson—shined as “Pod Leaders”, guiding the program in the planning process, advising on best practices, leading workshops and discussions throughout the summer, and using their expertise to guide their peers. This new layer to the program provided more than a leadership opportunity: through this peer-to-peer program model, we cultivated a tight-knit group of Academy students dedicated to supporting each other and to protecting the local environment.

The 16 Summer Academy youth, led by New Voices Program Coordinator Carlos Zambrano, Program Director Jill Ratner, and the Pod Leaders, stayed busy for the six weeks of the program.



Students gained deep knowledge about environmental justice issues in Oakland, working both at the Rose Foundation and with program partners such as Rooted in Resilience, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, the Lake Merritt Institute, Full Harvest Farm, The Butterfly Movement, and Roots Rising.

The students covered a lot of ground – from travelling to Sacramento to learn about the political process in California to rafting on the South Fork American River to visiting Oakland’s drinking water source, the Pardee Reservoir – which provided a wide range of experiences and issues-based knowledge.



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Rose Foundation Supports Fire Recovery

The Rose Foundation is working with Mendocino, Napa, and Sonoma County grassroots groups to set up a fire recovery fund. Stay tuned for more details on the Just and Resilient Futures Fund.

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and other festivities that will kick off in the new year.