



Final Grant Report

June 5, 2026

Prepared for: Napa County Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Green Futures - Equitable Engagement of High School Students in Wildlife Habitat Stewardship and Conservation Careers



Green Futures students care for a newly planted oak tree with Land Trust of Napa County's Whitney Wyche during a field trip at Skyline Wilderness Park in Napa.

Program Summary

122 students from 8 high school classes participated in Napa RCD's Green Futures environmental education program. RCD staff implemented 8 classroom sessions and 4 field trips to Skyline Wilderness Park in Napa. Green Futures increased time spent learning outdoors in nature by 4.5 hours per student. Students planted, monitored, and maintained 85 native oak trees across a 3-acre area.

"Beyond the academic benefits, these trips provide a critical space for healing. In an era where many of our youth face significant stress and anxiety, the time spent in nature offers a profound sense of calm."

- Green Futures partner teacher Julie Lovie

Program Description

Green Futures is designed to support students who are historically underrepresented in environmental fields by connecting them with relevant mentors, engaging them in practical skills development, caring for open spaces, and fostering wellness benefits of outdoor learning and stewardship experiences.

Napa RCD strives to improve equitable access to environmental education opportunities for students who may not otherwise have access to meaningful outdoor learning, stewardship experiences, or exposure to environmental careers. Napa RCD partnered with Valley Oak High School (VOHS) as the primary audience for the Green Futures program. VOHS was invited to partner for this program to provide sustained opportunities which build a sense of belonging, purpose, and identity in conservation and stewardship spaces among disadvantaged continuation school students. VOHS students by percent of enrollment are 89% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, 75.5% Latino or Hispanic, and 32.3% English Learners ([2024-25 VOHS SARC](#)).

To reduce and eliminate barriers and equitably support VOHS, the Green Futures program is offered free of cost to VOHS, covering all expenses for field trip bus transportation, substitute teacher coverage (while the teacher participates in field trips), and a teacher stipend to support their time coordinating curriculum, debriefing, and providing critical feedback.

Additional improvements to equitably support students include:

- **Instructional Clarity & Expectations:** Staff clearly communicate the purpose, expectations, and skills associated with classroom and field trip activities. Students understand what successful participation looks like, and instructional materials are presented through written, verbal, visual, and hands-on formats to support diverse learning styles, language needs, and levels of experience.
- **Career Exposure and Relevance:** Napa RCD recruits, trains, and integrates organizational partners to serve as professional mentors and career role models during field experiences. Green Futures intentionally engages conservation professionals whose backgrounds, experiences, and identities reflect the diversity of participating students, helping youth see environmental careers as accessible, relevant, and attainable. Professional role models support small group sizes, which

create greater opportunities for student engagement and the sense that community members care for and about students and their role in habitat stewardship and conservation. Professional role models from partner organizations and agencies included American Canyon Community & Parks Foundation (ACCPF), Land Trust of Napa County (LTNC), United States Dept. of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

- **Positive Nature Experiences:** Students spend meaningful time outdoors exploring, observing, and interacting with natural environments. By creating positive, engaging, and memorable experiences in nature, the program helps students build comfort outdoors, develop a personal connection to local open spaces, and foster a lifelong appreciation for wildlife and the natural world.

Objectives

Green Futures is designed to achieve measurable wildlife habitat and student development outcomes through the following objectives:

1. **Stewardship:** Measurably improving the condition of wildlife habitat and native plant abundance in Skyline Wilderness Park.
2. **Nature Affinity & Interaction:** Building students' connection to nature and local outdoor spaces to build a lifelong commitment to stewardship of wildlife and nature.
3. **Conservation Career Exploration:** Improving awareness of, access to, and participation in, environmental skills and careers among historically underinvested-in and underserved populations of students.



A Green Futures student collects wildlife biodiversity data in her schoolyard

Results

Classroom Date	Field Trip Date	# of Students	Stewardship Activities	Career Partners
9/9/25	9/11/25	26	29 native oaks monitored and maintained	ACCPF, LTNC, RCD, NRCS
10/21/25	10/23/25	49	17 native oaks planted	ACCPF, LTNC, RCD
3/3/26	3/5/26	41	15 native oaks monitored and maintained	ACCPF, LTNC, RCD, NRCS
4/30/26	5/7/26	25	24 native oaks monitored and maintained	ACCPF, LTNC, RCD, NRCS

Stewardship

- Three acres of native oak habitat within Skyline Wilderness Park (Napa, CA) were cared for by students.
- Students installed 17 new native oak tree plantings creating new wildlife habitat, canopy, and carbon sequestering biomass.
- Students provided critical monitoring and maintenance of 68 young trees, supporting their survival and establishment.
- 90% of students reported participating in at least one direct stewardship action.

