

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT**

BOARD MEETING: December 01, 2021

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-October 2021 through mid-November 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. Benefits and Compensation Study:** As previously reported, MPRPD has secured the services of Koff & Associates to perform a comprehensive benefits and compensation study for MPRPD.

Analysis has begun. The initial step included every staff member completing a Position Description and Qualifications (PDQ) survey for their respective job. Staff completed the PDQ survey and the data, along with a copy of MPRPD's current organizational chart and job descriptions, was forwarded to Koff & Associates for their analysis. The consultant will be meeting with staff to obtain additional information. Periodic updates will be provided to the Board as the study progresses.

- 2. COVID-19:** Staff continued participating in weekly Monterey County Office of Emergency Services meetings to obtain updates from the County Health Department. This information is shared with MPRPD staff.
- 3. COVID-19 and Assembly Bill (AB) 361:** On September 16, 2021, Governor Newsom signed AB 361. This legislation amends the Brown Act to allow legislative bodies subject to the Brown Act to meet via teleconference during a proclaimed state of emergency in accordance with teleconference procedures established by AB 361 rather than under the Brown Act's more narrow standard rules for participation in a meeting by teleconference.

In alignment with AB 361, MPRPD Board's initial finding indicated the need to

conduct remote meetings. At the November 3, 2021 MPRPD Board Meeting, the Board reaffirmed its findings, thereby authorizing remote meetings through December 19, 2021.

At the December 01, 2021 MPRPD Board Meeting, the Board will be presented Resolution #2021-15 for consideration. Adoption of the proposed resolution will enable the Board to meet via teleconference December 20, 2021, through January 19, 2022, and to reconsider the determination for subsequent meetings.

- 4. Habitat Restoration Plan:** Staff continues to work with the California Coastal Conservancy and McBain Associates (the Rancho Canada Unit's Habitat Restoration Project's consulting firm) to refine the project's concept plan. It is anticipated that the project will generate substantial amounts of fill material (soil). Much of this fill material was originally imported to construct the former golf course's links.

As previously reported, this fill material may be used to "cover" and smother non-native grasses and other non-native invasive flora, to create shall catchments that will temporarily "harvest" stormwater runoff, to enhance wildlife corridors, and to reconstruct the site's extant ponds or construct new ponds. Reconstructing or replacing the site's extant water features may help reduce if not eradicate invasive flora and fauna that presently inhabit the extant ponds.

- 5. Laguna Grande Regional Park:** The cities of Monterey and Seaside, and MPRPD, continue to work with BFS to refine concepts for the park's proposed Trail Maintenance Strategies and Environmental Enhancement Plan.

The project's goal is to enhance the park's recreational and wildlife-viewing accessibility, improve the park's monitoring, security, and pedestrian sightlines, and restore the site's native flora and fauna habitat. Construction of proposed firebreaks within the park may help advance these goals.

A Joint Powers Authority meeting is in the process of being scheduled.

- 6. Palo Corona Regional Park (PCRP) Administration Office Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Unit:** A recent power outage at PCRP burned out the circuit board in the new Administration Office HVAC unit. Staff & tenants were without heat or air conditioning for about 2 weeks while parts were ordered. The HVAC company recommended adding a surge protector to the unit to prevent this from happening again in the future. Staff will also be looking at adding surge protection to all new units that are planned to be installed in the future at PCRP's headquarters.

7. **PCRP Parking Lot Circulation:** Staff met with MPRPD's architectural, landscape architectural and engineering consultants to review Project A and B, and to plan pedestrian and vehicular circulation and flow at PCRP Rancho Canada Unit's parking area and adjacent pathways/sidewalks and buildings. The concept plan recommends minor changes to the flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic to accommodate the proposed bus drop-off area, and ParkIT! and dog park users. The Board will be provided a copy of the concept plan once it has been refined.
8. **Training: Here Today Gone Tomorrow Webinar:** Staff participated in a Government Finance Officers Association-sponsored webinar to review internal control issues. The illustration below, depicts how difficult setting up internal controls and segregation of duties can be when you have a very small department and limited staff.



MPRPD staff and management have worked diligently to create a separation of duties, and levels of accountability, and are continually looking for additional ways to do so. As

a matter of checks and balances, staff have been utilizing outside accounting firms to provide oversight and random monthly payroll reviews and spot checks, as well as other important control items.

