

MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

**DATE:** October 07, 2020  
**TO:** Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Rafael Payan, General Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Monthly Staff Report

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

That the Board accept and file this report. This report is for information only and does not require further action.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Not applicable.

**FUNDING SOURCE:**

Not applicable.

**FUNDING BALANCE:**

Not applicable.

**DISCUSSION:** The following briefly summarizes some of the key tasks and projects MPRPD's Staff undertook from mid-August through the end of September 2020 in addition to performing the District's regular business. This work was accomplished in compliance with the CDC's recommendations and the State's and County's shelter-in-place orders.

**ADMINISTRATION DIVISION**

- 1. Amphibian Monitoring:** Rachel Anderson, MPRPD's consultant who monitors amphibians and assures the District's compliance with the Safe Harbor Agreement for Palo Corona Regional Park's Animas and Entrance ponds, recently reported to staff that these ponds need maintenance. The ponds' maintenance help's MPRPD continue to protect the threatened and endangered species (T&E species) that rely on these ponds, and to uphold the Safe Harbor Agreement's requirements. The primary species of concern is the California Red-legged Frog, but other T&E species including California Tiger Salamander, tri-colored blackbird, and others also frequent these ponds.

Ms. Anderson reported that for the most part these ponds are looking great and have robust populations of California Red-legged Frogs. She noted that fences that enclose these ponds require some routine repair to effectively keep cattle out. Ms. Anderson added that both ponds are becoming "choked with tule and other vegetation, limiting amphibian habitat." She has also observed the presence of

dangerous invasive fauna at both ponds, including crayfish at Animas Pond and bullfrogs at the Entrance Pond.

Over-grown aquatic vegetation and invasive fauna can simultaneously be combated by dredging the ponds in the manner undertaken at Animas Pond in October 2013. Specifically, dredging will remove excess vegetation and sediment, and remove the pond's standing water which both crayfish and bullfrogs require to survive.

To minimize impact to native amphibians, dredging should take place in the fall, preferably in October, when frogs have metamorphosed and left the pond, and before winter rains begin to refill the ponds, causing California Tiger Salamanders to start moving toward these impoundments.

Ms. Anderson will prioritize action on Animas Pond because invasive crayfish are among the most damaging invasive predators in aquatic systems, where they eat amphibian eggs and tadpoles. How crayfish were introduced into Animas Pond is unknown. The good news is that crayfish have only been observed during her most recent surveys, so their numbers and their associated impact may still be low. Ms. Anderson developed a Scope of Work for the project. Operations Division staff will contract and oversee an equipment operator to dredge the ponds and haul away the debris as soon as possible.

- 2. CalOES/FEMA Meeting:** Staff met with CalOES and other COVID-19 relief applicants on 09 September. FEMA has issued an interim policy related to COVID-19 relief claims, of which the District is an approved applicant. This interim policy defines the framework, policy details, and requirements for determining the eligibility of work and costs under the Public Assistance Program (PA) to ensure consistent and appropriate implementation across all COVID-19 emergency and major disaster declarations. Except where specifically stated otherwise in this policy and other disaster specific COVID-19 policies, assistance is subject to PA Program requirements as defined in Version 3.1 of the Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide (PAPPG).

This interim policy supersedes the *FEMA Fact Sheet dated 19 March 2020: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Eligible Emergency Protective Measures*, for work performed on or after 15 September 2020. This interim policy will be updated or revised as required in response to changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Costs borne by MPRPD to address COVID-19 will not be reimbursed for expenses that are incurred after 15 September 2020. Unfortunately, it is doubtful that costs incurred by MPRPD prior to this date will be reimbursed either, as these will likely be viewed by FEMA simply as additional operational costs.

- 3. CalPERS Additional Discretionary Payment (ADP):** Staff met with MPRPD's CalPERS pension actuary on 10 September, following receipt and review of the new actuarial reports. MPRPD has been making outstanding headway on paying-down unfunded bases. Arrangements were made to utilize the FY 2020-21 budget

authorized ADP in the amount of \$305,121. Payment was made on 15 September. This ADP saves MPRPD approximately \$313,727 in interest payments.

