

MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING: March 06, 2024

SUBJECT: Monthly Staff Report

PRESENTER: Dr. 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-January 2024 through mid-February 2024 in addition to performing MPRPD's regular business.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

1. Auction

Staff are preparing items for auction. Operations Division needs to dispose of non-operating equipment or items that are past their useful lives or need to be upgraded.

The following items will be auctioned at the Spring 2024 auction, which generally brings in the best pricing: Golf carts (5), Golf Utility vehicle (1), RTV 900 2-seater, Honda ATV Rubicon 500, and Vermeer BC600 XL brush chipper.

As Wedgewood renovated their ballrooms and updated their kitchen's amenities, older items were stored in the garden-level open-air storage chamber underneath Wedgewood's banquet rooms. These items are owned by MPRPD because they were included as part of the Rancho Cananda Unit's acquisition. The auctioning of these types of amenities has been a very slow and tedious process. Staff are investigating options for a quicker cleanup and disposal of these items.

2. Biologist

Planning and Administration divisions continue working together to hire an in-house biologist. This new position represents a critical need that has been voiced, requested, and supported by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, several State agencies, MPRPD's consultants for the Rancho Canada Unit's Floodplain and Restoration Project, and staff.

This position will not only play a vital part as MPRPD embarks on the Floodplain and Restoration Project, but it will also enable MPRPD to better monitor, research, and protect, conserve, and rehabilitate the agency's properties, and ensure compliance with federal, state, and local mandates. Funding for this position is presently available.

3. Cachagua Community Park

Staff is in process of meeting with the public to discuss the proposed upgrading of amenities for this park. A concept plan was developed by staff several years ago and will be used to guide this proposed project.

4. FEMA – Winter 2023 Storm Damage Compilation

Administration and Operation divisions' staff continued working on FEMA's Damages Reporting Requirements and Requests for Additional Information. To date the District has received \$20,979 in funding towards the 2023 winter storm damages. Additional updates will be presented to the Board as additional information becomes available.

5. Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget

Staff is working on developing updates and year-end estimates for the FY2023-24 budget, which will be presented at this March Board meeting.

6. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget

Staff have begun preparations for the FY2024-25 budget.

Drafting of the FY 2024-25 budget will be completed within the next month or so, with review by the Finance Committee and presentation to the Board by the June 2024 Board meeting.

Inclusion of key items discussed at the February 10, 2024 Strategic Plan (Plan) Special Board meeting, may potentially be included in the FY 2024-25 Budget, subject to the Plan's completion. This matter shall be discussed at an upcoming Finance Committee meeting.

7. Grant Management and Writing

Regional Government Services and MPRPD staff continue an extensive review of all active District grants, developing protocols as needed, and maintaining files, as well as continuing to evaluate various grant management software programs for cost benefit.

Staff participated in a State Coastal Conservancy grant on-boarding meeting to discuss the recently awarded Rancho Canada Unit Floodplain Restoration Project's grants. Staff shall continue to meet with all grantors to ensure that the District's financial management processes align with each grant's protocols.

8. Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve

Ms. Joyce Stevens met with staff to discuss the Preserve and the future development of trails and amenities to support public use of this fragile stand of Monterey Pines – considered that last remaining pristine stand of these iconic trees. Ms. Stevens and staff will meet at the Preserve to further vet options, constraints, and opportunities. The Board will be provided updates as more information becomes available.

9. Locke-Paddon Community Park

Staff were invited to give a brief presentation regarding the proposed re-master planning of this park. A design charette may be held in the near future to discuss various alternatives that may enhance this park and the City of Marina, and to solicit public input. Updates will be provided to the Board as more information becomes available.

10. Policy Creation/Updates Project

Staff are working on various policies and updates based on vetted public agency templates and the California Special Districts Association (CSDA). Policies shall continue being presented for Board approval in the coming months.

11. Records Retention

Staff are focusing on records retention and are in process of creating required electronic copies of paper records. The electronic copies must be made prior to disposal of hard paper copies. The respective revised policy shall be presented for Board review soon.

