

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT**

BOARD MEETING: June 7, 2023

SUBJECT: Monthly Staff Report

PRESENTER: Shuran Parker, Acting 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-April through mid-May 2023 in addition to performing MPRPD's regular business.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

1. Del Rey Oaks, MPRPD, and the FORTAG Project Team

The Team continues to discuss the joint planning of proposed improvements that will enhance public pedestrian access via and expanded trail network, construction of an underpass to facilitate the City of Del Rey Oak's residents and visitors to safely traverse between Frog Pond's East and West Units, re-establish a wildlife corridor that may help to regionally help connect Jacks Peak to the Salinas River, and enhanced parking by possibly relocating the staging area to South Boundary Road, replacing the extant parking strip on Highway 2018.

2. FEMA – Winter 2023 Storm Damage Compilation

Administration staff have been working with Operations staff to compile all winter 2023 storm damage information. Administration Division staff manage the District's FEMA Online Portal Account and enter all data obtained for damage suffered on MPRPD properties and all costs associated with those damages. Staff is also working with insurance on potential reimbursements.

Operations staff have reported no damage to MPRPD properties related to the second declared winter rain season disaster, or thereafter.

3. Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget

Staff finalized the proposed Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget, included for Board review and consideration during this June 7th meeting.

4. Laguna Grande Regional Park JPA

The cities of Monterey and Seaside, and MPRPD comprise the park's Joint Power Authority (JPA). The team continues to meet to discuss opportunities to enhance the park. Potential improvements include the park's re-master planning, extensive trail system, community/visitor safety, creation of an environmental education center, and fire and law enforcement enhancements such as improving access routes for police

and fire fighters, and development of an incident command center and staging area similar to that being proposed at Palo Corona Regional Park's Rancho Canada Unit.

5. Locke-Paddon Wetland Community Park Master Plan

The City of Marina and MPRPD's personnel met on June 2nd with prospective design consultants to discuss re-master planning of the park. The new master plan will incorporate public input. MPRPD's Board will be provided a presentation at a future meeting.

6. Palo Corona's Project-B Construction in General

Project B electrical line trenching was delayed first by rain, then wet ground, then by PG&E availability to reschedule. As of the writing of this report, trenching has been rescheduled to begin June 5th and is expected to take about one week to complete, barring rain, CRLF discovery, and any other acts of mother nature.

7. Recruitment

Funds for additional staffing in Operations and Maintenance; Environmental Education, and Planning and Conservation Management positions have been included in the proposed FY2023-24 budget, so recruitment activities will continue.

8. Training

Staff participated in various training, including the GFOA conference.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH (EECO)

1. Community Outreach

A. Earth Day Events Continue

Earth Day Events

MPRDP received several invitations to participate in other organizations' events associated with Earth Day (April 22) this year. MPRPD was represented at four events including:

i. MEarth Carmel Earth Day Fundraiser (4/29/2023, 10am-4pm)

Staff set up an outreach booth at this festival-style event at the Hilton Bialek Habitat (next to Carmel Middle School), focusing on living sustainably and becoming better environmental stewards. The fundraiser involved a silent auction, food and refreshments for purchase, live music, other live entertainment, and 15-20 vendor and exhibitor booths. The event, as a whole, was estimated at around 400 participants, over 120 of which stopped at the MPRPD booth to learn about wildlife via pelts and tracks, ask questions about upcoming events like our wildflower show (June 10-11), and generally discuss the District's parks and open spaces. GRRP and PCRP trail maps and literature were highlighted. Many folks also took part in family-friendly activities like coloring park stickers and a "long jump challenge," during which kids compared their own leaps to those of various local wildlife.



The public enjoys the MEarth Earth Day celebration, as MPRPD staff table the event.

B. Social Media Posts: (April 15-May 14)

For this reporting period, posts consisted of district news, promotion of upcoming LGO! programming and new programs, upcoming Wildflower Show promotion, snowy plover education/MDP dogs on leash posts, and educational content about the flora and fauna of MPRPD parks.

The following of MPRPD social media accounts grew in April-May.

