ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Concerned Resource & Environmental Workers
Dear Friends of The C.R.E.W.,

It’s safe to say that 2020 pushed us all into strange and uncomfortable territory. We didn’t all face the same challenges: some of us were plunged into isolation while others, especially essential workers, dealt with ongoing public exposure. Parents, teachers, family caregivers, and many others faced impossible decisions about how to best safeguard the physical health of people they love during the long months since March 2020.

In many ways, The C.R.E.W. was fortunate. We found out early that our work is indeed ‘essential’ and we examined all operations to minimize exposure between staff members. We made changes, figured out how to mask even when the global inventory of masks ran dry, and carried on. We headed into a fire clearance season that turned out much busier than usual due to the late and heavy rains of spring 2020, and we found out just how essential this work is.

The pandemic demanded our full attention as we practiced new ways, large and small, of navigating our lives. And in the midst of this, we keep an eye fixed on the future: the pandemic shone a spotlight on many vulnerabilities in our society and economy and we have deeply examined our role in preparing young people to succeed. We will continue to work with fellow community leaders to greet the years ahead with a robust array of projects and professional training. Our teens and young adults are smart, dynamic, and they’re continuing to adapt, as our precious young people do. Our work is to give them all the tools and wisdom available. You are with us in this work, and we can only accomplish this together.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Berry
Executive Director

Mary Bergen
Board President
OUR MISSION

To give young people employment, and develop lifelong skills through environmental work that restores natural land and protects communities against wildfire.

OUR IMPACT

- 11,800 hours worked in the field
- 23 fire prevention projects impacting 22,000 acres
- 16 miles of trail maintained
- 13 acres under ecological restoration
- 38 low-income and elderly neighbors received no-cost brush clearance
- 200 donors: community members, foundations, government agencies, and local businesses
Since 1991, The C.R.E.W.’s has brought the employment and education of young people together with environmental stewardship. For all people, living a healthy and successful life is directly linked to having meaningful work and living in a healthy environment. From the farthest, wildest reaches of our watersheds to the habitats around our homes and cities, we need nature and the environment needs us to ensure its support and protection.

At the same time, young adulthood is a pivotal moment in a person’s life when the available opportunities play an outsized role in shaping their lifelong paths. C.R.E.W. field staff take part in habitat restoration, fire prevention, conservation, and trail access, all of which require skilled and knowledgeable care.

The C.R.E.W. continues, as we have done for nearly three decades, to effectively take on this vital work while introducing each new generation to formative experiences and life lessons that will have a positive impact on the future for our whole community.
Field work is where our values are put into action. We take part in dozens of projects each year, from reclaiming an overgrown wilderness trail, to planting trees along city parkways. Here are just two of our many projects with long-time partners:

Green Valley Project

At the start of 2020, Green Valley Project was a brand-new idea. Despite COVID and school closures and tremendous uncertainty, the idea grew: young people taking lead roles in environmental stewardship within their own community. Environmental science students at Nordhoff High School started the first of several acres of oak restoration at the Ojai Meadows Preserve, while a team of teens and young adults created the name and logo for Green Valley Project. Working with visionary partners from Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, Pax Environmental, and Once Upon A Watershed, we created a blueprint for the next twenty years so that the children of today’s youth can be part of environmental learning, leadership, and careers to enrich the whole community.

Learn more about this dynamic new C.R.E.W. program at www.greenvalleyproject.org.
**PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS**

**Trailwork**
Maintaining remote trails in the Los Padres National Forest is where The C.R.E.W. started and this remains a central part of our work today. For many of our team members, trails are their favorite and most satisfying type of work. It’s the one that challenges their physical endurance, teaches a whole new range of skills, and takes them into brand-new wild places. In 2020 we took on Ortega OHV Trail, and in 2021 we’ll tend to over 13 miles of trail throughout the Ojai Ranger District. Many of these trails, like Red Reef and Last Chance, are remote enough that we’ll have the opportunity to revive the treasured experience of multi-day spike-outs.

If you love trail work and are interested in volunteering alongside our team members, just say the word! Email jberry@thecrew.org to be included in trails updates.