"I remember learning how to plant trees it was a really fun experience."

"With the maintenance we did today, [the trees] should grow pretty tall"

"When I'm in my 50's or my 40's I'll come back"

-Green Futures students

Nature Affinity & Interaction

- Increased time learning outdoors by 4.5 hours per student.
- Students ranked field trip experiences as "Very Positive" (4.6 out of 5.0)
- 70% of students voluntarily shared and described positive reflections about their experience. In follow-up surveys students recalled:

"walking in there in the morning I didn't think I'd have a great time, but being around such positive people/teachers, really made my experience worth it, I left with multiples smiles and laughter."

"I remembered nature is good for you and it helps you relax mentally"

"I remember enjoying it, having fun and working outside."

"We were planting a tree and I remember the smiles we had while digging."

"Had lots of fun walking around in a very clean garden and seeing all those animals living in a space that humans built, crazy how nature works"

-Green Futures students

Conservation Career Exploration

Napa RCD staff recruited, trained, and integrated 9 unique conservation career partners as professional mentors including:

- ACCPF: Joy Hilton (Education Director) and Tammy Saunders (Naturalist)
- LTNC: Clarisa Rosas (Assistant Stewardship Coordinator), Joseph Clark (Stewardship Program Assistant), Whitney Wyche (Stewardship Program Assistant)
- Napa RCD: Francisco Larios (Project Assistant), Eric McKee (Project Manager)
- NRCS: Frank Bradley (Biologist) and Erika Valek (Soil Conservationist)

Through direct observation as well as follow-up surveys, students demonstrated development of practical conservation career skills throughout their experience. The most reported skills reported by students were environmental data collection (90%), tree care (80%), using a GPS

(75%), and plant and animal identification (70%).

- 85% of students reported interacting with at least one professional mentor during their field trip.
- 35% of students expressed curiosity about environmental internships, careers, or a willingness to try conservation work.
- 14 students were uncertain whether environmental careers were right for them, highlighting the importance of continued exposure, mentorship, and career pathway programming for youth who have historically had limited access to environmental professions.



Students pose for a photo around their oak tree at Skyline Park.

The results of program evaluation data demonstrated that when students are provided meaningful opportunities to care for the environment, learn outdoors, and connect with relevant conservation professionals, they develop the skills, confidence, and sense of belonging needed to become future stewards of Napa County's wildlife and habitats.

Napa RCD thanks the Napa County Wildlife Conservation Commission for making these experiences possible. Green Futures would not be possible without the support and assistance from: ACCPF, LTNC, NRCS, Skyline Wilderness Park, and VOHS.

Additional funding for the Green Futures program is provided by: County of Napa PBES, County of Napa Health & Human Services, Innovative Health Solutions, Lewis Cellars Community Grants, North Bay Watershed Association, Steve Rasmussen & Felicia Woytak and individual donations.



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Project RCD2025028

June 10, 2026

Invoice Submitted To:

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Invoice #: 1

Project: Green Futures

Period Covered: September 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Description	Hours / Units	Rate	Cost
Personnel			
Project Manager Eric McKee	65	\$ 72.57	\$ 4,717.05
Accounting & Administration Specialist	5	\$ 50.66	\$ 253.30
Expenses			
Field Trip Sub Teacher Dec 25	1	\$ 305.80	\$ 305.80
Field Trip Transportation - Skyline	1	\$ 418.00	\$ 418.00
Class supplies-thermometer & GPS	1	\$ 723.48	\$ 723.48
Notebooks for student journals	1	\$ 76.95	\$ 76.95
Wilderness supplies & measure tapes	1	\$ 216.89	\$ 216.89
Field Trip Transportation - Skyline	1	\$ 390.00	\$ 390.00
Field Trip Sub Teacher May 26 - Valley Oak HS	1	\$ 336.37	\$ 336.37
Green Futures Teacher Stipend	1	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Travel			
Employee Truck Mileage		\$ 0.725	\$ -
Expense overage			\$ (589.84)
		Total Due:	\$ 7,348.00

Lucas Patzek, Executive Director

6/11/2026

Date