EECO DIVISION

- 1. Community Outreach with Return of the Natives (RON):** A beautiful day was had by the 35+ RON staff, CSUMB service learners, and EECO staff as they learned about the coastal dunes environment while planting 690 native coast buckwheat, deerweed, sea thrift, beach sagewort, and common aster. The event ended with a reflection circle discussing the lessons learned and sense of accomplishment.



More than 35 California State University Monterey Bay students plant 690 native plants at Marina Dunes Preserve



Marina Dunes Preserve's Restoration Site 2A (a/k/a "the Bowl") is a priority planting site for this year



Teamwork: Students work together to remove large stands of iceplant

2. Education:

A. 30 x 30: Staff attended a roundtable workshop on Biodiversity Informatics, Community Science, and Strategic Conservation Planning in support of the State of California's commitment to conserving our state's natural heritage through the formation of the [California Biodiversity Network](#) to help develop strategies, pathways, and tools to identify and advance conservation goals described as "30 x 30". 30 x 30 is a statewide initiative to protect at least 30 percent of California's lands and waters by the year 2030.

B. Monterey Regional Monarch Alliance (MRMA): Staff met with MRMA's members -- a collaboration of public agencies, special districts, nonprofit organizations, private individuals, and entities operating in Monterey County, for the quarterly meeting. The meeting began with a partner roundtable with updates on monarch recovery programs and activities. The draft MRMA Action Plan identifying priority goals was also under review and may be available via MRMA upon request.

The Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History (PGMNH) is leading the annual 3-week monarch butterfly "Thanksgiving Counts" at 18-overwintering sites along the Central Coast. With 30-people responding to the request for counters, each site will have an experienced counter and first-year trainees, thereby creating and training a new generation of monarch butterfly enthusiasts. PGMNH will also be conducting weekly counts on the Friday and/or Saturday of Thanksgiving week. The event and its data will be shared on the PGMNH website.

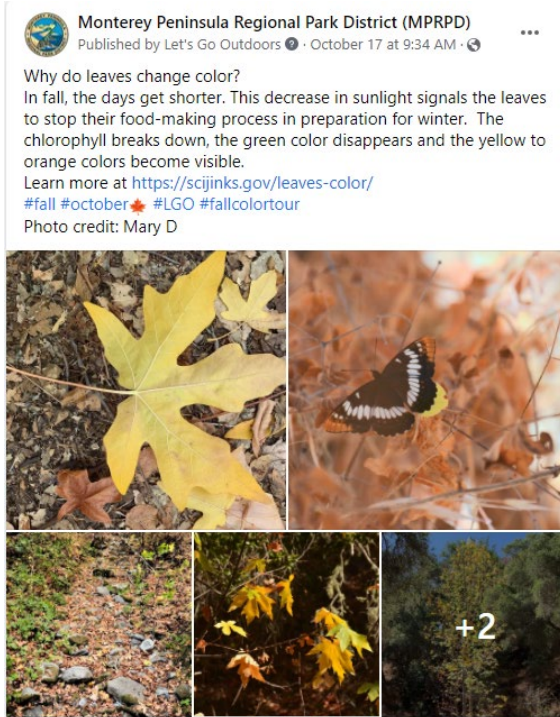
The hopeful news! To date over 50,000 monarchs have been counted in California -- up from 2,000 last year. 13,708 of the 50,000 were counted in Pacific Grove alone.

C. Digital Education/Social Media:

i. **Monarch Focused Posts:** Staff is working with the PGMNH to develop content and a calendar of posts on monarch butterflies. Working together in a coordinated fashion, the MRMA's collaborative partners will simultaneously post information and bolster awareness of monarch butterflies. This information will be available via PGMNH's and MRMA's websites.

The "ready-made" post will also be shared with the other collaborating partners, including the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, Carmel River Watershed Conservancy, Central Coast Wetlands Group, Elkhorn Slough Foundation, Moss Landing Marine Labs, and MPRPD. This will help reach an even broader audience, enhancing our social media outreach and education.

- ii. **Social Media Posts:** This reporting period's posts consisted of park happenings and educational content related to changing fall leaves, fall fruits, comparisons between the Carmel region's creeks and North Cascades creeks, and the completion of a wetland assessment study.



- D. **Let's Go Outdoors! Catalog and Programs:** Staff is coordinating and scheduling the release of the Winter 2022 LGO! guide that includes a variety of return and new instructors. Programs are scheduled to include in person and virtual activities to accommodate all audiences and comfort levels. The guide will

be a hybrid that includes a newsletter, programs, local community activities, and topics of interest. It is scheduled to be released in January 2022.