4. **Carmel and River Fires:** Staff participated in Joint Command briefings, offering the Rancho Canada Unit (RCU) as an auxiliary Incident Command Center and/or Evacuation Center if and as needed. Use of the RCU was not required for this event.
5. **COVID-related Orders, Meetings, and Updates:** Staff continued to participate in regular meetings held by the County Health Officer to ensure we have the latest information, and that planning and implementation practices align MPRPD with the CDC's, State's, and County's latest guidelines. This information is vital to the development of Return to Work policies and procedures.
6. **FORTAG Multi-modal Trail Corridor Project:** In early September, the project's selection committee composed of TAMC, the cities of Monterey, Seaside, Del Ray Oaks, the project's advocates, MPRPD, and others met to review and discuss the four proposals submitted by design firms for the FORTAG project's design. The selection committee selected and advanced two firms to the next step – the interview process. Interviews were held in late September and the selection committee came to consensus on the firm deemed the best fit for this project. TAMC will announce the selected firm's name once it has entered an agreement with that firm.

The project entails the design of a multi-modal trail corridor and road crossing improvement project that will go through MPRPD's Frog Pond Wetland Preserve, connecting it to FORTAG's 30-plus mile multimodal trail network.

7. **Foundation:** Staff introduced several parties to one another to explore the potential development of an MPRPD Foundation. Staff will seek the Board's interest in this project and identify next steps to be taken. Additional detail will be presented to the Finance Committee and Board at a future date.
8. **Habitat Conservation and Restoration Task Force:** Staff initiated contact with parties who may help MPRPD establish and sustain the proposed Task Force. The Task Force may be composed of university and college scholars, environmental specialists, staff, and others. The goal is to develop and institutionalize the means to monitor and track habitat protection and restoration measures on MPRPD's properties, and perhaps other appropriate lands.

The Task Force's findings may help determine the efficacy of a given conservation or restoration measure, track ground-cover modification post fire/flood/modified land use through photo-monitoring and other means, and other possibilities over time. Study plots that serve as control groups will also be included.

Datasets will inform future administrators, researchers, and others, and may be a valuable tool in tracking environmental changes related to climate change. This

model may be shared with other jurisdictions, perhaps coalescing data for biologically, hydrologically, or geomorphologically-specific regions (e.g., Central Coast to Santa Barbara).

**9. Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) System Assessment at the Ranch Canada Unit's Administrative and Events Complex (former Clubhouse):**

In conjunction with planning for the roof replacement project at the former Clubhouse, staff entered an agreement with 3C Engineers, Inc., to inspect the entire HVAC system and provide staff with an assessment report. The inspection took place in early September.

Staff was informed that the Fiesta Room is served by two rooftop gas units; one is a 6-ton unit, the other a 7.5-ton unit. Both units are well past their useful life, in need of code compliant gas connections, and should be replaced by units that introduce additional outside air to help combat Covid-19. Both units are recommended for replacement.

The Merienda Room, Pub, and Grill are currently served by a 17.5-ton rooftop gas unit. Although this unit is functioning, it is also past its useful life, and is also in need of code compliant gas connections and the ability to introduce outside air, as well as provide functioning zone dampers and thermostats.

The commercial kitchen requires a replacement take-up air unit, which is not currently functioning, in addition to exhaust fans and current code compliant gas connections.

The Discovery Center has a gas rooftop unit. This unit provides heat only. It is recommended that the replacement unit also provide cooling -- which also supplies outside air and will meet current code.

The unit over the Administrative Office was replaced in January 2020 after repeated failures. This area however still requires zone dampers and thermostat replacements.

**10. Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve Monument Sign:** The sign's final stucco coats were applied. Fabrication of the Monterey Pine silhouettes began, and lettering was ordered. At Architect Stevens request, the preserve's name was recently shortened from *Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Forest Preserve* to *Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve*. This change will be presented to the Board for action at a future meeting to formally ratify the preserve's new name. Ms. Stevens recommends a late October/early November date for the dedication ceremony.

**11. Laguna Grande Regional Park Master Plan and Trail Maintenance Project:** The project's consultant selection committee composed of a neighborhood representative, the cities of Monterey and Seaside, and MPRPD staff interviewed four consulting firms interested in this project's planning, design, and

implementation. The selection committee came to consensus on the firm deemed the best fit for this project. The City of Monterey will convene the project's JPA at which time the firm's name will be announced. The Board will be provided additional information as it becomes available.