12. Strategic Plan Update

On Saturday, February 10, MPRPD's Board, Legal Counsel, the Strategic Plan's Facilitator (Facilitator), and staff held a public session focusing on the forthcoming 2024-2029 Strategic Plan. The meeting was attended by the public and MPRPD personnel, providing valuable comments. Wedgewood Weddings generously provided the Merienda Room for this meeting gratis.

Staff will continue working with the Facilitator to advance this plan's formulation and development. The Board and staff will continue to participate in this process and shall be informed of the plan's progress as additional information becomes available.

13. Training

Staff attended the annual California Society of Municipal Finance Officer's (CSMFO) Conference. This is one of two key annual conferences where staff can obtain, among many other government finance topics, updated GASB information, and accounting and financial management guidance.

While at the conference, staff met with the District auditor and discussed new grant management software offered by CLA and the CSDA Finance Corporation. This software will help MPRPD regarding grant anticipation loans necessary to manage cash flow during the Rancho Canada Unit Floodplain Restoration Project.

Staff also attended training on the NetFile (Form 700 submission), workers compensation from the CJPIA, and the annual Public Agency Risk Management Association (PARMA) conference.

14. Transparency Certificate

Staff are taking steps to renew the SDLF Transparency Certificate. The checklist is extensive and additional required items have been added since the last application in 2021. Staff are updating the website with current required documentation.

Staff have reached out to potential reviewers: Two are required to be identified, from a specified list; and, the Community Foundation of Monterey County, which has confirmed that they are willing to review the requirements and provide acknowledgement certifying their review.

15. Wildlife Conservation Board \$13M Grant

In partnership with the California Wildlife Conservation Board, the Lombardo Group, MPRPD's general and special Counsel, and Planning staff, the grant application for the Rancho Canada Unit Floodplain Restoration Plan was successfully submitted. MPRPD was awarded the requested \$13M for this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH (EECO)

1. Community Outreach

A. Blue Zones Project (BZP) Monterey County Park Prescription Program (Park-Rx)

The Park Prescription Program – ParkRx - is coming to Monterey County. In coordination with the BZP, Ventana Wildlife Society, Big Sur Land Trust, consultant team for DigitalNest, and MPRPD, Monterey County's residents will have easy online access to a park locator, programs, and opportunities to get outdoors.

This is Step-1 of a partnership program where medical personnel will write prescriptions for people to get into nature and get physically active. *"ParkRx Monterey County is here to help connect you with the open spaces on the central coast."* The campaign is highlighted and will kick-off in the Spring/Summer 2024 LGO! guide. For more information visit: www.ParkRxMontereyCounty.org

B. California Wildlife Day (CWD) | Sunday, March 24, 2024 11 am-3 pm

CWD is one of MPRPD's largest and most attended events. This year's activities include a new "kids area," the Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community Dancers, presentations on the reintroduction of beavers to CA, and the impacts of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) on the ecosystem, recovery after wildfires, and the all-so-popular conservation of raptors with live birds. The Board and public are invited to meet the 25-plus local environmental, conservation, and educational organizations, and to enjoy the new food booths.



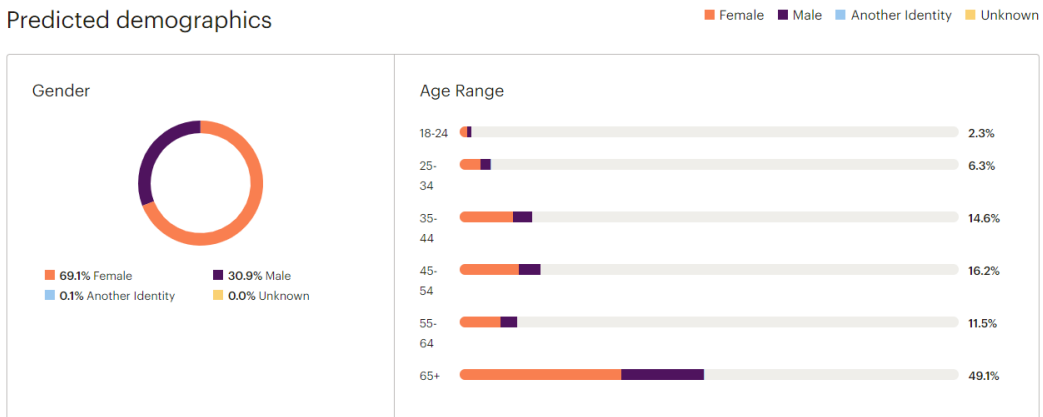
Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community Dancers

