

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT  
STAFF REPORT**

**BOARD MEETING:** July 06, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Monthly Staff Report

**PRESENTER:** Rafael Payan, General Manager

**REPORT:** The following briefly summarizes some of the key tasks and projects the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) Staff undertook from mid-May 2022 through mid-June 2022 in addition to performing MPRPD's regular business. This work was accomplished in compliance with the CDC's recommendations and the State's and County's COVID-related guidelines.

**ADMINISTRATION DIVISION**

- 1. Big Sur Land Trust's Race for Open Space at Palo Corona Regional Park:**  
Big Sur Land Trust (Trust) and MPRPD personnel will be meeting to discuss the continued hosting of the Trust's Annual Race for Open Space at Palo Corona Regional Park. This popular trail run/hike spans the length of this park, from the Rancho Canada Unit's Discovery Center to Palo Corona Regional Park's backcountry wilderness.

As reported by the Trust, the provision of participants' access to their public lands, via this live/virtual trail running event fosters an appreciation of conserved open spaces in Monterey County while celebrating the health benefits of time spent in nature.

This year's Race for Open Space was held on April 4 through 25, affording runners flexibility as to when they would participate. The Trust reported that participants could run or hike on designated trail courses and/or join the challenge to collectively log 10,000 miles as a community.

The Trust's process encourages participants to log their own experience by including miles run or hiked; reserve a date to access Big Sur Land Trust and MPRPD properties and suggested courses; and/or select a time to experience one of two exclusive Adventure Courses beginning at Palo Corona Regional Park's Discovery Center in Carmel.

All funds raised from this year's Race for Open Space will further Big Sur Land Trust's mission of, "inspiring love of land across generations, conservation of our unique Monterey County landscapes, and access to outdoor experiences for all."

The Adventure Courses offer a unique opportunity on April 17, 18, and 24 for seasoned long-distance trail runners to access lands currently closed to the public, typically requiring a permit for access. The Trust stated, "We are grateful to our partners at Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, California State Parks, the Santa Lucia Preserve, and the Santa Lucia Conservancy for making this special access for this foot race possible. This is a unique opportunity to access and explore these conserved areas." This model has been utilized by many jurisdictions throughout the United States for such events.

**2. Board of Directors' Hybrid Meetings:** Legal Counsel and Staff reviewed the Brown Act and have determined the following:

The Brown Act notice requires that a notice be posted/broadcast listing that Board Member X will be participating remotely in an MPRPD Board of Directors meeting on X date and time, at 123 Main Street, Anytown, USA. Board Member X will need to physically tape the agenda to the door of their house, fence, or remote meeting site, such that this information is readily visible and accessible.

In the unlikely event that someone shows up at the remote meeting location, Board Member X can sit with them inside or outside (e.g., in the driveway), so that the member of the public can hear the meeting being conducted. In the case of a gated community (like Pebble Beach), Board Member X will need to notify the gate attendants/security at Pebble Beach shall allow entrance to the site for anyone going to Board Member X's house for the meeting, free of charge.

**Govt Code 54953:**

(b)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the legislative body of a local agency may use teleconferencing for the benefit of the public and the legislative body of a local agency in connection with any meeting or proceeding authorized by law. The teleconferenced meeting or proceeding shall comply with all requirements of this chapter and all otherwise applicable provisions of law relating to a specific type of meeting or proceeding.

(b)(2) Teleconferencing, as authorized by this section, may be used for all purposes in connection with any meeting within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body. All votes taken during a teleconferenced meeting shall be by rollcall.

(b)(3) If the legislative body of a local agency elects to use teleconferencing, it shall post agendas at all teleconference locations and conduct teleconference meetings in a manner that protects the statutory and constitutional rights of the parties or the public appearing before the legislative body of a local agency. Each teleconference location shall be identified in the notice and agenda of the meeting or proceeding, and each teleconference location shall be accessible to the public. During the teleconference, at least a quorum of the members of the legislative body shall participate from locations within the boundaries of the

territory over which the local agency exercises jurisdiction, except as provided in subdivision (d). The agenda shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the legislative body directly pursuant to Section 54954.3 at each teleconference location.

(b)(4) For the purposes of this section, “teleconference” means a meeting of a legislative body, the members of which are in various locations, connected by electronic means, through either audio or video, or both. Nothing in this section shall prohibit a local agency from providing the public with additional teleconference locations.

- 3. Budget Fiscal Year 2022-23:** Copies of the MPRPD Board approved FY2022-23 budget were posted on the intranet/MPRPD’s website. A copy has been attached below.



AdoptedBudget\_FY20  
22-23.pdf

- 4. Cachagua Community Park Improvements:** Staff is in the process of advancing several projects at this park within the next few months. These include updating the park’s concept upon receiving additional public input during the upcoming Cachagua Community event, and several capital improvement projects including installation of a potable water fountain(s), shade structure, and relocation of the horseshoe pit. Replacement of the extant chain link boundary fence with a ranch-style fence will also be considered. Other park improvements include reconstruction of the historic dry-set stone wall, and design and construction of the archaeological site’s interpretive path and signage.
- 5. Community Trail Completed and Opened for Public Use:** In compliance with recent revisions to the Public Resources Code 5541, the project was advanced, and construction completed in early June. The trail’s official name is now the “East Trail.” Staff met with County of Monterey and State of California officials, independently, to discuss this project. The East Trail was officially opened for public use on June 08. Additional information is provided, below, by division.
- 6. COVID-19:** A copy of the recent CALOSHA fact sheet, entitled: ***What Employers and Workers Need to Know about COVID-19 Isolation & Quarantine***, is enclosed below. These parameters shall continue to guide MPRPD’s activities. An important guideline states that a person must be assessed 3-5 days after the last close contact and must wear a mask for 10 days post-contact.