**12. ParkIT! Initiative:** Staff met with the initiative's team. Discussions included the possibility of piloting this project during three weekends in June, July, and August 2021. Other topics discussed included logistics, financing options, and shuttle-bus staging areas. MPRPD's Rancho Canada Unit (RCU) continues to be a viable option for one of the staging areas. The RCU's Phase I staging area could be located near the Discovery Center.

**13. Policy Development (revised and new):** Staff continues to review existing policies and procedures and identify and draft necessary updates and revisions. Policies and procedures that will benefit MPRPD and our public service but are not currently ratified by the Board are being researched and will continue to be presented to the Board for its consideration as drafts are developed.

One of the most critical items staff is working on is the *Return-to-Work Plan (RTW)*. This plan is required to safely reopen MPRPD facilities and worksites. The RTW cannot be implemented until related policies and procedures are in place, and the state's and county's guidelines permit reopening.

**14. PROJECT-B UPDATE:** The project's design team composed of Page & Turnbull (consulting architects) and MPRPD staff met on 17 September to review and update the schematic site plan and to select a floor plan for the project's restroom building at Palo Corona Regional Park's Rancho Canada Unit. Please see electronic attachment for enlargeable rendition of the schematic site plan, its legends, and additional project details (**ATTACHMENT 1**). The project's primary scope items include an eight-cabin all-gender restroom building, school bus drop-off, welcome kiosk and trailhead, group picnic area, event tent pad, and site improvements.



**15. Seawall Mitigation Fund:** The California Coastal Commission (SCC) and Staff continued to communicate re: the terms for this funding mechanism. Staff is cautiously optimistic that MPRPD will continue to have access to, and use of, these funds for the express purposes identified by the SCC. The SCC informed staff that these funds must be placed in a separate account. Staff had already met this requirement. SCC also stated that it will likely introduce a reversionary clause that if MPRPD cannot fulfil the SCC's identified express purposes, these funds will revert to the SCC. MPRPD's Board will be provided additional information as it becomes available.

**16. Strategic Plan:** Staff continues to develop the outline for the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. In addition to including recommended goals and objectives related to COVID-19, social equity, and climate change-related recommendations, staff will include language that specifies parameters related to the potential disposition of properties, ensuring that environmental protection measures are required, implemented and maintained as a condition of conveyance. The implementation of green technology will also be included.

**17. Training Continued:** COVID-19, Workers' Compensation, and Finance were the primary topics. Other training sessions focused on CalPERS, *California Joint Powers Insurance Authority*, and CPS HR (*CPS HR Consulting* is a self-supporting public agency providing a full range of integrated HR solutions to government and nonprofit clients across the country).

## **EECO DIVISION**

- 1. Interpretive Exhibits:** A design team composed of volunteers and staff met to advance the design and subsequent development of several Discovery Center exhibits. Proposed exhibits that may be pursued include a life-size Rumsen ruk (house), a freshwater steelhead aquarium and life cycle exhibit, and expansion of the California Condor exhibit – in partnership with the Ventana Wildlife Society – to provide important information about the impacts the Dolan Fire had on the Central Coast's condor population. The nesting condor replica may also be improved.
- 2. Let's Go Outdoors! Newsletter:** Staff drafted a plan to create an *LGO! Newsletter* to be mailed mid-November 2020, instead of October. Content is in the editing phase and will include topics such as: Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Forest Preserve, Your Social Distancing Keeps Our Parks Open, Rangers are Our Heroes, Frog Pond Wetland Preserve, Marina Dunes Preserve, and Meet the Board Director in your Ward.

The Board shall be receiving an email questionnaire from staff to provide information for the *Meet the Board Director in Your Ward* article.

