

MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING: August 04, 2021

SUBJECT: Monthly Staff Report

PRESENTER: Rafael Payan, General Manager

REPORT: The following briefly summarizes some of the key tasks and projects MPRPD's Staff undertook from mid-June 2021 through mid-July 2021 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 COVID-related guidelines.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

- 1. Big Sur Marathon Foundation (BSMF) Agreement:** This Agreement will facilitate BSMF's construction and subsequent shared use and maintenance of the proposed cross-country course. The course will be located at the former east golf course at Palo Corona Regional Park's Rancho Canada Unit.
- 2. CalPERS Investment Returns FY2020-21:** CalPERS reported a preliminary 21.3% net return on investments for the 12-month period that ended June 30, 2021, increasing the overall funded status of the Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF) to approximately 82 percent.

Under the Funding Risk Mitigation Policy, approved by the CalPERS Board of Administration in 2015, the double-digit return will trigger a reduction in the discount rate used to calculate employer and Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) member contributions. The discount rate, or assumed rate of return, will drop to 6.8% from its current level of 7%, which will result in increased annual contribution rates for employers and PEPRA employees. The Funding Risk Mitigation Policy lowers the discount rate in years of good investment returns. This is the first time it has been triggered. CalPERS has put together the attached FAQ to help address questions received from stakeholders (**ATTACHMENT 1**).

- 3. Capital Project Financing:** Staff continues to research capital improvement financing options, including loans, grants, and use of MPRPD's reserve funds. Staff have met with the CSDA's Finance Corporation team to investigate options and shall soon meet with MPRPD's Finance Committee to discuss options. Recommendations

will subsequently be brought before MPRPD's Board for review, discussion, consideration, and direction.

4. COVID-19:

A. Hybrid Meetings Going Forward: Further, in response to the pandemic, organizations throughout the world have embraced alternative service delivery mechanisms, including Zoom or other similar means, to meet and provide or exchange information. This includes meetings. Thus, MPRPD may continue to re-engage with the public remotely as this has proven to be successful. Thus, MPRPD will pilot a "hybrid system" for its meetings and classes, including its Board meetings as MPRPD's Board authorizes. For example, a hybrid MPRPD Board meeting may entail concurrently holding both onsite and remote meetings. This will provide the public an option as to how they may want to participate and may allow Board members and staff to participate remotely when in travel status, etc.

B. MPRPD Protocols: Staff continues to refine and revise MPRPD's COVID-19 Prevention Program (CPP) and Return-to-Work protocols.

C. Re-opening via Cautious, Deliberate Approach: Although some organizations have, or plan to, fully re-open all their facilities, MPRPD is once again carefully tracking CDC, State and County guidelines and recommendations, as well as scientific analyses and trends as in alignment with the globe's immunological science/medical researchers. As such, staff have determined that it is prudent to be very careful and deliberate in how MPRPD plans and ultimately implements various "re-opening tiers."

The recent up-tick in COVID-related illness and deaths attributed to the Delta variant require MPRPD to be very cautious and deliberate in how MPRPD re-engages our patrons, vendors, volunteers, and staff.

Until more is known regarding the Delta variant, its communicability (which has been reported as being highly transmittable when compared with other genetic variants), the severity of the disease, and how folks who have previously been partially or fully vaccinated, MPRPD must move forward with an abundance of caution to protect the health of our visitors, vendors, volunteers, and staff – many of whom represent the most vulnerable segments of our population due to their advanced age, are un-vaccinated youth, or pre-existing medical conditions. Already, several experts are recommending mandatory use of masks and social distancing be continued or reinstated.

Thus, MPRPD's outdoor facilities such as trails, parking areas, and open spaces shall continue to be available for parking use, whereas offices and visitor centers will continue to be closed. Staff is however, exploring options for volunteers and staff to offer public services via outdoor "contact booths" or similar stations.

- 5. Coalition-based Initiatives:** Staff would like to explore convening several multi-jurisdictional initiatives to explore how the region's governmental entities may integrate their resources to formulate a series of plans to address several key items:

A. Healthy and Sustainable:

i. Agricultural Lands: MPRPD may consider working with the agricultural industry to protect the region's agricultural industry. Already, MPRPD is protecting and conserving agricultural lands and Palo Corona Regional Park as a means of helping sustain the region's agricultural tradition and ag-based economy and attenuating potential development where appropriate. This may be expanded to include research on sustainable farming and ranching practices to ensure environmental, economic, and other factors align with environmental protection and enhancement.

ii. Multi-modal Transportation Corridors and Alternative Fuels: The region's weather, topography and "culture" lends itself to becoming one of the world's leaders in the planning and development of a regionwide recreational and alternative transportation methodology. This could result in a healthier human population while reducing our carbon footprint by establishing viable means by which our populace can transport themselves from "Point-A" to "Point-B" and beyond.