CALOSHA-Isolation-a  
nd-Quarantine-fs.pdf

**7. Fifty-Year Anniversary Celebration:** Staff is exploring various celebration/commemoration options to mark MPRPD's 50<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary. Staff will present ideas and options to the Board for review, comment, and direction at a future meeting. The electorate approved the measure creating MPRPD in November 1972, thus, initial dates for this public event will likely consider late October 2022.

**8. Floodplain Restoration Project:** Staff will be meeting with McBain Associates (the project's environmental design and engineering consulting firm), California Coastal Conservancy (the project's advisor), the Big Sur Marathon Foundation, and others to refine the habitat restoration plan.

Initial estimates indicate that approximately 740,000 cubic yards of riprap, cobbles, sand, soil, and other lithic-based materials (fill) will be removed from the Carmel River Channel. This fill will be used to build a more complex topography on what was formerly the Rancho Canada Golf Club course.

**9. Gathering of Nations Powwow:** Staff has been speaking with the region's Indigenous Tribal members and non-Native community members to determine if a gathering of nations powwow/celebration should be held at a District property. If so, several dates will be identified and subsequently presented to the Board.

**10. GFOA Annual Conference –** Aligned with Goal #7 of MPRPD's Strategic Plan, Staff attended the annual GFOA conference, focusing this year on the GFOA's Best Management Practices in developing the Capital Improvement Plan, and tying it to the Long-Term Financial Forecast and the Budget.

Administration Division Staff will begin creating the Capital Improvement Plan for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 23-24 Budget and will be working with other Divisions to gather the list of Capital Improvement needs, analyze them in conjunction with the Strategic Plan, and vet and prioritize them with the Finance Committee before presentation to the Board. The conference included a session on assisting agencies with Policy Development, of which MPRPD continues to make advancements and which also align with the Strategic Plan's Goal #1.

**11. Let's Go Outdoors! Fund:** Staff continues to consult with the Community Foundation for Monterey County (Foundation) regarding the creation of this funding mechanism. Staff will provide updates as information is obtained. Presently, the Foundation and MPRPD staff are optimistic that this fund may come to fruition during the 2022-23 Fiscal Year.

**12. Juneteenth Holiday:** This important national commemoration is the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. Day, in 1983. This year, Juneteenth was observed on Monday, June 20, 2022. Staff and Legal Counsel continue to discuss this important holiday and will present the Board a recommendation regarding MPRPD's celebration of the Juneteenth Holiday, at a future meeting.

**13. Measure B (De1 Rey Oaks ) Fails:** Staff will meet with City of De1 Rey Oaks to discuss options going forward related to the FORTAG project.

**14. Del Monte Forest Property Owners (DMFPO) Presentation:** MPRPD was invited to speak to the DMFPO on June 26, 2022. MPRPD highlighted our organization’s history, broad coalitions with numerous private, not-for-profit, and governmental parties and organizations, and current and future educational programs and capital improvement projects.

**15. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation \$10.2 Million Grant for Rancho Canada Unit’s Flood Plain Restoration Project:** MPRPD and the California Coastal Conservancy optimistic about pursuing and being awarded a \$10.2M National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Flood Plain Restoration project grant. The Board will be provided additional information as it is becomes available.

**16. Project B Construction at Palo Corona Regional Park’s Rancho Canada Unit:** After performing initial mobilization, fencing, signage, and site preparatory activities in May, significant construction activities began during the month of June. Excavation and foundation work was performed for the restroom building and multipurpose pad. Irrigation piping was rerouted to continue service to areas outside the construction footprint, and piping inside the work zone was removed.

Trenching for new utilities was undertaken, including extending services from the clubhouse under the driveway, while maintaining access for Wedgewood events. Rangers and the Ausonio construction management personnel are preparing progress reports. Public feedback has been positive and supportive.

During excavation, a tribal monitor identified potential artifacts of historical significance. The area was protected from further disturbance and the District engaged archeologists from Rincon for examination. The archaeologists concluded the materials were not of historical significance and construction resumed. The project site will continue to be monitored through the completion of earth disturbing activities.



**Restroom building foundation**



**Multipurpose pad excavation**



**Contractor and Civil Engineer reviewing field layout of piping**



**Repurposing excavated soil to create future main gate trail access**

**17. Staff Returns to On-site Offices and Workstations:** On June 06, 2022, staff returned to their respective offices and workstations. Out of an abundance of caution, office staff will be rotating their office-based workdays. Because there has been an uptick in COVID-related illness nationally, this measure will hopefully reduce the possibility that all office staff would concurrently become ill.

This careful scheduling adjustment will also be applied to all divisions, as needed. This cautious, deliberate roll-out aligns with MPRPD's past practice to protect the public and staff yet optimistically keeping our parks and trails open, affording the public health-based outdoor activities. MPRPD's careful application of a similar process resulted in MPRPD being one of the very few agencies that kept its properties open at the inception of, and during, the pandemic.

**18. Tenant Improvements at Former Golf Club Building:** Staff met with Wedgewood Weddings (Wedgewood) representatives at the former clubhouse to review planned tenant improvements. Wedgewood is in the process of planning and obtaining permits for a long-awaited facelift to the event rooms as well as other capital improvements, which may include infrastructural, structural, cosmetic, utility, and other scope items. Improvements shall remain the property of the District, once completed. Capital improvements require the District's prior written approval.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION and COMMUNITY OUTREACH (EECO) DIVISION**

### **1. Community Outreach:**

**A. Visitor and Discovery Centers Reopen:** The Garland Ranch and Palo Corona regional parks Visitor Center and Discovery Center, respectively, reopened on Saturday, June 11, for public use. Days of operation will initially be limited to Saturdays and Sundays through the summer months as we

continue to navigate and adjust to COVID-19 pandemic's impacts, thereby balancing public access with public and personnel health and safety.