C. MailChimp and SPOKE

Staff and SPOKE Consulting, consolidated all MPRPD email contacts into one efficient email marketing and automation platform(s). The endeavor will be very beneficial as the team develops monthly newsletters, regular messaging, and a consistent cadence to reach a broader audience, especially as we prepare for the Floodplain Restoration Project’s construction in late spring/early summer 2025. There are currently 7,777 subscribed contacts.

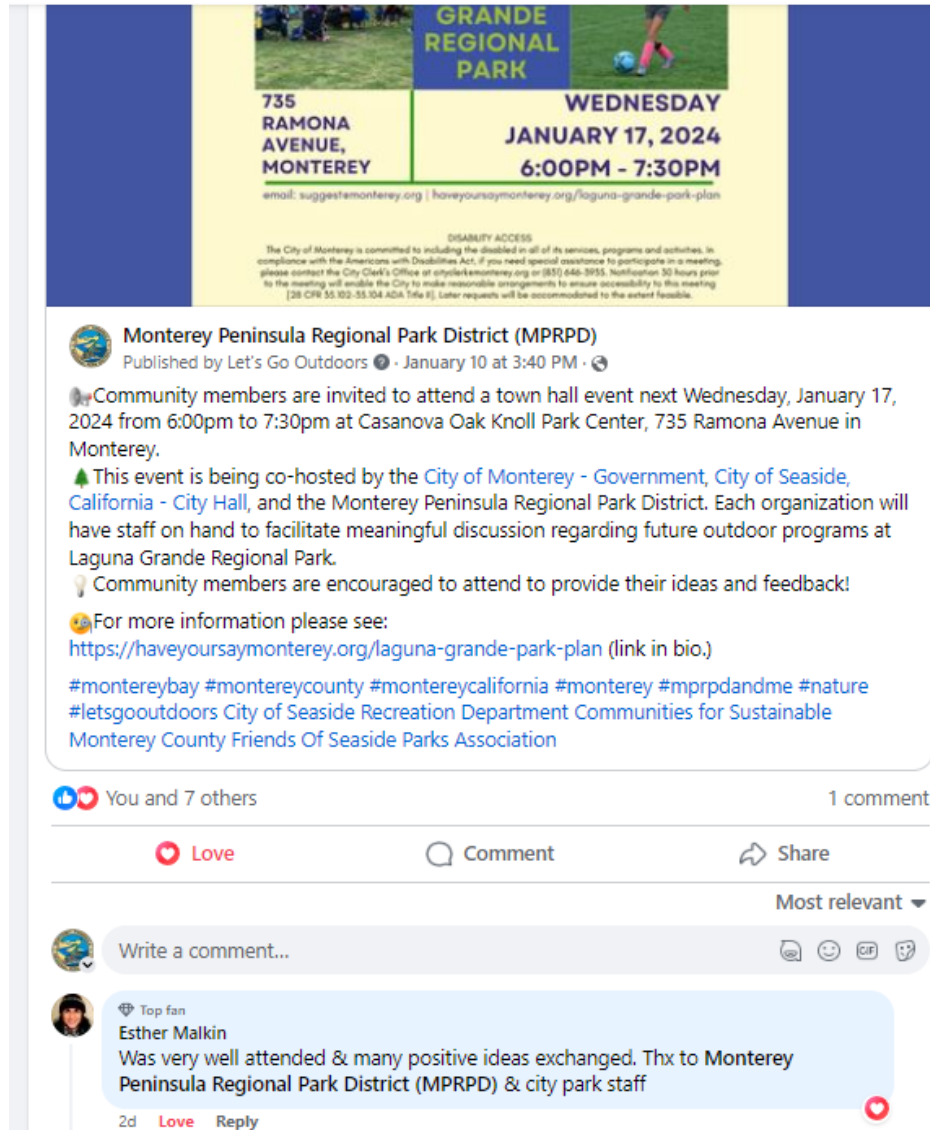
MailChimp also provides analytics including “predicted demographics,” which is based on shared Mailchimp account information from around the world, and which uses the same gender and age range categories as Google Ads.