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

1. May 14 Follower Count: 2,197 (+25)
2. Facebook Page Reach (number of accounts that viewed a piece of content at least once): 7,253 (↓ 4.7 %)
3. Top 3 posts for likes/reactions: April 15–May 14
 - a. May 14: Bobcat mom/Mother’s Day



- (2,115 reach) (143 likes/reactions)
- b. May 13: Star Party (4,010 reach) (80 likes/reactions)
- c. May 3: Upcoming Wildflower Show (2,474 reach) (67 likes/reactions)

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

1. May 14 Follower Count: 1,232 (+38)
2. Instagram Page Reach (number of accounts that viewed a piece of content at least once): 1,497 (↓ 10.3%)
3. Top 3 posts for likes/reactions: April 15 – May 14
 - a. May 14: Bobcat mom/Mother's Day (402 reach) (74 likes/reactions)
 - b. April 23: Floodplain Restoration Project/Monterey Herald article (661 reach) (53 likes/reactions)
 - c. May 7: PCRCP trail views/wildflowers (443 reach) (51 likes/reactions)

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) May 14 at 12:01 PM

Happy Mother's Day to all the human and non-human moms out there!
 This nurturing bobcat mom was pictured in Palo Corona Regional Park, carrying her kitten. Make sure to leave space for wildlife, observe from a distance, and let them pass you on the trail without approaching!
 Did you know if this kitten is under ten days old it can not yet open its eyes! After ten days, bobcat kittens open their eyes for the first time and will nurse through their second month. When her young are five months old, mom will start teaching them to hunt on their own. This kitten will learn from mom for about a year and then venture into the world on it's own.
 Photo by Lucy H.
 #happy mothersday #mprpdandme #PaloCorona #bobcat #bobcat #wildlife



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) May 12 at 6:00 PM

Snowy Plover mothers are hard at work during their nesting season from March through September. If you're headed to the coast this Mother's Day weekend, remember to help these avian moms and share the beach with federally protected (illegal to disturb or harass) Western Snowy Plovers by keeping dogs on leash at Marina Dunes Preserve!
 Camouflaged along the upper beach, their nesting sites are very sensitive, and snowy parents are hard at work often raising 2 or more broods... See more



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) May 7 at 10:58 AM

Check out ocean views and spring wildflowers at Palo Corona Regional Park along the hike to Inspiration Point!
 Did you know the Western Columbine (Aquilegia formosa) flower has 5 petals that each form a long hollow tube containing nectar in the upper tip, which is fed on by hummingbirds, butterflies, and moths. Even some bumblebees have a long enough proboscis (tubular mouthpart used for feeding) to reach the nectar!
 Photo 1: view of the Pacific Ocean from Palo Corona Regional Park. Photo 2: Western Columbine wildflower. Photo 3: Lupine wildflower
 #mprpdandme #lets gooutdoors #carmel #carmelvalley #carmelbythesea #monterey #montereybay #montereycounty #wildflowers #lupine



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) May 3 at 11:57 AM

Learn about local wildflowers at our 24th annual Summer Wildflower Show at Garland Ranch Regional Park!
 This event will be held at the Garland Park Visitor Center on Saturday and Sunday, June 10th and June 11th from 10 am to 4 pm.
 Surround yourself with a variety of local summer wildflowers at this free educational nature event for the whole family!
 More info, to come.
 Image of a flyer with the above information and images of the Douglas Iris (Iris douglasiana) wildflower.
 #mprpdandme #lets gooutdoors #wildflowerseason #carmelbythesea #monterey #monterey #montereybay #montereycounty #montereyevents #garlandranch #douglasiris



📅 Reserve your spot today for the NEW Pet Safety and First Aid program!

📅 Saturday, May 27th from 10 am - 12 pm

📍 Garland Ranch Regional Park Visitor Center

📌 Registration required!

🚨 Heat exhaustion, rattlesnakes, bees, dogs, and other wildlife can endanger your pet in the great outdoors. This informative program will teach you basic first aid and important safety tips when every minute counts. Gain confidence to prevent visits to the emergency room. Instructor: Dr. Bill Sullenberger, Blue Pearl Veterinarian. Ages 13 - Adult

🔗 Find more info, and register for this FREE program here: <https://secure.rec1.com/.../monterey-peninsula.../catalog> (link in bio.)

#mprpdandme #letsgooutdoors #carmel #carmelvalley #carmelbythesea #monterey #montereybay #montereycounty #montereyevents #petsafety #petsafetytips #hiking #hikingsafety



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD)
April 26 at 3:55 PM

🎨 The next Painting Nature in Nature session is this Saturday, April 29th at Locke Paddon Wetland Community Park in Marina! Gather outdoors in the beauty of nature to paint a specific local flower, herb, or plant.