This endeavor could also possibly result in MPRPD becoming one of the nation's leaders as it transitions itself into an electric vehicle "format" – where possible -- over the next five to ten years.

iii. Natural Landscapes and Watersheds: This proposal similarly recommends the region's governmental bodies in partnership with NGOs and other parties work in an integrated manner to protect and restore the region's landscapes and watersheds.

iv. Tomorrow's Environmentally Literate Electorate and Inclusive Societies: MPRPD has proposed and is advancing transportation grant opportunities to schools. By making the region's aquariums, museums, open spaces, preserves and reserves available and accessible to the region's youth, we may be able to achieve MPRPD's goal of creating a more environmentally

literate and inclusive society. This may help today's youth become supportive members of tomorrow's electorate and consumers.

B. Regional Fire Management Plan: Although there is tremendous value in developing site or property-specific fire/fuel load management plans, perhaps this value can be greatly enhanced if the region's governmental bodies unified our effort to address wildfire concerns and develop action plans at the "landscape-level." Wildfire knows or nor honors no boundaries or borders thus, it may be prudent to explore and implement large-scale options – especially because climate shifts may already be increasing the potential for wildfire.

6. FORTAG Angelus Way Site Walk and Meeting: On 28 June, TAMC held a public meeting to update the community re: the proposed FORTAG alignment at and in proximity to Work Memorial Park, Del Rey Oak's City Hall, and Frog Pond Wetland Preserve. FORTAG's founders and MPRPD joined TAMC, along with several tens of residents and other interested parties. The meeting provided a general update which will be followed-up with more detailed presentations to continue vetting options for this TAMC project.

7. Garland Ranch Regional Park Fire Management Plan and Initial Work: Staff continues to make progress on this important project. On-site meetings with fire-management experts will be held to obtain their input on how to develop the plan and to identify steps and processes may be executed in the short-term. Funds for the following became available 01 July 2021.

The following is in alignment with the Board's direction:

A. Short-term: The primary initial steps will identify those projects which actions may soon be taken. MPRPD will meet with CalFire and the Monterey County Regional Fire District to obtain their expert guidance in the short-term measures that can be addressed and by whom. Because MPRPD is NOT a fire management expert, we seek input including how to identify priority areas, working with the region's fuel management/canopy management experts, and how to engage inmate and volunteer crews. Due to the very early, aggressive, and expansive fire season, fire and fuel management experts may understandably be engaged with extant emergencies.

B. Mid-Term and Long-term: It is imperative that MPRPD develop a fire management plan for Garland Ranch Regional Park. Although one presently exists for Palo Corona Regional Park, other MPRPD properties do not have a counterpart plan. The development of a plan will help MPRPD to strategically plan, budget, and execute fire and fuel plans at all its properties. The lack of a plan(s) to focus "next steps" may arguably be less effective.

8. **Laguna Grande Regional Park:** In alignment with the MPRPD Board's direction, staff transferred \$60K to City of Monterey to continue the Trail Strategies and Environmental Study for Laguna Grande Regional Park. To date, initial analysis by the project's consultants has begun. The community, MPRPD's Board, and JPA shall receive updates as this project advances.
9. **ParkIT! Initiative and San Jose Creek Trail:** MPRPD continues to be a contributing partner on this important initiative.

ParkIT! representatives recently met with Muir Woods National Monument representatives to discuss the current shuttle bus initiative at that park. This information will help the **ParkIT!** initiative's team formulate, implement, and refine its plans. Accordingly, the **ParkIT!** initiative's team will identify potential phases and tiers within each phase to determine how this project may be advanced.

A potential pilot project may include the potential opening of the San Jose Creek Trail. This project may include a "multi-member" initiative wherein a shuttle reservation system and its implementation may help the participating partners determine what worked, what did not, and what can be expanded or compressed. This information may subsequently be valuable in implementing a shuttle system for Point Lobos State Natural Reserve. MPRPD's Board will be provide updates and recommendations for the Board's review, comment, and consideration as this project advances.