Predicted demographics



[Learn more about predicted demographics](#)

D. Seaside-Monterey-MPRPD Programs at Laguna Grande Regional Park
Staff presented to the JPA Board findings from the January 17 Town Hall Public forum, held on February 12. MPRPD’s social media platform subsequently received positive feedback regarding the Laguna Grande Regional Park Community Town Hall.



Local resident, Esther Malkin, complimented Director Raskoff for his support to continue the forward moment and strong work the three agencies composed of cities of Seaside and Monterey, and MPRPD – are jointly striving to make the park better.

During the JPA Board meeting, the City of Seaside’s staff announced being awarded \$1.2 million dollars for trail improvements at this park.

E. Social Media Posts (January 16, 2024 - February 15, 2024)

For this reporting period, posts included district news, *LGO!* instructor recruitment, *LGO!* upcoming programming, Laguna Grande Community Town Hall promotion, California Wildlife Day, the upcoming Volunteer Orientation, and educational content about the flora and fauna of MPRPD parks.

The following MPRPD social media accounts grew in January and February.

i. Facebook stats - @MPRegionalParkDistrict ([1](#)) [Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District \(MPRPD\) | Carmel CA | Facebook](#)

1. February 15 Follower Count: 2,599 (+99)
2. Facebook Page Reach (number of accounts that viewed a piece of content at least once): 10,676 (↓ 66.9%)
3. Top-3 posts for likes/reactions: Drastically greater “reach” and “likes/reactions” for the following “event” posts compared to the following non-event post is due to sharing these “event” posts to Facebook Group pages (i.e., “Monterey Bay Festivals/Events,” “Carmel Valley Happenings,” etc.).
 - a. February 3: Upcoming Star Party at GRRP (2,282 reach) (76 likes/reactions)
 - b. February 14: CWD Invitation and 2023 Recap (2,587 reach) (64 likes/reactions)
 - c. January 27: “Mushroom and Fungi Tour of Garland Ranch” video (343 reach) (31 likes/reactions)

ii. Instagram stats - @mprpd_lgo: [Monterey Peninsula Parks \(@mprpd_lgo\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)

1. February 15 Follower Count: 1,430 (+30)
2. Instagram Page Reach (number of accounts that viewed a piece of content at least once): 1,000 (↑ 23.9%)
3. Top-3 posts for likes/reactions (January 16 - February 15)
 - a. February 3: Upcoming Star Party at GRRP (647 reach) (91 likes/reactions)
 - b. January 27: “Mushroom and Fungi Tour of Garland Ranch” video (440 reach) (65 likes/reactions)
 - c. February 14: CWD Invitation and 2023 Recap (267 reach) (32 likes/reactions)



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD)

Published by Let's Go Outdoors · February 7 at 4:54 PM ·



🕒 Space is going quick, register today and reserve your spot for the upcoming MPRPD Volunteer Orientation!

👉 Get information and get oriented to become a volunteer steward, educator, or both.

🕒 When: Sunday, February 25th from 2 PM - 4 PM

📍 Where: Garland Ranch Regional Park Visitor Center Patio

Ages 18+... See more

Monterey Peninsula
Regional Park District



VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

Sunday, February 25th from 2 pm - 4 pm
Garland Ranch Regional Park Visitor Center Patio



- Learn more about becoming a volunteer
- You can become a steward, an educator, or BOTH
- Many exciting ways to get involved! Ages 18+



To register and for more information see the
website link or call (831) 372-3196 ext. 102

<https://secure.rec1.com/CA/monterey-peninsula-regional-park-district/catalog>

MPRPD Volunteer Orientation Announcement

 **Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD)**
 Published by Let's Go Outdoors · 6d · 🌐

🌈 Join us for California Wildlife Day to celebrate and honor wildlife on Sunday, March 24, 2024 from 11 am to 3 pm at Palo Corona Regional Park in Carmel Valley. Mark your calendars! We'll have another great line-up of speakers, guided nature walks, activities, food for purchase, live music, information on local wildlife, and more!

