

Building Connection and Resilience

Evolution of a Community-based Habitat Restoration Program in Urban Los Angeles Parkland

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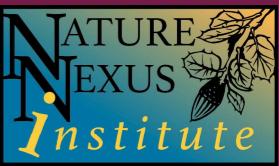
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2007

TIMELINE

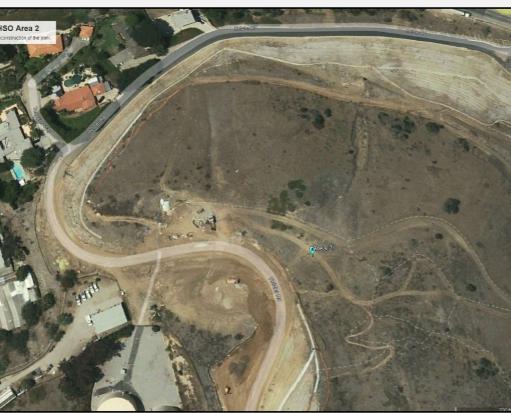


Photo 1: Google Earth image of key habitat restoration sites at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park in 2007.

Baldwin Hills Parklands represents some of the largest continuous open space and intact coastal sage scrub habitat in urbanized Los Angeles.

Our project locations, Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park (BHSO) and Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area (KHSRA), also serve as vital hubs for the adjacent socioeconomically diverse local communities, supporting social connection, mental and physical health outcomes, and access to nature connection opportunities.

Since 2007, we have engaged in community-based approaches to restoring habitat at these locations. This approach has allowed us to adapt and expand our outreach goals concurrent with long-term restoration goals.

Our project's Habitat Goals:

1. Removal by hand of invasive plants (*Brassica nigra*, *Hirschfeldia incana*, *Raphanus sativus*, *Glebionis coronaria*);
2. Restoration of coastal sage scrub habitat through plant installation and direct seeding;
3. Plant propagation and seed collection on site where restoration is being conducted.



Photo 2: Google Earth image of key habitat restoration sites at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park in 2025.

Community Connection

Since 2007, we have built a **network of collaborators** to provide restoration expertise and expansion of community outreach capacity. Key collaborators include LandIQ, Los Angeles Audubon Society, California State Parks, LA County Parks & Recreation, California State Parks Foundation, LA Conservation Corps, and many other nonprofit organizations.



Habitat Restoration Volunteer Events, 2022-2025:

- 42 community habitat restoration events, engaging 595 volunteers
- 40 corporate events, engaging 1,287 volunteers

Nature Connection Events, 2022-2025:



- 81 community nature events which include nature walks, campfire events, nature sketching, and plant workshops, engaging 1,911 participants
- Participants frequently become volunteers and enrollees in our education programs



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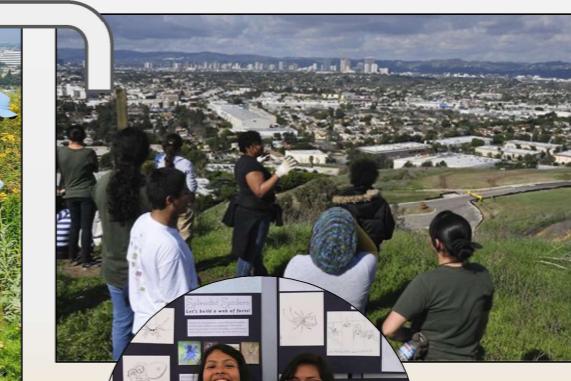


As our sites, staff, and community connections become more established, we are now seeking additional ways to create a more robust stewardship program.

We are currently collaborating with a statistician and field biologist to **develop vegetation and wildlife monitoring protocols**. Staff is piloting these protocols, with plans to engage students and community volunteers in their long-term implementation. We view monitoring as crucial for both tracking our habitat restoration efforts and as a new pathway for community participation.

Building a Workforce

Established in 2008, the **Baldwin Hills Greenhouse Program** has engaged hundreds of local high school students. Students were foundational in our initial efforts to connect community to restoration effort. Students have collectively contributed thousands of hours to stewardship and outreach activities.



Over the years, our alumni pool has become a primary source for both seasonal and permanent staff members.



"Working with Summer Fellows has given me an opportunity to learn about what is outside my neighborhood and has allowed me to consider a field of science like conservation that is so important."

The **Summer Fellows** program provides seasonal employment opportunities for alumni from our education programs. As demand and capacity grew, the program became more formalized in 2019. Fellows are focused primarily on habitat restoration and establishment care tasks during the summer months, but also provide support for education and outreach programs year-round. Dozens of Fellows, from a range of academic disciplines, have participated.



"I am so glad to have participated in this program last summer. The teacher and other students were inspiring with their love and care of nature."

The **West Los Angeles College Conservation Certificate Program** was piloted for three years starting in 2016 and then was formally approved at the college in 2019. Serving both enrolled students and community members, this free two-course certificate introduces participants to the ecology of the local watershed and offers opportunities to connect with environmental and conservation professionals. Upon completion of their certificate, alumni qualify for employment in the Summer Fellows Program.

Funding for these programs have come from a range of federal, state, and local grant opportunities, as well as private donations. A key funder and collaborator throughout our program and restoration history has been the Baldwin Hills and Urban Watersheds Conservancy, integrating our efforts into a bigger, regional vision.