



# Friends of Five Creeks

*Volunteers preserving and restoring watersheds of  
North Berkeley, Albany, Kensington, south El Cerrito and Richmond since 1996*

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[www.fivecreeks.org](http://www.fivecreeks.org)

May 22, 2015

Association of Bay Area Governments  
Attn.: JoAnna Bullock, Senior Planner  
101 Eighth St.  
Oakland CA 94607

Re: Supporting nomination of Hillside Natural Area as Priority Conservation Area

To Whom It May Concern:

Friends of Five Creeks, a 19-year-old, all-volunteer nature restoration group working from Berkeley to Richmond, strongly supports adding the El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area to the Priority Conservation Area network.

This 100-acre open space, with native-grass meadows and oak-woodland canyons, surrounded by homes, is an amazing treasure. In our four years of work curbing French broom and other fire-prone invasives, totaling thousands of hours, we have catalogued more than 100 native plants and an impressive (still incomplete) list of birds, mammals, and other wildlife.

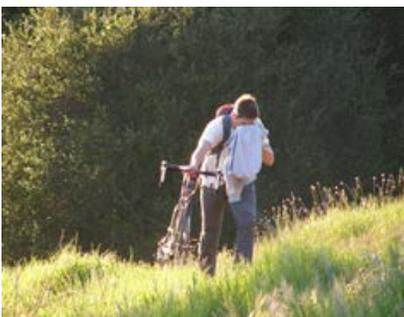
Even unused by people, the surprising biodiversity of this area, remarkably similar to conditions before European settlement, would be worth preserving. However, the area is loved and enjoyed by dog-walkers, mountain bikers, casual strollers, bird watchers, kids just being kids, and others, from a slack-rope walker to folks practicing various kinds of meditation. Two other citizen groups now have joined volunteer efforts, along with three neighboring schools. One, El Cerrito Trail Trekkers, now sponsors of annual festival. The City of El Cerrito's recent acquisition of eight acres linking the two parts of this area (with much of the money contributed by local citizens) will make it still more popular.

The city's nomination gives you the information needed. The photos on the next page give you a hint of the beauty and complexity that should be preserved. For more, please see the slide shows and plant list at [http://www.fivecreeks.org/projects/hillside\\_natural\\_area/](http://www.fivecreeks.org/projects/hillside_natural_area/).

Sincerely,

Susan Schwartz, President  
Friends of Five Creeks

Cc: City of El Cerrito.





May 26, 2015

Dear Representative of the Association of Bay Area Governments:

El Cerrito Trail Trekkers strongly supports the city of El Cerrito's application to gain priority conservation area status for the Hillside Natural Area and portions of Cerrito Creek.

As a nonprofit group that builds and improves trails and advocates for open space with an eye to the overall wellbeing of the city and its residents, we are concerned that increased development and population density needs to be counterweighed by increased attention to natural open spaces and creeks.

We are intimately acquainted with these parcels of land and waterway, having hiked them, cleaned them, worked on trails in them, restored habitat in them. For instance, Trekkers was a leader of the effort to buy and fund the recent addition of eight acres of land to the Hillside Natural Area and continues to advocate for more additions.

Designation as a priority area would benefit the Hillside in many ways, calling attention to a resource that, while spectacular, remains surprisingly unknown to many people. Cerrito Creek too is a beautiful spot that needs greater attention from public and officials alike.

Funding is needed for a signage program being developed by the National Park Service for city trails, including those in the Hillside and along Cerrito Creek. Funding is needed for other trail improvements in the Hillside and along the Creek, and to provide visual and physical connection between these two areas and the Bay and Ridge trails.

Such designation would help secure such funding. Thank you for your attention.

Dave Weinstein  
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May 29, 2015



Association of Bay Area Governments  
Attn: JoAnna Bullock, Senior Planner  
101 Eighth St., Oakland CA 94607

Re: El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area Primary Conservation Area application

Ms. Bullock,

The Trust for Public Land is pleased to provide this letter of support for the City of El Cerrito's application to designate the Hillside Natural Area as a Primary Conservation Area under ABAG's Plan Bay Area program.

The Trust for Public Land is a national land conservation non-profit organization established in 1973 and headquartered in San Francisco. We conserve land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens and other natural places. In our forty years we have completed approximately 4,500 projects protecting over 3.2 million acres of land across the country. This includes several projects in El Cerrito, most recently involving the protection of the 8-acre Madera property which unified the Hillside Natural Area into a contiguous, mile-long, 100+ acre natural area.

The Trust for Public Land invested in the protection of the Madera property because of the conservation significance of the Hillside Natural Area (HNA) and the importance of the HNA to the local community. The HNA is a rare urban wilderness in an otherwise densely developed East Bay. It provides habitat to wildlife and green infrastructure benefits for people, such as stormwater absorption and urban cooling. It also provides public recreation and health benefits, with over five miles of multi-use trails in a natural setting, all within walking distance of tens of thousands of residents. In these ways, the HNA is an excellent example of urban greening.

The PCA designation is important because pressing conservation needs remain within and around the perimeter of the Hillside Natural Area. There are undeveloped properties with very significant natural resource values adjacent to the HNA which could be developed, and there are stewardship needs to restore natural resources and enhance and manage public access. The Trust for Public Land looks forward to continuing our partnership with the City and community to build on a PCA designation to achieve these conservation goals.

Thank you for considering the City of El Cerrito's application. It has our strong support.

Sincerely,

Mary Creasman  
California Director of Government Affairs

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