🦋 This is a FREE event, all are welcome!

👉 For more information see: <https://cawildlifeday.net/> (link in bio.)

🖼️ Image 1 of original artwork by Emily Underwood featuring paintings of local wildlife with the above event details in the foreground. Image 2 includes pictures from California Wildlife Day 2023.

#naturetherapy #montereybay #montereycounty #montereycalifornia #carmelbythesea #monterey #mprpdandme #carmelvalley #carmel #nature #PaloCorona #californiawildlifeday #carmelriver #carmelriverwatershed #carmelriversteelheadassociation California Wildlife Day Carmel River Watershed Conservancy



California Wildlife Day Announcement



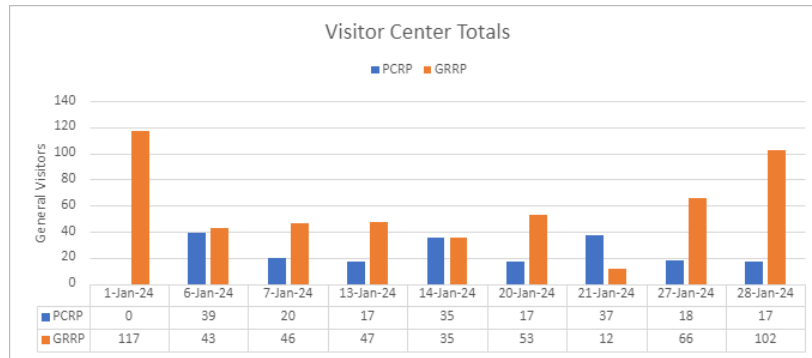
<https://youtube.com/shorts/oB8-71H7qlQ?si=sp--Xvugxv7xlbGu>

Program Announcement

F. Visitor Center Totals

Staff continue to record visitation during weekends, 10 am-4 pm, at both the PCRP Discovery Center (DC) and the GRRP Visitor Center (VC). One or both centers have also been opened on select holidays. Staff will soon increase the number of days these centers will be open, subject to staffing capacity.

The chart below summarizes weekend and holiday visitor contacts with staff or volunteers in January 2024. Winter weather events impacted park visitation on multiple weekends. Dates with zero contacts recorded (1/1/24 at PCRP) indicate that the center remained closed due to limited staff availability.



Visitor contacts: PCRP DC & GRRP VC in Jan. 2024

2. Education and Interpretation

A. Staff attended a presentation by Maria Parker STEAM Coordinator for the Monterey County Office of Education MCOE on the Environmental Literacy and Climate Justice Network. Working with Monterey Bary Environmental Educators, the program aims to share resources, identify community needs, and strategically plan to create actionable steps to meet partner and community goals.



B. Partner Programs

i. Middlebury Institute International Studies (MIIS)

Saff are collaborating with Professor Megan F. McKenna to present on the “Changing California Coastal Ecosystems Understanding Dynamics and Building Solutions,” alongside Bruce Delgado, at Marina Dunes Preserve on Monday, March 4, 2024. This is part of the undergraduate Coast and Climate program.

ii. Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History | CA Naturalist Training

MPPRPD staff, in partnership with Jane Silberstein - CSUMB Professor, will present to the 2024 California Naturalist certification program participants on environmental interpretation. The lecture series is to be held virtually on April 17, 2024 and field portion at Elkhorn Slough NERR on April 20, 2024.

iii. Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History (PGMNH) | Workforce Grant

MPPRPD staff submitted a letter of support on behalf of the PGMNH Workforce grant application through State Parks. The project’s goal is to provide training, mentoring, and pathway for young people, particularly people of color, to enter the environmental conservation, interpretation, and education workforce. MPPRPD may be mentors or be recipient of a ten-week intern.

3. Special Use Permits (SUP)

Staff prepared the following Special Use Permits (SUP) during this reporting period:

A. Medicinal Plant and Guided Walks

Small group guided walks are held at Frog Pond Wetland Preserve. Participants learn about medicinal uses of both native and non-native plants and herbs. Participants must stay on trails and no foraging is allowed.