New partnerships include Blue Zones Project Monterey County, Montage Health, and Friends of Seaside.

- E. Service Learning – CSU Monterey Bay:** Staff is working with CSUMB’s School of Computing to work on data management for calendars and contacts, the San Andreas Fault exhibit, and the website for the annual wildflower show which will be held in June 2022. Two students from other disciplines are assisting with the Education Program by creating lesson resources and social media posts related to our region’s redwood forests, Carmel River floodplain, and climate change.

3. Interpretive Planning:

- A. PCRPD Exhibits:** Staff continues to meet with MPRPD volunteers, partners, and consultants to develop several new exhibits at the Palo Corona Regional Park Discovery Center. If possible, several new exhibits will soon be in place in preparation for the reopening of the Discovery Center. Exhibit planning includes an Anthropocene-focused geology panel, interactive 3-D Carmel River watershed terrain map, and Native American displays that include a tule boat, ruk (home), and common tools.
- B. GRRP 3-D Terrain Map:** The much used 3-D terrain map at the GRRP Visitor Center received a new plexiglass cover. Since the start of the pandemic Plexiglas sheeting has been in short supply. Working with a fabricator in Santa Cruz, staff has a new local source to have Plexiglas exhibit cases made.

The terrain map offers visitors an accurate depiction of the topography of the main unit of GRRP with trails, elevations, and length of routes. First-time and frequent park visitors regularly stop at the map, both before and after their hikes to explore the diversity the park trails have to offer.

4. Special Use Permits (SUPs):

The following SUPs were issued during this reporting period:

- A. Blue Zones Project Monterey County (Blue Zones Project):** Recognizing “National Take a Hike Day” on November 17, Blue Zones Project staff sponsored an early morning hike to PCRPD’s Inspiration Point. It was anticipated participants would finish their brisk hike by 8:30 am with enough time to get to work.

Blue Zones Project is reaching out county-wide to encourage individuals to get outdoors and “move naturally.”

B. Boy Scouts of America (BSA): Carmel Valley BSA Troop 127 took a Night Hike on November 19. Meeting at sunset to discuss night vision and lighting, nocturnal animals, the evening sky, and basic celestial navigation, before taking off to the Mesa Pond for dinner. Hiking back in the dark, the Scouts also practiced “Leave No Trace” principles as they packed out all their trash.

5. Training: MPRPD’s newest team member and Environmental Education Specialist, Michael Biedebach, was welcomed to MPRPD’s “work family” and EECO team.

6. Volunteers: Staff coordinated with the PGMNH to have MPRPD volunteers attend that museum’s upcoming Hardcore Natural History virtual program, for their end-of-year enrichment. The program, “The Value of ‘Good Fire’” -- presented by Jared Childress, coordinator of the Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association, will cover the past, present, and future of prescribed burns in the Central Coast area. The presentation will be on Thursday, December 2, 2021.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION

1. Frog Pond Seasonal Maintenance: Rangers coordinated the annual brushing and clearing of the Highway 218 drainage canal at Frog Pond Wetland Preserve. Covid-19 caused a postponement in last year’s project, so the Gabilan inmate crew had some extra work to do this year.



Highway 218 Drainage Canal

- 2. GRRP Fire Management Plan:** Staff is working with Regional Government Services (RGS) to develop and finalize a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Fire Management Plan for Garland Ranch Regional Park. When finished, the RFP will be advertised statewide for eventual selection and contracting with a licensed environmental consulting firm to develop and draft the Fire Management Plan.

Staff recently met with the Concerned Citizens of Carmel Valley group to discuss the progress of the Fire Management for Garland Ranch Regional Park and other updates. This meeting included MPRPD Board President Monta Potter and was held in-person at the Palo Corona Discovery Center on November 02, 2021. Following the meeting, Mr. Tom Oliver wrote in response to the meeting:

“As for MPRPD’s continuing leadership in these Garland projects we cannot thank you enough for demonstrating your understanding of not only the basic issues but the manner in which you relate to us and the community.”