**Sign and PCRP**



**GRRP Wildflower Show Display**

**B. 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Wildflower Show - A HOT PICK:** The annual wildflower show, held at Garland Ranch Regional Park, on Saturday, June 11 through Sunday June 12, 2022, highlighted a display over 100-native wildflower and tree specimens from various MPRPD lands. The flowers held up well despite the hot temperatures ranging from mid-90's on Friday to mid-80's on Sunday.

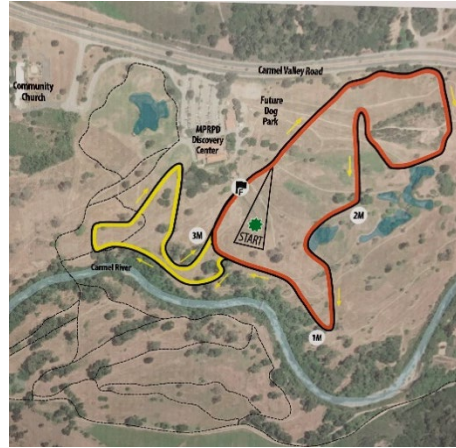
The event was announced through social media, banners, and eblasts as MPRPD's staff and volunteers' transition back to in-person activities. Even with minimal advertisement and the late-spring heatwave, 306 attendees were counted during the 2-day event. Prior to the pandemic, this event would draw crowds of 700-800 people over the two-day weekend.

To ensure the flowers held up as "hot picks" Bruce Delgado, Dave Styer, and other MPRPD volunteers dipped the cut flower ends in boiling water. We thank all those that planned, collected, identified, staffed, and helped to make this annual tradition a success.

The EECO Division also sincerely thanks the community for supporting and assembling this successful event, including: MPRPD's Rangers, Laurie B., Paulette S., Linda S., Vicky T., Patricia M., Shannon M., Joyce G., Mary G., Teri B., Kathie B., Bruce K., Rick B., Kathy S., Mary D., Cath F., Bruce Delgado, Dave Styer, and Patrick Furtado.



**Permeable decomposed granite trail**



**East Trail route jointly designed by McBain Associates and Big Sur Marathon Foundation**

**C. East Trail at the Palo Corona Regional Park's Rancho Canada Unit Opened for Public Use and Enjoyment:** The Big Sur Marathon Foundation generously funded construction of this environmentally friendly, soft-surfaced trail, decomposed granite (DG) trail. Construction was completed in early June and served as the kick-off for the former golf courses conversion into native habitat, starting with the removal of turf grass and invasive flora, and beginning the replacement of miles of existing curbed concrete and asphalt trails with DG-surfaced, user-friendly trial loops. Areas immediately adjacent to the trail shall be reseeded with the same native seed mix used to stabilize and restore the recent CAWD wastewater construction/service road alignment at this park.

Numerous positive, thankful comments have been offered by hikers using the East Trail. This trail's design allows a wide array of users of a broad spectrum of physical abilities to enjoy nature. This includes young children, senior citizens, and every age-group in between, and has also been warmly embraced by users with limited mobility, some using canes, thereby making nature available to everyone.

The trails design was a collaborative endeavor that included the input and participation of McBain Associates (MPRPD's environmental/riparian habitat restoration experts and consulting engineers), California Coastal Conservancy, the Big Sur Marathon Foundation, MPRPD, and others.

The trail is an integral part of the park's Flood Plain Restoration Project, offering visitors access to nature and wildlife viewing areas, experiencing conversion of the site from a former golf course into restored to native habitat. Areas that were disturbed during construction adjacent to the



**D. Monterey County Firesafe & Prepare Fair:** On Saturday, June 18, MPRPD staffed an outreach booth at the Firesafe & Prepare Fair, held at Carmel Valley Community Park. The event's themes included and emphasized various projects undertaken by MPRPD, related to the goal of reducing fuel loads on District parks, the importance of open spaces in building wildfire resilient communities, and recruiting volunteers for upcoming events.

**Robles Firewise Presents**  
*the Wildfire Safety & Prepare Fair*

**SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 10-4PM**  
@CVVILLAGE COMMUNITY PARK (CV RD. & FORD RD.)

**JOIN IN & LEARN HOW TO PREPARE & PROTECT  
YOUR FAMILY, YOUR PETS AND YOUR HOME!**

Interested in Volunteering?  
Looking for help day of event.  
Contact us for more info:  
**831.601.1502**

**ALL THE 411 ON YOUR  
911 WILDFIRE NEEDS**

Visit the website for more info:  
[www.roblesfirewise.com](http://www.roblesfirewise.com)

### **Robles Firewise Event notice**

**E. Social Media Posts:** For this reporting period, posts consisted of highlighting park happenings and educational content related to Spring and Summer at District parks, open spaces, and resource conservation areas. MPRPD used social media to relay relevant trail updates, celebrate National Trails Day, and advertise the Annual Summer Wildflower Show at Garland Ranch Regional Park.

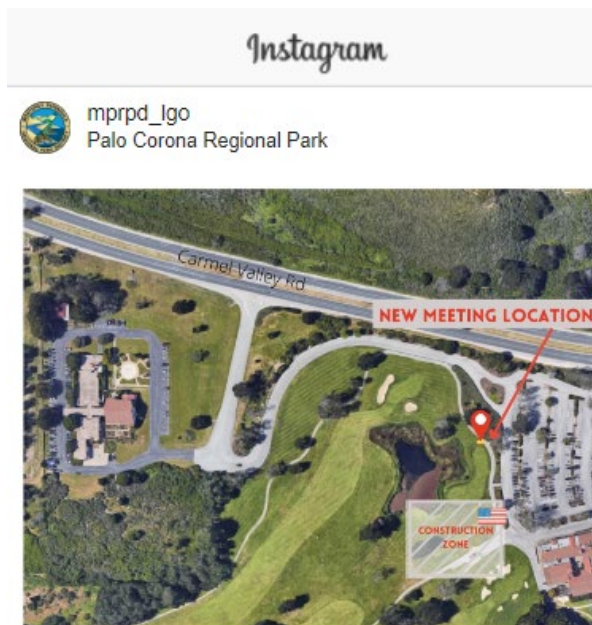
MPRPD's social media accounts saw consistent growth from both Facebook and Instagram platforms in May and June 2022.