B. Monterey Military Homeschool Community

Permission to gather at Palo Corona Regional Park was granted to the Forest School Education Program. This parent-led homeschooled group explores nature with hands-on learning to ensure and develop a strong sense of community engagement and collaboration.

C. Professional Photographer

Uses a photojournalistic approach that involves simply being in nature while being respectful.

D. Santa Lucia Conservancy (renewal)

Santa Lucia staff and their contractors were issued a 2024 SUP to access Palo Corona Regional Park for the purposes of inventory surveys; invasive spp. mapping/removal; fire management planning; pond research; etc.

E. UC Regent Sudden Oak Death Blitz

Sudden Oak Blitz 2024 is a citizen science project where participants take an online training class to learn how to identify symptoms of Sudden Oak Death. Once trained, participants collect samples, returning them to a main collection station for analysis. The PCPR Discovery Center is the collection site for the 2024 Monterey County Sudden Oak Death Blitz from April 26-April 30, 2024.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION

1. BSMAAC Meeting February 9, 2024

Rangers attended the Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Council meeting to represent MPRPD. These quarterly meetings take place at the Big Sur Lodge at Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park and include local agency representatives, stakeholder groups, and elected officials from local, state, and federal agencies.

2. Electric Gate at Dedampierre Park

Rangers and Administration staff are moving forward with contract execution to implement the automatic gate opener project at Dedampierre Park. This project was awarded to Central Coast Ornamental Iron and will be completed by the end of April assuming there are no weather-related delays. This project consists of newly fabricated entrance gates with solar-powered electric openers that will open at dawn and close at dusk, thus preventing after-hours vandalism and trespassing.

3. Fence Repairs at Marina Dunes Preserve

Marina Police Department reported that a section of property boundary fence along Dunes Drive at Marina Dunes Preserve was damaged by a vehicle off the roadway. Rangers responded, assessed the damage, completed an incident report, and will make repairs. Seeking restitution, in this case, isn't in the District's financial interest.



Damaged section of boundary fencing at Marina Dunes Preserve

4. Kayaker Retrieved at Rancho Canada Unit's Bridge #4

Cypress Fire Department personnel and MPRPD Rangers responded to a report of a kayaker stranded along the Carmel River who had attempted to kayak from Hacienda Carmel to the Carmel River Lagoon, but was unable to continue after overturning multiple times and becoming stranded on a sandbar upstream from Bridge #4. The party was extricated from the river channel, assessed by paramedics, and released (suffering only minor bumps and bruises).



CFD and MPRPD staff assessing stranded kayaker

5. Medical Emergency at East Garza's Trailhead

On Friday, February 16, Rangers responded to a report of an equestrian rider who was injured in the vicinity of East Garza's trailhead at Garland Ranch Regional Park. Rangers responded and the investigation is ongoing.

6. Storm Damages and Preparations

On Sunday, February 4, an atmospheric river event resulted in over four inches of precipitation in a span of just three days. In anticipation of the Carmel River reaching flood stage, the Monterey County Office of Emergency Services, in cooperation with the Monterey County Regional Fire District, requested access to Dedampierre Park to construct a temporary sandbag flood wall to mitigate the risk for potential flooding of homes at the adjacent Paso Hondo neighborhood.

Fortunately, this temporary wall was not tested as the river did not reach flood stage. However, the wall remains in place until the end of the rainy season in anticipation of future events. Ranger staff assisted with maintaining a hard closure of Dedampierre Park during the construction of the temporary sandbag flood wall to provide public safety and prevent public interference while heavy equipment was being utilized to stage sand and other materials.

That same event resulted in significant fallen trees and erosion at MPRPD parks and preserves. Several gates were damaged, roof panels displaced, and a recently installed memorial bench crushed. Rangers have spent the last few weeks clearing trees, addressing erosion issues, and repairing damage sustained during this event.

Thankfully, favorable weather is forecast for the next couple of weeks, which will provide an opportunity to continue affecting these repairs. Ongoing closures include the Cliff Trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park and segments of the Rancho Canada Unit's Multi-Benefit Community Trail, which will remain closed indefinitely until repairs can be made.