- 3. GRRP Enforcement:** MPRPD’s Rangers investigated several significant law enforcement incidents during the month of November, including a vehicle theft at Garland Ranch Regional Park, which was reported by the California Highway Patrol. MPRPD’s Rangers provided surveillance footage/evidence that helped locate the suspect’s residence. Rangers also issued a citation to an individual caught illegally riding his mountain bike on GRRP’s Veeder Trail.
- 4. GRRP Trees/Storm Damage:** The first major storm of the season brought significant winds and rainfall to the region. A large cottonwood fell at Palo Corona Regional Park’s Rancho Canada Unit (RCU) causing damage to several temporary chain-link fencing panels. The same storm caused damage to a vehicle parked at Garland Ranch Regional Park.



Large Cottonwood Tree @ RCU



Vehicle Damage @ GRRP

5. **KSBW @ GRRP:** Action News 8 was recently at Garland Ranch Regional Park reporting on the increase in tick activity following the season's first rainfall. MPRPD Ranger John Palaniuk was interviewed on-site and later appeared on the evening broadcast.



Ranger John on KSBW evening news

6. **Marina Dunes Preserve:** MPRPD Rangers, in coordination with Point Blue Conservancy, relocated the symbolic plover habitat fence to the base of the foredune for the winter season. Each year, Rangers and Point Blue Conservancy's personnel partner to move the fence out of reach of winter's high tides.



Symbolic plover fencing and signage at Marina Dunes Preserve

- 7. PCRP Barn Roof:** Ops staff is working with Ausonio Construction, Page & Turnbull, and RGS to coordinate a project to effect repairs to the Palo Corona Regional Park Barn roof. Significant repairs are necessary and will be proposed as part of next year's FY budget, however, staff is moving forward with an expedited stabilization project to prevent any further damage potentially caused by rainfall and wind events.



PCRPN Barn Roof Damage

- 8. Projects A and B:** Rangers continue to provide project management services for Project A, whose design phase will soon be complete once construction drawings reach 90% deliverable status. At that point, the plans will be held until funding for Project A can be identified. Once funding is secured, the plans will be presented to the County Planning Department to initiate the permitting process. Rangers continue to also be engaged in Project B and the companion application process for the RPP grant which, if awarded, will fund the multi-use trails' and dog park's construction.
- 9. Rancho Loop Fuel-break:** Gabilan inmate crews spent another week falling, chipping, and removing eucalyptus trees at Garland Park. Now that a solid 30' buffer between northern Rancho Loop Trail and the eucalyptus grove has been established, crews will begin focusing on the southern portion of Rancho Loop where a smaller eucalyptus grove exists. This work will continue through winter and be referenced in the forthcoming Fire Management Plan. Cal Fire continues to be engaged by and with MPRPD and is supportive of the District's efforts to address the community's concerns.



Eucalyptus rounds along Rancho Loop South

10. San Clemente Fence Repairs: Reconstruction of the fence, lost during the Carmel Fire, began on November 15, 2021. Cardoza Construction is beginning the project by replacing the 3-cattle gates, and shall then proceed with corner-brace installation, followed by the eventual hanging of barbed and smooth wire. Additional updates will be forthcoming as part of next month's staff report.

11. Sewer Main Replacement Project: Rangers continue to be involved in the protection of the District's infrastructure and assets at Palo Corona Regional Park, as Carmel Area Wastewater District's (CAWD) general contractor (Graniterock Construction) trenches the length of the property to install a new 16" sewer main. Rangers are on-the-ground each day to ensure that broken water lines are properly capped and/or repaired, electrical conduit and wires are protected, and the area is appropriately rehabilitated. Furthermore, Rangers participate in weekly check-in meetings with CAWD, Graniterock Construction, Psomas Construction Management, Rincon Consultants, and MNS Engineers.



Broken 8” water main owned by MPRPD was repaired

12. Siesta Point Trail Steps: Rangers recently replaced the steps at the Siesta Point Trail. The previous steps had become unstable, uneven, and were an unreinforced 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 retainage is a key feature.



Before



After

13. Trail/Road Work at GRRP: Rangers recently addressed some erosion and potholing issues following the recent rains at Garland Ranch Regional Park. The Access Trail (adjacent to the lower parking lot) required a fresh “cap” of decomposed granite, while the upper parking lot received a load of granite dust to fill potholes found at the beginning of the entrance ramp.

Dedampierre's park's settling pond was cleared of debris and the parking lot was skimmed using MPRPD's light tractor. The park's decomposed granite parking lots require maintenance several times per year to prevent potholes from becoming safety hazards and/or causing vehicle damage.



Access Trail



Dedampierre Ballfields/Park Parking Lot