3. **PCRP Interpretive Master Plan:** The Interpretive Master Plan Core Team consisting of volunteers, National Park Service personal, and MPRPD staff met and scheduled two (2) subsequent workshops in October 2020 to develop and refine the Master Plan's interpretive themes and subthemes sections. Various reading assignments were issue to the core team in preparation for these workshops.
4. **Professional Development – Interpretation:** In preparation for creating exhibits at the Palo Corona Discovery Center focusing on Climate Change messaging, staff and members of the Interpretive Master Plan Core Team members created three “skits” with skills learned from the *Climate Change Crash Course*. The proposed skits, which were reviewed by the National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation (NNOCCI), will be presented in the next three *Volunteer Newsletters*. The topics include Wildfire, Carmel River Steelhead, and the Anthropocene.
5. **Public Outreach/Social Media:** Staff continues to post park updates, recent sightings, and research technology to connect the public and volunteers to parks and open spaces.

**A. Facebook stats - @MPRegionalParkDistrict:**

- 14 September follower count: 1354 ▲
- New followers since 13 August: 66
- Post reach: People reached at least once
- 13 July – 13 August average: 329 views per post
- 13 August – 13 September average: 602 ▲ views per post

**B. Reactions, Comments, Shares:**

**Reactions:**

- 13 July – 13 August average: 12 reactions per post
- 13 August – 13 September average: 20 ▲ reactions per post

**Comments:**

- 13 July – 13 August average: 3 comments per post
- 13 August – 13 September average: 2 ▼ comment per post

**Shares**

- 13 July – 13 August average: 2 shares per post
- 13 August – 13 September average: 4 ▲ share per post
- **Top 3 most popular posts: August 13 – September 13**
  - August 27 PCRP & GRRP re-opening after fires (12.1k views)
  - August 25 Why did the snake cross the road-photo (942 views)
  - August 20 You've got to be kitten me! photos (825 views)

6. **Service Learning at CSUMB:** Staff presented three remote service-learning opportunities for CSUMB students via *Flipgrid Video*. These were provided at CSUMB's Zoom Community Partner Fair and at a Zoom meet-and-greet presentation. Service learners are being interviewed for the following projects:

- A. Improving communication resources for park users;



- B. Making MPRPD.org more accessible for a variety of audiences; and,
- C. Creating sustainability carbon-footprint interpretive materials addressing climate change.

7. **Volunteers:** The 17 September Zoom-based volunteer meeting included updates on MPRPD's properties. Dr. Judith Canner, Professor of Statistics in the Mathematics and Statistics Department at California State University, Monterey Bay presented information, and provided proposed processes and examples on interpreting charts and graphs. Her presentation was entitled, *Visualizing the Virus: Evaluating Evidence in the COVID Era*. Since March 2020, we have been inundated with information about the COVID19 pandemic. Often, that information is in the form of graphics or graphs. Staff will review various graphics and graphs generated by others over the last few months and discuss practical ways to evaluate them to become better consumers, and, as appropriate, distributors of information during the pandemic. Keeping volunteers engaged is of critical importance. The next *Volunteer Newsletter* is scheduled to be sent out the week of September 28, 2020.

## **OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION**

1. **Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Council:** Staff participated in the quarterly Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Council Meeting. These meetings are now being held virtually as opposed to in-person at the Big Sur Lodge.
2. **Cachagua Community Park Water System:** Water system improvements at Cachagua Community Park were temporarily interrupted due to the Covid-19 Pandemic shutdown but have since resumed. The District's lessee (Carmel Unified School District) contracted with Don Chapin Company to complete the water system improvements funded by MPRPD. The project was also delayed due to power supply poles being damaged during the Carmel Fire. PG&E has since replaced and restored power to the site. Upon project completion, CUSD and MPRPD staff will attend a system operation training session provided by Don Chapin Company.





- 3. Carmel Fire:** With containment of the Carmel Fire at 100%, Rangers began working with the Cal Fire suppression repair team at the San Clemente-Blue Rock Open Space Preserve. Unfortunately, Cal Fire was only able to spend one day onsite before equipment resources were assigned to fight the Dolan Fire, which continues to challenge firefighters in the Ventana Wilderness and Arroyo Seco area. As Cal Fire and the US Forest Service get a handle on the Dolan Fire and other incidents around the State, equipment will return to complete suppression repair on MPRPD properties.