## Facebook stats @MPRegionalParkDistrict:



- Facebook Page Reach: 6,413 (↑ 35.8%)
- 6/19 follower count: 1,838
- Top-3 most popular posts: May 15 – Jun 15
- 6/4 National Trails Day (664 views)
- 6/9 Snake Safety (1,907 views)
- 6/10 Wildflower Show Setup (816 views)

## Instagram stats - @mprpd\_lgo:



- Instagram Page Reach: 515 (↑ 9.6%)
- 5/16 follower count: 796
- Top-3 most popular posts: May 15 – Jun 15
- 5/18 Palo Corona Trail Update and Project B (251 views)
- 5/28 Visitor Center Open (232 views)
- 6/10 Wildflower Show Setup (255 views)

## 2. Consulting Services:

- Graphic Designer RFQ/RFP:** Staff completed the process to secure a Graphic Designer, and contracted with Tracy Hopper - Hopperpolis, to provide illustrations, concept designs, and layout for MPRPD's Visitor Interpretive Education Plan (VIEP). The VIEP is scheduled to be completed and presented to the Board of Directors as early as December 2022.



**B. Ono Consulting Tree Services:** Aware of the defoliation of several iconic oak trees on the west side of the Ranch Canada Unit, staff contacted arborist Justin Ono to assess the trees' conditions. The summary report stated the trees are healthy and putting on new growth and bark expansion, visible in pink/orange colored wood in the cracks of the bark, despite the region's recent oak moth infestation visually evident by the high number of chrysalises observed on the trees' trunks and limbs.

The summary reported that treating the trees for oak moths at a landscape-level would be cost prohibitive and difficult to conduct. The trees will continue to be monitored as they resprout, and reevaluated if they have not substantially re-foliated by the fall 2022. The subject trees were also inspected by sudden oak death (SOD) researcher, Kerri Frangioso - UC Davis, who found no evidence of SOD.

### 3. Education:

**A. K-12 Education Programs:** Staff lead a Discovery Center oriented and natural science-based walk for Carmel Middle School's 7<sup>th</sup> graders during the week of May 24-26. Over the three-day program, 180-students hiked to Palo Corona's Inspiration Point, participated in various teacher-designed and lead site-specific programs and activities, including watercolor painting and poetry.



- B. Timeframes:** Staff has identified program timeframes with the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District's (MPUSD) Program Coordinator, and Seaside Middle School's Teachers to enhance and reinforce the current life science curriculum (STEM Scopes) through access and use of Palo Corona Regional Park and Rancho Canada Unit's trail, natural and museum education resources. Program implementation is projected to occur in spring of the 2022/2023 school year for nearly 300-seventh grade students.
- C. Partnerships:** Staff continues to research potential partnerships with state and local entities such as State Parks PORTS program and Pacific Grove Museum Watershed Guardians program.



#### 4. Exhibits:

- A. Carmel River Watershed 3-D Terrain Map:** The Carmel River Watershed Conservancy partners, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, and MPRPD staff are reviewing the penultimate rendition of the Carmel River watershed 3-D map. Installation at the PCRPD Discovery Center is rescheduled to August 2022.
- B. Monterey Bay Jade Festival:** Staff attended the festival and networked with the Jade Events Limited, LLC, dba Monterey Bay Jade Festival Board of Directors discussing the proposed jade exhibit in the Palo Corona Discovery Center.

## 5. Let's Go Outdoors! (LGO!) Guide and Programs:

**A. Public Response to LGO! Programs:** “Warm fuzzies” are one of the pleasures of working with, and for, the public. Staff received the following voice message from a District resident on June 9, 2022.

*“Well, good morning. This is XXX calling. No need to call me back. I just wanted to tell you that I am so glad that you sent out a few months ago the Let's Go Outdoors publication. I'm still using it because there are still things going on and I just wanted to thank you. That's all. I appreciate what you did. Others may not call you, but I just wanted to say 'thank you' for this great publication of things going on around our area. So have a great day and keep up that great work.”*

**B. Registration Platform Review:** Staff extensively reviewed two different platforms for program registration: CivicRec (current) and Community Pass. It was found that CivicRec was the most cost-effective platform with the best administrative functionality due to its familiar platform and reporting abilities.

**C. Rumsen Feather Dance – Bringing it Back Home:** The Feather Dance was the first time in recent history the Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe held a cultural dance on their original homeland now known as Cachagua Community Park. The event was respectfully announced, in coordination with the tribe, in the spring/summer 2022 LGO! over-100 participants watched the 15+ Costanoan Rumsen Carmel Tribe members share their beautiful ceremony with our region's non-Indigenous community members. After the presentation, several of the tribe's members visited the grinding and birthing rock site to sing and honor their people. Many of the tribe's members were visiting this park and surrounding lands for the first time.

This and future events shall be designed to bring communities together and people back to their native lands. Discussions for future events are underway.