10. **Projects A and B Open House:** Please see the EECO's and Operation's and Maintenance divisions' reports for additional detail on this successful event.
11. **Project B:** A walk-through meeting was held with Tatum's Garden designer Amanda Bakker to solicit ideas for further planning and development of MPRPD's proposed all-inclusive Nature Play area. The goal is to develop a nature play area that will be accessible to children of all abilities.
12. **Request for Proposals (RFPs):** Staff continued working on the drafting of several Requests for Proposals (RFPs). The RFPs shall help MPRPD solicit and obtain professional services for the:
 - A. **Benefits, Wage, Rental Fee, and Organizational Restructuring studies;**
 - B. **Garland Ranch Regional Park Fire Management Plan; and,**
 - C. **Redistricting:** Realignment of MPRPD's boundaries in response to the 2020 Census.

MPRPD's Board shall receive updates regarding these RFPS for review, consideration, and action during future meetings.

- 13. Reroof & HVAC Replacement:** Plans for the reroof are still in Plan Check with the County RMA office. They returned with two comments that will need to be resolved before proceeding with bidding process. The project's Construction Manager, Architects, and Project Consultant are working to address these comments.
- 14. Intersection Improvement:** Staff met with County officials to briefly discuss signalization or a roundabout at the intersection of Rio and Carmel Valley roads. Additional detail will be provided to the Board as we obtain more information.
- 15. Tatum's Garden Model:** Amanda Bakker met with MPRPD staff to continue discussion related to the construction of a nature-themed play area that would be accessible and enjoyed by children of all abilities. Additional detail will be provided to the Board at a future meeting.
- 16. Training:** Staff continued to participate in sessions related to Return-to-Work; Generational Diversity, Succession Planning, and implementation of the ProcureNow contracts management system.
- 17. Tribal Consultation:** Staff met with members of the Ohlone Nation, State Parks, and several NGOs to continue consultation with the Tribe re: potential options leading to the opening of the San Jose Creek Trail. Staff will present its recommendation(s) to MPRPD's Board once the aforementioned parties have refined and reached a consensus on the most feasible options.

Staff is also continuing consultation with the Esselen, Ohlone, and Rumsen nations to ensure MPRPD's compliance with Assembly Bill-52 (AB-52) for several projects including the re-master planning of Cachagua Community Park. AB-52 requires that governmental organizations notify and consult with the region's ancestral Tribes for certain projects, such as master planning and construction projects.

EECO DIVISION

Local resident shared this stunning image of a bobcat catching a squirrel for MPRPD use in the *Let's Go Outdoors!* guide and on social media.



1. Community Outreach:

- A. Strategic Management of Public Service Organizations:** EECO staff participated in a Master student's research program for "Strategic Management of Public Service Organizations" to compile information about governmental organization culture, operations, and practices. The interview included questions which delved into the mission, opportunities and threats, direction for the future, and partnerships. The MPRPD strategic plan, available online, was a contributing factor for being selected to participate in the project.
- B. Prop 68 Grant Funding: Palo Corona Regional Park "Plan Your Park":** Staff launched a series of engagement forums to update the community and elicit public input on the amenities proposed for the Rancho Canada Unit of Palo Corona Regional Park (PCRP). This is one of the requirements for the Regional Park Program (RPP) and Rural Recreation & Tourism (RRT) grant applications. Advertisement included press releases, paid ads in the Monterey Herald and Monterey County Weekly, and a street banner at the entrance of PCRP.
- i. Plan Your Park Virtual Meeting:** The first in a series of three (3) public engagement venues, staff, and consultants from Regional Government

Services, Page & Turnbull, Ten Over Studios and BFS Landscape Architects held a joint, virtual meeting, on June 30 from 6:30 pm-8 pm. The program included a presentation with an overview of the services plan and discussions to gather public feedback. The workshop was recorded and is available for viewing on the mprpd.org website.

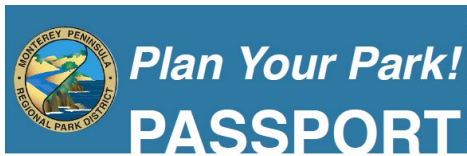
- ii. **Open House:** MPRPD hosted an in person, outdoor event Open House on Saturday, July 17 from 10 am-1 pm. Two hundred (200) attendees, many with dogs, visited stations at both the Project A and B sites. Public feedback was collected verbally through conversations, written on passport handout cards, and through voting on vision boards. Synthesized by the consulting teams, the comments will inform the park planning process.