📅 This program is almost full, reserve your spot today!

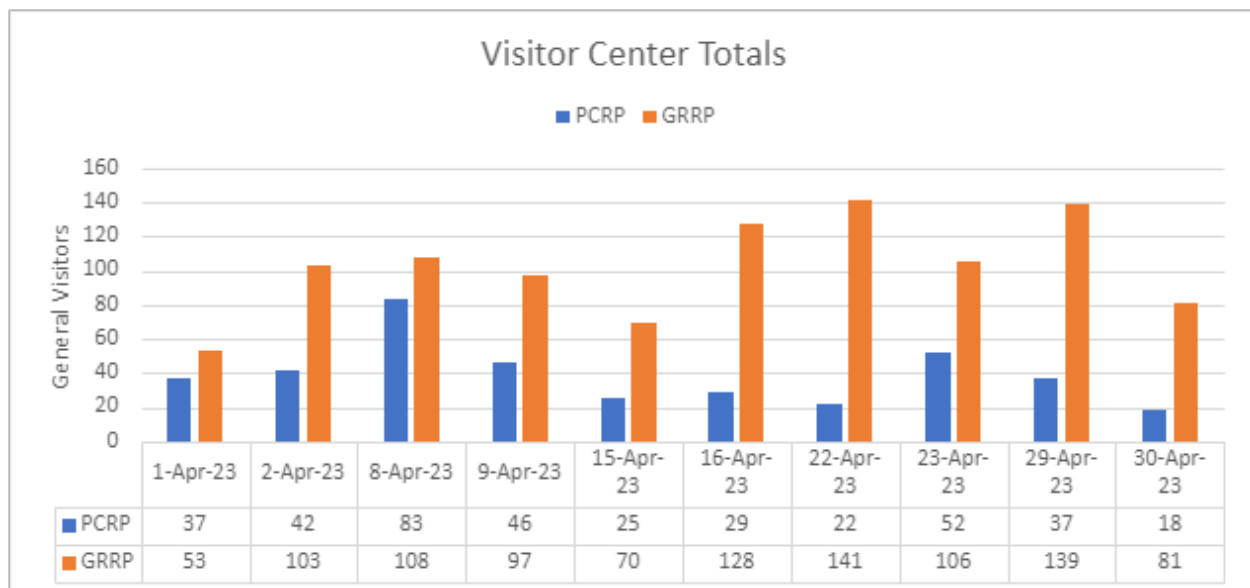
🔗 Find more info, and reserve your spot for this FREE program here: <https://secure.rec1.com/.../monterey-peninsula.../catalog> (link in bio.)

#mprpdandme #letsgooutdoors #painting #paintingart #naturepainting #natureart #natureartwork #monterey #montereybay #montereycounty #CityOfMarina Suzy Adra @suzy_adra



C. Visitor Center Totals

Staff continue to monitor and collect visitation data during weekends, 10am-4pm, at both the PCRP Discovery Center (DC) and the GRRP Visitor Center (VC). The chart below summarizes weekend visitor contacts with staff or volunteers in April 2023. Visitation was relatively higher at both parks this month, with a sustained increase notable at GRRP.



D. Education

i. *Healthy Habitats* Pilot Program – Field Trip Days

MRRPD staff and volunteers, and Bay View Academy (BVA) teachers, chaperones, and students participated in a pilot, two-day fieldtrip series that focused on the land, plants, animals, and humans within the riparian and upland habitats at Palo Corona Regional Park. These field trips (April 27 and May 11) were successful in practice and affirm the value of such opportunities and educational materials for highlighting how much can be learned in our community members' own "backyards" (see images and preliminary feedback below).

The next step in development is to refine the programming according to feedback from both students and adults. Once the program has been refined, EECO staff will move on to Phase 3, which will make field trip materials and related content available online as teaching resources for the public, followed by outreach to other schools for their use and participation in future field trips.



Images: Bug collection & identification by Bay View Academy 5th graders on May 11th, 2023. Part of Phase 2 of the *Healthy Habitats* pilot program.

Quotes from teachers and chaperones when prompted with the question, “What was your biggest take-away from this program?”