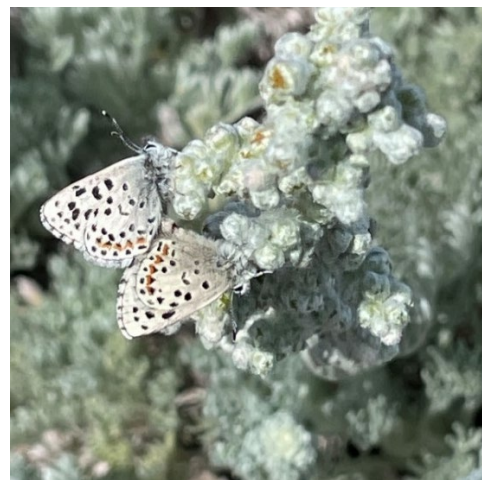


**D. Special Event -- Cachagua Country Fair:** Staff and volunteers will staff a table at this fair on July 9, 2022, at 11 am. The event is being held at the Cachagua Community Park. The park’s graphic concept plan will be posted during the fair and attendees will be asked to provide ideas and identify desired/preferred facilities and amenities that will enhance the park’s design, development, use, and the public’s experience(s), while also protecting and restoring the site’s cultural and environmental resources.

**6. Marina Dunes Preserve and Burleson Consulting Counts Smith’s Blue Butterflies (SBB):** On June 16, Burleson staff conducted a second SBB count for the 2022 season. Below is a summary of their findings from the last two surveys. The study analyzed several representative sample transects measuring 31-meter X 50-meter. The most recent survey indicates there is an increase in the number of SBBs being observed, and that many more exist outside of the subject transects.

On June 8  
 52 SBB positively identified  
 7 unknown blue butterflies  
 Total: 59 SBBs

On June 16  
 50 SBB positively identified  
 11 unknown blue butterflies  
 Total: 61 SBBs



**Multiple pairs of SBBs were observed mating during this analysis**

**7. Special Use Permits:** The following special use permits (SUP) were received or issued during this reporting period:

**A. California American Water:** A request to enter the Rancho Canada Unit of Palo Corona Regional Park to conduct bore-hole sampling along the Carmel River is currently under review.

**B. Dawn Reis -- Ecological Studies:** As the summer season's temperatures increase and the Carmel River's flows greatly decrease, the rescue and relocation of California red-legged frog (CRLF) tadpoles found in the Carmel River section flowing through PCRCP, continues. Dawn Reis is in regular communication with MPRPD's staff as she prepares and continues to access the property.

**8. Volunteers:**

**A. Volunteer Enrichment:** Bruce Delgado - Bureau of Land Management's botanist, gave an informative talk to MPRPD's volunteers entitled "Flora, Fauna, and Recreation at Fort Ord" during our volunteers' monthly virtual meeting.

1. Volunteer Mary Dainton gave a wildflower collecting tutorial to volunteer wildflower collectors.
2. Volunteers and staff collected and identified wildflowers from several MPRPD lands. The specimens were displayed at our annual Wildflower Show.
3. The June 30, 2022, volunteer enrichment event featured MPRPD park updates presented by Rafael Payan, Kelly McCullough, and Jake Smith.

**B. Volunteers Return to In-Person Services:** Staff provided orientation to volunteers in preparation for their return to their respective in-person duties.

**C. Gordon Williams:** It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of our brilliant, wonderful, talented Gordon Williams. Mr. Williams passed away on Friday, June 10, 2022.

Debbie Wyatt is creating a dedication for him and invites you to add to it. Please send your stories to [wyatt@mprpd.org](mailto:wyatt@mprpd.org):

*Gordon Williams joined MPRPD as a member of the first group of volunteers in 1989. He had recently retired after teaching Chemistry at Monterey Peninsula College for 33-years. He dedicated nearly 30-years of his life, helping MPRPD staff train and mentor volunteers. By*

*the time he was eighty-six he had led approximately 180-hikes at Garland Ranch, Marina Dunes, Mill Creek, and Palo Corona regional parks, during a 15-year period. Gordon, along with Mary Saylor, created the 1st Summer Wildflower Show for MPRPD in 1999, and he continued to organize the Annual Summer Wildflower Show at Garland Ranch Regional Park for many years. In 2016, into his 90's he proposed and led a series of 2- to 3-hour wildflower hikes while also training our volunteers on wildflower identification.*

*When Gordon was asked to identify his favorite trail, he'd quickly respond: "Whichever trail I am on at the time is my favorite! Every trail is different."*

*We will always remember Gordon's analogy about our brains being like chicken wire. Gordon would remind us, "Information is mud which is slung at the chicken wire. Some information sticks and that is what you remember. Over the years, some of the mud falls off so new information can stick. So, keep learning lifelong."*

*Sometimes Gordon ended his emails with "Cheers, Gordon."*

*Cheers to you, Gordon, and Happy Trails!*

**9. Welcome Back:** MPRPD staff held its first in-person All Staff meeting since March 2020.





## **OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION**

- 1. Cachagua Community Park Trail Improvements:** With the assistance of a Cal Fire inmate crew, Rangers coordinated the removal of a low-hanging sycamore branch and the construction of a ramp with a retaining wall over the water supply pipe serving the Cachagua water system.



**Cachagua Community Park Trail to the “Swimming Hole”**

- 2. Carmel Valley Fuel Break Project Grant Award:** MPRPD has partnered with the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) and other stakeholders, partners, and landowners for several years to develop and submit grant applications to Cal Fire for Wildfire resiliency programs and fuel reduction projects. On June 3, the District received confirmation that the Carmel Valley fuel break project has been awarded \$3.269 million dollars, which includes funding for fuel treatments within Garland Ranch Regional Park, specifically the Vasquez Trail fuel break and treatment of the Rancho Loop eucalyptus grove.