- 4. Carmel Valley Fuel Break w/ RCD:** The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County is considering applying for another Cal Fire Strategic Fuelbreak Grant. This project includes fuel mitigation on MPRPD properties, which the Board approved last year. The recent Carmel Fire and its vicinity to Carmel Valley Village may be a key factor in receiving favorable consideration toward the project this time. RCD project lead Jamie Tuitele-Lewis is considering expanding the project scope to include recent fuelbreaks that were constructed during the Carmel Fire courtesy of Cal Fire.
- 5. Corona Road Repaving and VWS Access:** The road leading to the Corona Road entrance was recently repaired and seal coated. This project was coordinated by the Corona Road Association and funded by contributions from property owners located along the private portion of Corona Road, including the Park District. This is also the access road into the PCRP backcountry, which, per Ventana Wildlife Society personnel, will be utilized very soon to deliver carcasses to the Condor Feeding Site.
- 6. COVID-19 Pandemic Response:** With summer slowly coming to an end, Rangers are seeing visitation beginning to taper slightly. The unofficial summer season was capped-off with 114-degree Fahrenheit temperatures at Garland Ranch Regional Park, a medical emergency in Garza's Canyon, and multiple citations for violations

at the Kahn Ranch. Rangers continue to work a limited staffing scheduling, practice social distancing, and wear masks to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. MPRPD's playgrounds and ball fields remain closed to the public in compliance with County and State officials' orders. The Utility Vehicle purchased by MPRPD and transferred to the Monterey County Regional Fire District once again proved an asset for responding to medical emergencies at Garland Park.



- 7. Former Clubhouse Repairs and Related Projects:** Project management services for Project B and Clubhouse roof/HVAC repairs have been keeping the Rangers extra busy. These services include reviewing and commenting on project plans/specs, attending meetings, and sharing knowledge with project architects and engineers as to the whereabouts of current underground utilities. Rangers also continue to address building deficiencies as they become apparent and making repairs/improvements as needed.
- 8. Gate Installations:** Rangers are replacing several critical access gates at Palo Corona and Garland Ranch regional parks, specifically the northeast access gate off Carmel Valley Road, the entrance to the emergency staging area, and the entrance gate to the Kahn Ranch Addition. These gates were previously constructed of wire or contained dilapidated wood members. They will be replaced with 12' or 16' aluminum Powder River gates.
- 9. Hazard Tree at GRRP:** Rangers investigated a damaged sycamore tree that threatens to crush a neighboring property's fence. This tree appears to be very close to the property boundary based on initial GIS information. If/when the tree is confirmed to be on District property, Rangers will contract with a local tree service company and request access onto the neighbor's property to facilitate removal. This

is an issue Rangers deal with often, as many District property boundaries are shared with residential private properties.

- 10. Memorial Benches:** Rangers continue to coordinate the memorial bench program during the pandemic. Several benches are scheduled to be installed/replaced in the coming weeks, including this bench at the intersection of Terrace and East Ridge trails.



- 11. Project-A Update:** The design team, composed of Ten-Over Studios – Architects and MPRPD staff met on 04 September to kick-off Phase 2 of the Project-A capital improvement project. The architects shared initial schematic designs with the District and requested feedback from staff.

Project-A has been expanded to include the conceptual design of the *PARK IT!* staging area, following a decision by staff that this proposed bus and pedestrian staging area would be better located in the northeast corner of the RCU parking lot, thus allowing *PARK IT!* to share parking and restroom facilities with dog park users. Project engineers were onsite on 16 September to locate underground utilities and infrastructure. The next meeting for Project-A is scheduled for 02 October and will include a review of the revised site's schematic plan based on the District's feedback.

- 12. Safe Harbor Agreement Pond Work at PCRPD:** The District's Safe Harbor Agreement requires MPRPD to maintain ponds identified as habitat for threatened and endangered species, specifically tiger salamanders and red-legged frogs. Rangers coordinated with the District's contracted amphibian biologist to obtain a scope of work for this project, which includes draining the Animas and Entrance ponds and removing accumulated sediment. Rangers are seeking proposals from local heavy-equipment contractors who can hopefully meet the project's deadline of 31 October 2020. The last time this work was done was in 2013.

**ATTACHMENT:**

1. [Project-B Schematic Site Plan](#)