- “Hands-on experience for our kiddos was wonderful! Thank you for everything and for the intentional work you put into planning!”
- “The plant and bug ID out in the field helped me create a better relationship with the environment and being able to share that with others.”
- “Just how everything IS connected. You hear this all the time, and this activity series REALLY showed that.”
- “Love seeing the kids having fun and appreciating the outdoors.”
- “Net catching is a great activity for 5th grade.”
- “The history and wildlife of this area and specific piece of land.”

ii. Service Learners

Lilia Alvarez, Polly Meakcharoon, and Rodrigo Diaz from CSUMB’s School of Computing and Design completed their service hours with MPRPD. They created graphic designs for our Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan document and the backdrop for a “Common Snakes of Garland Ranch Regional Park” exhibit.



CSUMB Servicer Learners graphic design pieces for the Visitor Experience Interpretive Plan

E. Facilities

- i. As part of the Palo Corona Regional Park Discover Center meeting room renovation project blinds were installed over the west facing windows to shield the bright afternoon sun during programs, presentations, and meetings. The two sets of window coverings include transitional, semi-transparent, shade cover and a “black-out” cover.

F. Let’s GO Outdoors! Guide and Programs

i. Program Updates

The Spring/Summer 2023 LGO! publication was circulated in the Monterey County Weekly on May 4th, which added new participants to the programs. The majority of programming in this reporting period consisted of events during this new season, and the feedback from participants has been largely positive and grateful.

G. Outreach

i. Press Releases

Staff worked cross-divisionally in conjunction with partners and Spoke Consulting, to release a “Managing Landscapes for Wildlife and Public Enjoyment” press release on the management and mowing of the Rancho Canada Unit of Palo Corona Regional Park.

- ii. Staff met with Big Sur Marathon Foundation to begin planning for the cross-country season starting in August 2023.

H. Special Use Permits

i. Big Sur Land Trust Race for Open Space (ROS)

ii. Middlebury School of the Environment/Middlebury Institute

iii. Monterey Peninsula College (MPC)

iv. Astronomy America Butterfly Association (NABA) Chris Tenney

I. Volunteers

- i. Naturalist and wildlife biologist Chris Tenney will be training interested MPRPD volunteers to participate in the annual butterfly survey for the North America Butterfly Association (NABA). This year the Monterey count date is Saturday, June 3. Chris led an instructional butterfly identification fieldtrip for our volunteers on May 20th.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION

1. CCC Apartment Roof

The roof project at Cachagua Community Park commenced on Monday, May 22. Ranger staff is contracting with Avila Construction to replace the roof on the apartment/restroom building. This project also includes the addition of gutters and downspouts on the building, and may require some additional work following removal of the existing shingles and underlayment.

2. Marina Dunes Education & Enforcement

Ranger staff continues to increase their presence and visibility at Marina Dunes Preserve, particularly as we are in the midst of Snowy Plover nesting season. More recently, Ranger staff discovered an active homeless encampment near the closed southern entrance, which was cleared with the assistance of Marina Police Department. Citations were issued for illegal camping, entering a prohibited area, and defacement of property. Disaster Kleenup Specialists was utilized to remove abandoned property and rehabilitate the site.

3. Memorial Bench on Garza's Canyon Trail

A new memorial bench has been fabricated and installed along Garza's Canyon Trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park. Rangers, along with the Sponsor and a group of his friends carried bench pieces and tools to the project site, where the bench was assembled and installed.

4. Ranger Staff Training

Ranger Staff recently attended a full day of training courses addressing equipment operation and safety. The trainings, titled "Backhoe/Loader Operator Safety, Front End Loader Operator Safety, and Skid Steer Loader Safety" were held at the Rancho Canada Unit Maintenance Shop and included both workbook curriculum and hands-on practical exercises.

Seasonal Ranger Ira Comello recently attended the PC832 "Laws of Arrest" course in San Jose, CA., which authorizes Ranger Comello to issue citations for ordinance violations on MPRPD property.

5. Seasonal Footbridges at GRRP

The seasonal footbridges at Garland Ranch Regional Park have been installed for the season. This includes the 3 footbridges across the Carmel River and the 4 footbridges in Garza's Canyon. Ranger staff utilized a combination of temporary workers and inmate crew labor this year for installation assistance.

6. Seasonal Mowing & Brushing

Spring is upon us, and with it comes new growth of weeds and grasses along trails and roadways. Rangers continue to coordinate temporary workers to assist with weed-whipping along single-track trails and around structures.

The mowing of two-track trails has commenced and will continue for the next few weeks, until all trails at GRRP have been mowed and/or brushed. Ranger staff will continue to monitor growth to determine if a second round of mowing is needed.