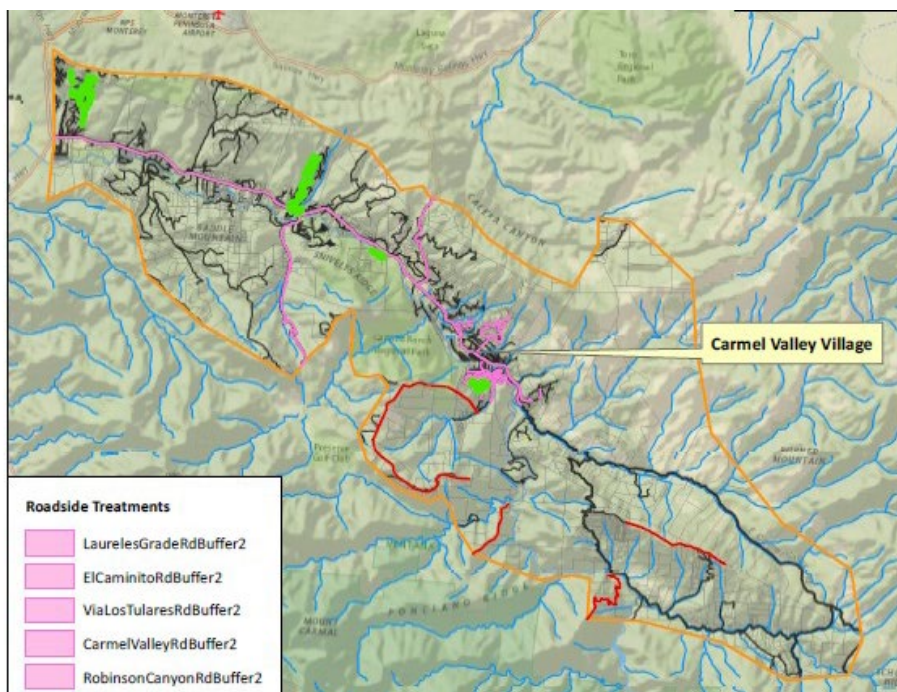
### **From the RCDMC’s website:**

*“The [RCDMC] is excited to announce that they are the recipient of a newly awarded California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) Fire Prevention grant for the Carmel Valley Fuel Break Project. This project covers approximately 403-acres across Carmel Valley [Valley] to re-establish and strengthen strategic fuel breaks in the Carmel Valley region, help implement community fuel treatments in critical neighborhoods and to help assess the feasibility of new emergency egress areas for at least three areas in the Valley. The RCDMC expects that the grant will have full funding at \$3.26 million dollars for all project work. A full agreement is expected to be submitted and signed later this year.*”

*The RCDMC will be proudly partnering with the Fire Safe Council for Monterey County (<https://www.firesafemonterey.org/>) to help with community outreach and education during the project. Other community partners that they have been and*

will continue to work with on this project are listed below:

- 5th District County Supervisor's Office
- CALFIRE BEU
- Carmel River Watershed Conservancy
- Carmel Valley Association
- Carmel Valley Ranch
- Monterey Bay Firewise Partners
- Monterey County Public Works
- Monterey County Regional Fire District
- Cypress Fire Protection District
- Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District
- Santa Lucia Conservancy”



**Carmel Valley Fuel Break Project Map**

- 3. Community Fair at Cachagua:** The annual Community Fair, to be held at the Cachagua Community Park, is scheduled for July 9, 2022. In preparation for this year's Fair, Rangers (with the assistance of a Gabilan Conservation Crew) will assemble vendor booths, weed-whip the site, prep trails and walkways, and provide a portable restroom near the horseshoe tournament venue. EECO Division will staff an interpretive booth this year with the assistance of volunteers, and the Admin Division will post the park's draft concept plan to solicit public comment and ideas.

The Cachagua Community Fair is the most significant annual fundraising event for the Cachagua Community Park Board, which oversees many activities in the Cachagua region and at this park on behalf of MPRPD. Funds generated from

this year's event will go toward improvements including shade structures, drinking fountains, etc.

#### **4. East Trail Construction Completed and Public Enjoying Their Trail and**

**Park:** As previously noted, the Big Sur Marathon Foundation and the foundation's donors generously underwrote the trail's construction costs, giving the region a wonderful gift that will be enjoyed by present generations and many generations to come, helping us become a healthier, more environmentally literate, and inclusive humanity.

Chapin Company completed construction of this trail at Palo Corona Regional Park's Rancho Canada Unit in early June 2022. The environmentally friendly, permeable decomposed granite trail will replace many sections and miles of the existing concrete and asphalt-surfaced curbed golf cart paths at this park. The trail is integrated into MPRPD's Floodplain Habitat Restoration project, affording visitors who possess a broad range of physical abilities the opportunity to experience their park's healthful hiking opportunity in the soon-to-be restored native environment.

The trail is now officially known as the "East Trail" and was opened for public access, effective June 8, 2022. The upstream-most bridge (also known as Bridge #1) provides access to the East Trail, thus providing a loop trail experience for the public via Bridges 1 and 4. This reinforces MPRPD's and our private, not-for-profit, and governmental partners goal and philosophy that nature, and the opportunity to access nature, belongs to everyone.

The trail will help accommodate several key opportunities, including: Provide access to emergency/first responder/law enforcement vehicles to patrol and provide timely emergency access and response; in an era of COVID-related concerns allows hikers to pass one another with adequate social distancing, will protect the soon-to-be restored habitat by allowing people/groups of people to pass one another without the desire or need to step off the designated trail which would result in environmental damage to the restored habitat, aligns with the park's general development plan, replaces miles of extant concrete, asphalt, and curbed trails with a softer, permeable heat-reflective surface, greatly reduces the site's fragmentation presently caused by numerous miles of hard-surfaced golf cart paths; provides an alternative nature-based experience for visitors that cannot physically, cognitively, or experientially partake in the park's more rigorous trails to Inspiration Point and other locations.

The earthen shoulders were the result of removing turf grass and invasive flora and shall be re-seeded with a native seed mix in advance of this fall and winter season's rains, as a water conservation. The trail alignment, designed in coordination with MPRPD's environmental/habitat restoration consultant and the California Coastal Conservancy, shall be integrated with the sites habitat restoration plan.)