KSBWB news reporter Alani Letang, interviewed staff, the “Dog Park Four” representatives, and park visitors. The two-minute segment aired on Saturday at 6 pm and 11 pm.

Days in planning, creating posters and collateral information, and setting-up was testimony to ranger, administration and EECO staff uniting to create a successful in-person open house event. The public repeatedly expressed their appreciation. The compiled data and input are being synthesized and will provide guidance on the development of the park.



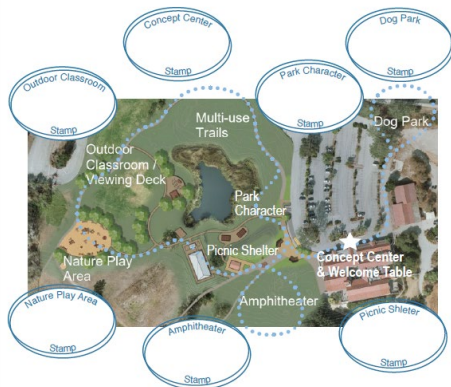
Open House Welcome Station Word Cloud



Your Nature Space - Your Plan!

Share your ideas for designing Palo Corona Regional Park into a nature-based park! Visit each of the proposed park features and talk with the design teams to create YOUR park.

Get your passport stamped at each station to earn a commemorative Palo Corona Regional Park sticker!



Thank You!

Your input is being used to guide the park's aesthetic design and to raise money through grants!

Please drop off your passport at the Welcome Table to receive your sticker and snack!

Zip Code: _____

Year of Birth: _____

How far away do you live?

_____ Miles

What suggestions or comments do you have?

How did you hear about this event?.....

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer? Yes No

Can we contact you about future events? Yes No

Name: _____

Email: _____

Mailing Address: _____



Open House participants were greeted at the welcome booth and requested to visit each station to review the park plans and provide comments. Similar to the National Parks Service “Passport Program”, the passports were stamped at each station. Sixty-eight passports were collected. Once submitted, participants received an “I Heart Palo Corona” commemorative sticker.

iii. **Virtual Meeting Summary of Findings:** The third (3rd) engagement presentation and discussion are scheduled to be held on Tuesday, August 31, 2021, from 6:30 pm-8 pm. Project A and B consultants will provide an analysis of the public input, findings, data, and next steps.

2. Education:

Staff lead the informal pilot program “Art in and Intro to Nature” for eight Therapeutic Intervention Program students and their chaperones, from Alisal High School, at Garland Ranch Regional Park. Students in this program are rarely exposed to natural parks and have different learning styles and abilities. The students sketched the different plants around the arboretum and were encouraged to be respectful of nature, the Carmel River, and trail users. Participants were masked at greeting and unmasked when 6ft social distancing was possible and when they were comfortable. The group of twelve (12) did not obstruct other park users as appropriate distancing was achieved in larger gathering areas like the arboretum and when on wide trails.

3. **Marina Dunes Preserve:** Dune monitoring continued during this reporting period. Burleson Consulting, Inc. completed the following:
 - A. **Design of the vegetation monitoring protocol and monitoring report template;**
 - B. **Uploaded and provided management of GIS data to and for MPRPD server;**
 - C. **Seed collection and delivery to Return of the Natives:** Collection included harvesting of four (4) plant species, totaling 380-grams of clean, genetically and site appropriate seed, including *Eriogonum latifolium* (commonly referred to as Seaside Buckwheat) for growing in a greenhouse for later use on various dune habitat restoration projects; and,
 - D. **Final annual report:** This report shall include data related to this dune habitat restoration project's progress and efficacy.
4. **Social Media:** Social media posts were created and posted advocating fire safety and warm weather/seasonal park practices. Other posts included advertising Environmental Education Specialist openings, Plan Your Park advertisement and engagement, and July's "Parks Make Life Better" month.
5. **Special Use Permits:** The following special use permits were issued during this reporting period:
 - A. **Adventure Scientists** is hosting a workshop for TED conference attendees, related to water quality monitoring project for Wild and Scenic Rivers (for more information visit: <https://www.adventurescientists.org/rivers.html>). Garland Ranch Regional Park was selected as the site to collect water quality data on the Carmel River.

In-situ data will be collected using Hach Pocket Pro+ and Sper Scientific DO field probes. These probes measure: pH, conductivity, total dissolved solids (TDS), salinity, temperature, and dissolved oxygen. Water samples will be collected in plastic bottles; averaging approximately 5L of collected water. The collection of these samples is for demonstration only; samples will not be analyzed.