PCRP - Rancho Canada Unit (Top and Bottom Photographs)



PCRP - Front Ranch (Top and Bottom Photographs)



PCRP – Multi Benefit Community Trail (Top and Bottom Photographs)



PCRP – Backcountry



PCRP - Corona Road Entrance Gate Damaged



Garland Ranch Regional Park - Cliff Trail



Garland Ranch Regional Park - Waterfall Trail



Garland Ranch Regional Park - Sage Trail



Garland Ranch Regional Park - Sky Trail



Garland Ranch Regional Park - Laureles Trail



**Garland Ranch Regional Park
Memorial Bench on Laureles Trail**



Mill Creek Preserve - Davis Property Entrance Gate Crushed



**DeDampierre Temporary Sandbag Flood Wall Construction
(Middle and Bottom Photographs)**



DeDampierre Temporary Sandbag Flood Wall Constructed

7. Strategic Planning Meeting

Rangers attended and participated in the strategic planning meeting on February 10, 2024 at Palo Corona Regional Park. Rangers were grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this meeting and provide their input to MPRPD's Board, the Facilitator, Legal Counsel, and most importantly, the public in attendance. Rangers are excited, ready, and willing to continue this productive dialogue at future meetings where everyone is encouraged to speak freely.

PLANNING & CONSERVATION DIVISION

1. Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Mitigation Projects

MPRPD staff continue to work with The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) and Denise Duffy & Associates (DDA) on environmental review and permitting for Cal Fire and Coastal Conservancy funded projects on Garland Ranch Regional Park, including thinning of the eucalyptus grove near the Rancho Loop Trail and a shaded fuel break along East Garzas Road.

Staff and DDA met with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) on 2/23/24 to go over development of a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement through CDFW's Cutting Green Tape Permit Streamlining Program, which would authorize MPRPD to complete removal of eucalyptus trees in the riparian zone of the river.

Staff met with RCDMC to confirm options for treating downed eucalyptus trees and believe that Cal Fire's [Air Curtain Burner](#) or local contractor [carbonators](#) could be feasible options to process downed logs. Staff are also finalizing bid documents that will be included in a request for proposals from contractors for implementation of the

eucalyptus removal and shaded fuel break so this work may proceed shortly after all necessary permits and approvals are secured by early summer.

2. Low-effect Habitat Conservation Plan for PCRPD's Rancho Cañada Unit

Staff and MPRPD's consultant, SWCA, met with USFWS staff on 2/22/24 to review MPRPD's initial list of projects, operational activities, and programs that are proposed to be covered under the forthcoming Low-effect Habitat Conservation Plan (LEHCP) for the Rancho Cañada Unit of Palo Corona Regional Park.

The project team continues to develop sections of the report while USFWS reviews these initial submittals. Staff will provide an updated project schedule and estimate of when MPRPD expects to receive an incidental take permit, in the April Planning & Conservation Division report.

3. Marina Dunes Preserve Coastal Dunes Restoration and Enhancement Project

Staff are working with Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) to secure additional restoration funding at Marina Dunes Preserve in exchange for implementing activities that mitigate impacts associated with MST's SURF! Busway and Rapid Transit Project.

Staff are currently working with MPRPD's legal counsel on the development of a funding agreement and restoration plan that meets MST's mitigation needs while also supporting MRPPD's restoration goals for the Marina Dunes Preserve. Staff expect to bring a funding agreement to the Board for review and consideration as early as April of this year.

4. Multi-Benefit Community Trail

After receiving approval during the February Board meeting, staff executed a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) outlining MPRPD's resolution of a Notice of Violation that was issued by CDFW after construction of the Multi-Benefit Community Trail.

The agreement provides CDFW's authorization for MPRPD to retire, restore, and realign the Multi-Benefit Community Trail and other trails' segments at the Rancho Cañada Unit of Palo Corona Regional Park, and restoration of a pond at the Park, thereby resolving the regulatory violation.

5. Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project

On February 15, 2024, MPRPD was awarded \$29M in grant funding for the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project. The California Wildlife Conservation Board awarded MPRPD \$13M, and the California State Coastal Conservancy approved a separate grant award in the amount of \$16M. In partnership with MPRPD's Administration Division, staff will work with the State Coastal Conservancy to outline the terms of a grant funding agreement.

END OF REPORT