**Don Chapin Co. spreading decomposed granite along trail**

**(NOTE: Dead turf grass and invasive plants still evident beyond the temporary limits of construction. These plants shall be removed during the site's restoration, replaced with native flora)**

- 5. Frog Pond Seasonal Puncheon Crossing:** Rangers recently completed replacement of the seasonal puncheon crossing at the Frog Pond Wetland Preserve, which also serves as the spillway and weir dam housing. The previous puncheon had begun to fail and allow the passage of retained water through small crevices in the wood. The innovative design is watertight and will help retain pond water into the dry summer months.



**Rangers Hatton and Jared construct ramp approaches**

6. **Garland Ranch Regional Park Visitor Center Restroom Reopens:** After 2-years, the Visitor Center restrooms at this park have been reopened. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, staff utilized portable restrooms and a janitorial service to minimize exposure to our limited and highly essential staff. During that time, Rangers had the opportunity to paint walls, resurface floors, replace fixtures, and update plumbing. The public has been pleased to have the restrooms reopened and the feeling that things may slowly be returning to “normal.”
  
7. **Palo Corona Road Grading/Brushing by Cal Fire:** MPRPD has partnered with Cal Fire to allow road grading and brush mastication in Palo Corona Regional Park’s backcountry. This comes at no charge to the District and will better prepare Cal Fire firefighters and heavy equipment operators with initial attack strategies if/when an incident occurs. In the Palo Corona Front Ranch Unit, Cal Fire reestablished a fuel break paralleling Highway 1 along an existing ranch road. The map listed below illustrates the projects Cal Fire has completed to date:



**Cal Fire PCRP Backcountry Project Map**

8. **Project B Construction Project:** Rangers continue to be engaged with Avila Construction and provide support to Project B, including scheduling arborists, providing access, and identifying areas for spoils and excess fill placement and stockpiling. Rangers will continue to participate in the weekly check-in meetings and provide support as needed.
9. **Tree Down at Palo Corona Regional Park:** A large oak tree that fell at Palo Corona Regional Park was recently removed with the assistance of a Gabilan Conservation Crew. The section of split-rail fencing that was crushed has been replaced by Rangers.



**Cal Fire Gabilan Conservation Crew removing fallen tree**

10. **Seasonal Mowing and Brushing:** Seasonal maintenance at all District parks and preserves has been completed. Rangers started seasonal mowing and brushing of MPRPD's open spaces, preserves, and trails on May 9, 2022. Rangers will continue to monitor and assess what areas require a second round of mowing or brushing, and schedule accordingly. The Rancho Canada Unit of Palo Corona Regional Park is scheduled to be mowed on August 1<sup>st</sup>, following the end of bird nesting season.
11. **Wildfire Preparedness at Carmel Valley Community Park:** OPS and EECO divisions teamed up to staff a booth at the June 18, 2022, Wildfire Preparedness Fair at the Carmel Valley Community Park. The Fair consisted of over 30-vendors and live demonstrations, educating people on home hardening and defensible space requirements. MPRPD and event staff shared the good news about the \$3.2 million grant that was recently awarded to RCDMC for the Carmel Valley Strategic Fuel Break, of which MPRPD is a partnering agency.

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**MPRPD's outreach booth at the Wildfire Safety & Prepare Fair**

**12. Wildfire Roundtable Meeting with Senator John Laird, Fire Protection Agencies and Community Members at the Rancho Canada Unit's Discovery Center:** MPRPD's staff continues to meet monthly with the Concerned Citizens of Carmel Valley (CCCV) to discuss wildfire preparedness, progress status of

MPRPD's Fire Management Plan for Garland Ranch Regional Park, and current fuel mitigation projects.

Senator Laird was invited to the June meeting. Our Senator graciously attended the meeting alongside members of his staff. MPRPD took this opportunity to invite staff from other stakeholder organizations to this meeting to discuss regional wildfire preparedness, including Cal Fire, Monterey County Regional Fire District, Santa Lucia Conservancy, Santa Lucia Preserve, Big Sur Land Trust, and the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County.

MPRPD's staff provided a brief overview of the Rancho Canada Unit's acquisition and the park's General Development Plan, focusing on MPRPD's coordination with fire management organizations to develop an Incident Command Center at this park to help the region combat future fire, flood, and civil unrest-based emergencies. Fuel mitigation projects to date were also discussed.

Senator Laird's team and the attending fire management organization's complimented MPRPD's vision and efforts, including current construction of the East Trail and restroom facilities. These projects will afford the public enhanced experiences at the Rancho Canada Unit. Upon this meeting's conclusion, several meeting attendees, including Senator Laird, toured the Santa Lucia Preserve to discuss said Preserve's fire mitigation measures implemented to date.



**Wildfire Roundtable Discussion w/ Senator Laird, CCCV, and others**



## **PLANNING & CONSERVATION DIVISION**

### **1. Program Updates:**

- A. Program Records Review:** Staff are in the process of reviewing, consolidating, and reorganizing planning and conservation project and property records. This will be long-term and ongoing effort to develop a centralized record of MPRPD property history and the status of past planning and conservation projects and monitoring efforts.
  
- B. 22/23 Fiscal Year Preparation:** Following the Board's approval of the 22/23FY budget, staff are refining the Planning and Conservation Division's 22/23 workplan. Staff plan to present a Planning and Conservation Program status update to the Board as early as September 2022.
  
- C. Internship Opportunities:** Staff are working with the Environmental Education and Community Outreach (EECO) Division to begin offering planning and conservation internship opportunities later this fiscal year. Staff are conducting initial outreach to local universities to learn how to align with degree program curriculum and goals while also supporting priority MPRPD projects and programs.
  