Twenty people on Sunday, August 1.

B. Dawn Reis Ecological Studies: Access to Carmel River via Palo Corona Regional Park was conducted to provide much needed and critical California red-legged frog (CRLF) tadpole rescues before the Carmel River's waters recede and go subsurface. This project was implemented at the request of California American Water and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Up to four (4) staff will be conducting rescues from June 3-July 15, 2021.

C. MEarth Summer Camp: As a partner through an MOU, MEarth staff showcased Palo Corona Regional Park as a destination location for three of their camp programs. Working with Scott Hennessy, twelve (12) campers collected native plant seeds, assisted in habitat restoration, and viewed pond wildlife prior to hiking to Inspiration Point.

Three (3) weeks of campers from grades 3-10 participated from June 21-July 23.



MEarth "Seed Hunters in Socks"

D. Santa Catalina School Summer Camp: Each week, nearly one hundred (100) camp girls, ages 8-14, experience the natural environment of MPRPD's open spaces at Garland Ranch Regional Park to hike the trails, participate in nature journaling, learn about environmental education ethics, and practice leave no trace tenets.

Approximately 100-youth participated during each site visit, from July 7-August 3.

6. Training:

A. All MPRPD staff participated in an overview and intake ProcureNow training to gain knowledge on how to access and navigate the new MPRPD procurement system.

B. Staff attended “An overview for Developing True Interpretive Master Plans.”

7. Transportation Grant: Staff participated in a series of virtual meetings with the Community Foundation for Monterey County to discuss ways to develop and deliver the transportation grant program. The goal of this program is to remove the financial barrier associated with transportation for MPRPD residents to get out and experience the outdoors and nature-based education. The grant will allow students, organizations, and community groups to apply. Grant criteria is currently under development.

8. Volunteers: Dr. Matt Savoca, researcher at Hopkins Marine Station, presented on “Plastic Pollution in California’s Oceans” to MPRPD’s Volunteers during the monthly meeting on June 24, 2021. Staff was awed, learning about the chemicals plastics release (working like pheromones), attracting zooplankton and other plastic-eating organisms, resulting in the bio magnification of plastics consumed. This informative presentation was recorded and is available to view upon request.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION

1. CAWD Sewer Line: Ops Staff continues to coordinate with Carmel Area Wastewater District to prepare for replacement of the wastewater main thru the Rancho Canada Unit. Rangers worked with Granite to identify two areas for staging equipment and supplies during the project and continue to participate in weekly check-in meetings. Conflicts with protected oak trees have forced CAWD to reevaluate their alignment for the new line.

2. Downed/Dead trees: Several more very large oak trees fell in MPRPD parks and preserves recently, including the two pictured below at Frog Pong Wetland Preserve and Palo Corona Regional Park.



Fallen oak tree at Frog Pond Wetland Preserve



Fallen oak tree at Palo Corona Regional Park – Rancho Canada Unit

- 3. Frog Pond Information Panel:** The information panel at Frog Pond Wetland was replaced recently. The new design incorporates an updated MPRPD rules/reg sign, universal use signs, and multi-post construction for stability.



New information panel at Frog Pond Wetland Preserve

- 4. Irrigation Master Plan:** Rangers continue to work with BFS Landscape Architects to finalize the Irrigation Master Plan for Palo Corona's Rancho Canada Unit and make repairs to the existing irrigation system as needed.



Ranger Jake plugs a small leak in the irrigation filter using the District's MIG welder

- 5. Rancho Canada Unit Open House Event:** Ops Staff participated in the coordination, preparation, and staffing of the RCU Open House on July 17th. Rangers mowed identified areas, installed project markers, and distributed tables, chairs, and traffic barricades for the event. The public was invited to provide input on the project and given the opportunity to tour the future site of the dog parks. Board members Monta Potter and Kathleen Lee, along with County Supervisor Mary Adams were in attendance.



KSBW Reporter Alani Letang interviewing the Dog Park 4

- 6. Terrace Trail Staircase:** Ranger staff replaced the stair steps at the beginning of Terrace Trail recently. The previous steps had become unstable, uneven, and were an uncontained design, which allowed soil to migrate and create a tripping hazard. The new steps are an “inter-locking” design, where each step is pinned with rebar to the adjoining steps, and soil retention is a key feature.



Before



After

ATTACHMENT:

- [1. CalPERS FAQs](#)