**Fire Safety in Carpinteria & Summerland**
Sometimes new friends ask, “Do you work outside of Ojai?” We sure do! Our projects carry us from Santa Barbara to Thousand Oaks, and all along the Los Padres range. One project that we have enjoyed for many years is the Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District’s curbside chipping program. Serving neighborhoods tucked among fire-prone forests with fuel reduction service is one of many ways that The C.R.E.W. does its part to strategically manage wildfire risk.
The C.R.E.W. can offer hands-on work with real environmental impact, thanks to the partnership of these many excellent agencies and organizations. For us, partnership shows up in many different ways: sponsoring a project; hiring us directly for services; collaboration on grantmaking and project implementation; staff education and training; and hiring C.R.E.W. ‘graduates.’ Our relationships make The C.R.E.W. better and benefit of the whole community, and we thank each and every one of these organizations and the excellent people behind them:

- Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- CA Fire Safe Council
- CA ReLeaf
- Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District
- Center for Regenerative Agriculture
- City of Ojai
- Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency
- HELP of Ojai
- Los Padres Forest Association
- Matilija Canyon Alliance
- Meher Mount
- Oak Ranch Estates
- Ojai Trees
- Ojai Unified School District
- Ojai Valley Land Conservancy
- Ojai Valley Sanitary District
- Pax Environmental
- Private Homeowners
- Santa Ana Ranch
- Sisar Mutual Water Company
- State Coastal Conservancy
- Thacher School
- U.S. Forest Service
- Ventura County Community Foundation
- Ventura County Parks
- Ventura County Resource Conservation Agency
- Ventura Land Trust
For the last 30 years, an outstanding community of supporters has made possible the professional development, environmental training, special projects to serve the community, and other programs that set The C.R.E.W. apart. We want to recognize, with tremendous appreciation, all of you who have donated in 2020. You helped us weather a challenging year and come through it stronger than ever, and we look forward to continuing to serve in the years ahead.

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Al & Joyce West
Elizabeth & J.B. White
Phil White
Peggy & Ric Wiles
Huora Williams
David & Kit Willis

Please join us in recognizing those community members we lost in 2020, and in offering our support to their friends and families:

Sheila Cluff
Harriet DiCapua
Chris Hilgers
David Kille
Cookie Miley
Larry Reilly
Through the support of our partners and donors, and through investment in our long-term growth and sustainability, we are pleased to report that The C.R.E.W.’s overall budget grew 23% from 2019 to 2020.
Board Spotlight: Michelle Henson

What made you want to get involved with The C.R.E.W.?
I was asked to join by Wally McCall who I knew for many years. Wally knew of my work with the Rotary Interact Club at Nordhoff High School, and we both agreed I would be a good connection and opportunity for students interested in the work the C.R.E.W. was doing.

What does The C.R.E.W. mean to you?
I have always thought the mission of the C.R.E.W. was a great opportunity for any young person interested in finding a path that was not always offered through the education system.

What do you hope for in the coming year?
The continued success, opportunities for young people to find work in the environment or just work in general, and the development of relationships with other nonprofits like OVLC.

What is your favorite aspect of The C.R.E.W.’s work?
The opportunities for young people to find employment, and career training in various areas of the environment. Also, the wonderful work the C.R.E.W. does for our community.
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Advisory Council members have generously committed to advise The C.R.E.W. on opportunities and issues, current local events, and to contribute their time and expertise to expand The C.R.E.W.’s positive impact.

Becky Beckett
Bret Bradigan
Rob Brokaw
Jim Clark
Ned Clark
Stefanie Coeler
Wiley Coeler
Pat Loughman
Bill Shanbrom
Alicia Stratton
Tony Thacher
Al West
When 2020 came to a close, we looked to 2021 with cautious optimism. We have a strong team; a knowledgeable and active Board of Directors; an incredibly supportive community; and 30 years’ experience to carry us forward. With such a foundation, The C.R.E.W. moves thoughtfully and confidently into the months and years ahead. We look forward to:

• Repairing trails and restoring ecosystems ruined by recent wildfires. The Los Padres National Forest is a treasure, and caring for this land is where The C.R.E.W. got its start. In the next few years we will repair dozens of miles of backcountry trails;
• Growing native trees in our new tree nursery, and planting trees along roadways and on public lands;
• Restoring ecosystems, especially surrounding local creeks and rivers;
• Playing a key role in our regional strategy for wildfire prevention including chipping, defensible space around homes and other structures, and home hardening;
• Expanding our workforce development to include more high schoolers and young adults who are able to experience an ever-widening array of outdoor and green collar jobs.
There are challenges ahead, to be sure. Growth is always challenging, but we are ready to meet 2021 and beyond. Join your C.R.E.W. members along the way with events and volunteer opportunities for all ages. To stay up-to-date with these and other opportunities:

Sign up for The C.R.E.W. newsletter: www.TheCREW.org/contact

Sign up for Green Valley Project updates: www.GreenValleyProject.org/getinvolved

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@GreenValleyProjectOjai

the_ojai_c.r.e.w
greenvalleypjectojai

We hope to enjoy our fall community gathering in October, and to host our annual BBQ celebration in April 2022 – and this time, we’ll be marking The C.R.E.W.’s 30th anniversary! Stay tuned…and together, let’s hope for a swift and smooth end to the pandemic. For now, stay safe and well, from all of your friends at The C.R.E.W.