- D. GIS Data Review and Consolidation:** Staff are reviewing existing MPRPD GIS data and are seeking to develop a framework to consolidate and standardize GIS data to be hosted in the Agency's ArcGIS Online Portal. This work will be a part of a broader GIS development effort that will be presented to the Board at a future date.
  
- E. ESRI Conservation Grant Program:** Staff recently received a software grant from ESRI Conservation Grant Program, providing annual GIS software and licenses to MPRPD at 10% of the normal cost. We appreciate ESRI's generous support of MPRPD's land conservation efforts.
  
- F. Monterey County GIS Data Sharing MOU:** Staff are working with the County of Monterey's Information Technology Department to explore development an interagency data sharing MOU that will allow MPRPD to access and use County GIS data and establish protocols for sharing MPRPD data with County staff and data portals.

## 2. Project Updates:

**A. Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration Project -- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant Application:** As previously mentioned, in coordination with MPRPD, the State Coastal Conservancy and Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration design team submitted a grant application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for \$10 million in grant funding to support construction of the Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration Project, covering approximately 30-50% of the total estimated project cost. If awarded, this grant would then be transferred from the Coastal Conservancy to MPRPD to administer. We are deeply grateful for the Conservancy's partnership and support throughout this project.

**B. Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration Project -- Uplands Enhancement and Trail Integration Planning:** Staff are working with the restoration design team to develop restoration design concepts for the uplands area – which ostensibly includes much of the former golf course that is not located within the existing Carmel River channel.

This upland section of the Rancho Canada Unit may allow MPRPD to relocate soil excavated from within the floodplain restoration area, notably from within the river channel which has become incised and is downward-cutting due to the placement of riprap and other channel modifications during the late 1960's and early 1970s. This fill material will enhance habitat in the eastern uplands area of this park, while also supporting compatible nature trail and environmental education uses.

Staff look forward to providing an update on this work as it progresses further and believe that the Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration project will serve as a national model for how to restore resilient habitats and wildlife populations while also providing a world-class nature experience for the public that increases community health and environmental literacy.

**C. Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Mitigation and Management Plan:** The project team is currently conducting a comprehensive consolidation and review of existing spatial data and relevant studies for Garland Ranch Regional Park. This initial project phase will culminate in a background understanding memo that will also be posted to a project website, slated to be launched in early August 2022. This will provide interested parties the opportunity to track project progress, review project documents, and to provide input on potential fuel mitigation and management priorities that will be considered for inclusion in the plan. The project will also provide at least two public stakeholder workshops to solicit input on plan priorities, in late summer

and early fall 2022.

Given some potential near-term funding opportunities to implement fuel reduction work at Garland Ranch Regional Park, the project team is prioritizing assessment of the potential treatment options and benefits associated with thinning or removal of fuels around the eucalyptus grove, securing any required permits or environmental clearances, and potential implementation of timelines according to potential sources of funding such as the recently approved Carmel Valley Strategic Fuel Break Grant (described in more detail in this report).

- D. San Jose Creek Trail Public Access Planning:** MPRPD staff met with California State Parks, Big Sur Land Trust, and Point Lobos Foundation representatives to coordinate docent-led hikes along the San Jose Creek Trail and discuss opportunities to provide public access on either a reservation or open basis. The Coalition is planning to reconvene in July to develop a workplan and schedule for planning and implementing expanded access along this section of the San Jose Creek Trail. Ideally, the San Jose Creek Trail will be dedicated this fall, celebrating and commemorating MPRPD's 50-year Anniversary.

### **3. Meetings, Conferences, and Notes from the Field:**

- A. California Landscape Stewardship Network Gathering and Field Tour:** MPRPD was invited to co-host a field tour of the District's Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration and the Big Sur Land Trust's CRFREE projects during a three-day gathering of the [California Landscape Stewardship Network](#). MPRPD staff attended the multi-day gathering, which was focused on how land conservation organizations can increase their collaborative capacity, enabling them to practice conservation in ways that are more inclusive, informed, and integrative.
  
- B. Monterey Peninsula Fire Preparedness Roundtable Meeting with Senator John Laird:** As previously mentioned, MPRPD and the Concerned Citizens of Carmel Valley organized a roundtable, including Senator John Laird, CalFIRE, Monterey County Regional Fire Department, the Monterey County Resource Conservation District, the Santa Lucia Conservancy, and the Big Sur Land Trust. The discussion focused on regional wildlife preparedness needs, key projects/programs that are currently underway, and resources that are needed increase fire preparedness across the region, including the proposed development of an Incident Command Center at the Rancho Canada Unit.



**Concerned Citizens of Carmel Valley organized a roundtable, including Senator John Laird, CalFIRE, Monterey County Regional Fire Department, the Monterey County Resource Conservation District, Santa Lucia Conservancy, Big Sur Land Trust and MPRPD**

**C. U.S Fish & Wildlife Service Tour of Palo Corona Safe Harbor**

**Agreement Area:** MPRPD staff met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Deb Kirkland, to tour the Palo Corona Regional Park Safe Harbor Agreement area and potential Smith's Blue Butterfly and California Red Legged Frog habitat areas in the park. While we did not see either of those species during the tour, we did see a black bear near the Palo Corona Cabin. Staff plan to work with USFWS over the next few months to develop a workplan to meet ongoing monitoring requirements outlined in the Safe Harbor Agreement and identify opportunities to update land management activities in the park to benefit these species.

**D. Wildlife Corridor Working Group Annual Summit:** MPRPD staff attended the Wildlife Corridor Working Group (WCWG) Annual summit in Sacramento. The WCWG includes public agencies and non-governmental agencies working on connectivity issues. The Summit included presentations on habitat connectivity projects across the state and educational presentations on habitat connectivity research and implementation.