

**Board Director Guest Column**  
**Director Linda LeZotte, District 4**

**Water District is working to protect the environment**

Along with providing a safe, reliable supply of drinking water and flood protection, the Santa Clara Valley Water District also has a goal to protect and restore creek, bay, and other aquatic ecosystems. Caring for streams, habitat and the environment is critical to our mission to provide Silicon Valley a healthy life, environment and economy.

The water district is working diligently to achieve that aspect of our mission. Our efforts span the county and run the gamut of activities. We annually support volunteer efforts to clean our creeks through National River Cleanup Day and Coastal Cleanup Day. This year, we hosted an additional volunteer cleanup day on Coyote Creek. Taken together, the three cleanups resulted in more than 101,000 pounds of trash being removed from creeks. Our crews removed 393 tons of trash throughout last year. Working together we make a greater impact.

In 2012, voters overwhelmingly passed the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection parcel tax that helps fund a variety of water-related stewardship work throughout our county including habitat enhancement, trails and water quality enhancement. Partnering with local companies, nonprofit organizations and other governmental agencies has helped the money for these items go further. Over the 15-year life of the program, the district expects to distribute nearly \$35 million in grants, partnerships and rebate programs, as part of the water district's commitment to protecting our environment and our work to restore habitat along creeks and the bay, clean pollutants from the water, and make sure water is used efficiently throughout the community.

The water district has completed several projects and is planning new fish passage improvement projects along Stevens Creek and Uvas Creek. We are also partnering with the City of San José for improvements along Coyote Creek. These passage improvements make it easier for fish to migrate upstream in our creeks.

To expand our knowledge of the fisheries and the health of our streams, we also monitor various parameters including water quality, habitat quality, and perform sampling to track whether mercury accumulates within the food web.

Keeping our waterways and their habitats healthy is important for clean water and environmental stewardship. That's why the water district is involved in contaminant remediation activities such as reducing mercury, responding to hazardous material releases in waterways, and dealing with pathogens in the environment.

Mitigation and the improvement of habitat is an important part of our work. We manage more than 3,600 acres of land around the county for stream and watershed preservation. We also participate in regional efforts to keep plant pathogens out of local habitats. We are making a concerted effort to plant clean plants in our watersheds so that pathogens do not spread.

Other activities the water district has participated in include monitoring wildlife corridors in Coyote Valley, participating in a global study of carbon dynamics in freshwater and marine soils, and continued work on our One Water Plan, a forward-thinking holistic approach to water resource management.

The water district is proud to be a staunch environmental advocate. We work hard to enhance, protect and restore our creeks and habitat.

**As always, I am available for questions or comments as your District 4 representative for the City of Campbell, portions of Willow Glen and the Cambrian, North Almaden and Blossom Hill neighborhoods of San Jose. Feel free to contact me at (408) 265-2600 or at [llezotte@valleywater.org](mailto:llezotte@valleywater.org).**