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 funded fuel breaks 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 expect to bring a CEQA notice of determination for the eucalyptus removal and shaded fuel break projects to the Board during the July meeting. The project team is also surveying site conditions and refining the project description to develop a timeline for securing any permits that may be required before those projects are implemented, hopefully later this summer.

- 2. Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration Project Plant Propagation:** Staff and the Floodplain restoration project team continue to work with Denise Duffy & Associates (DDA) on plant propagation activities that are required to ensure sufficient plant stock for the Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration Project. DDA has begun initial seed collection efforts under their current agreement while staff are requesting board approval to amend DDAs contract to support additional seed collection and nursery propagation work for the project. Staff anticipate one additional amendment to DDAs contract to support seed amplification services after seed collection efforts are completed and the level of seed availability is known later this summer.
- 3. Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration Project Permitting:** The project team continues conversations with potential project funders and is in the process of preparing additional applications for grant funding. The project team is also in advanced stages of permit/CEQA consultation with the US Army Corp of Engineers and Regional Water Quality Control Board while they continue to work on finalizing other state and federal permit applications.
- 4. Rancho Cañada Mowing Best Management Practice Development:** Staff have developed best management practices for MPRPD operations staff and contractors to help protect sensitive resources during regular mowing operations at the park. These practices are being piloted in the month of June as MPRPD completes property-wide mowing, and generally include pre-mowing nesting bird surveys, sensitive wildlife and plant surveys, and onsite biologist when mowing activities are conducted in proximity to potentially sensitive areas.
- 5. Rancho Canada Landscaping Irrigation Water Budget:** Staff continue to work with MPRPDs concessionaire, Wedgewood Weddings, to develop an updated plan for irrigated landscaping that will ensure irrigated water consumption is under 5 acre-feet per year. Staff are currently working on ongoing water usage monitoring and modification to irrigated landscaping plans at the park.

- 6. Multi-benefit Community Trail Maintenance and Repairs:** MPRPD planning and field operations staff are working with the Big Sur International Marathon Foundation to coordinate repair and maintenance activities for the Multi-benefit Community Trail and coordination with stakeholder agencies prior to implementation.
- 7. Laidlaw-Apte Vegetation Management Project:** Staff continue to work with the Carmel Highlands Fire Protection District and Cal Fire to reduce unnaturally high vegetation levels and fuel loading in the Laidlaw-Apte Preserve. Staff are working with Cal Fire to schedule follow up biological surveys that are required before the project can move forward. The Project is still expected to be completed by the end of June 2023.
- 8. Frog Pond Wetland Preserve Fort Ord Regional Trails and Greenway Mitigation:** Staff are working with the Transportation Agency of Monterey County to identify potential invasive plant removal and native oak tree planting options on the Frog Pond Wetland Preserve as mitigation for vegetation clearance activities that will be required during construction of the Canyon Del Rey/ Highway 218 segment of the FORTAG trail that will pass through the Frog Pond Wetland Preserve once construction begins later this calendar year.
- 9. Marina Dunes Preserve Restoration Project:** Annual vegetation monitoring was recently completed at the Marina Dunes Preserve and Burlison Consulting has prepared a scope of work for priority permitting and restoration implementation activities at the Preserve during the 23/24 fiscal year.
- 10. The Multi-Benefit Community Trail**

Staff continue to work with resource agencies and grant funders to develop a plan for realignment of sections of the Multi-Benefit Community trail.
- 11. Staff Training: Interest Based Negotiations Workshop:** Staff recently attended a 3-day workshop focused on interest-based negotiation and collaboration for conservation professionals to help solve disputes, strengthen teams, and help multi-interest stakeholders come to agreements. The training was sponsored by the Western section of the Wildlife Society and was facilitated by Steve Barber of Barber and Gonzalez Group.
- 12. Staff training: Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association Training Exchange “TRES”:** Staff will be attending a weeklong training focused on fire and fuel management techniques that is a joint project of Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association, UCCE San Benito, RCD of Monterey County and CAL FIRE. TRES is a multi-day prescribed fire training exchange that seeks to build capacity for community-based burning by promoting the ecological health of diverse landscapes while meeting specific training, cultural, research, and wildfire mitigation objectives while bolstering knowledge-sharing and effective cooperative burning, or “good fire”. This year’s TRES is hosted by the Santa Lucia Conservancy and sponsored by MPRPD. Staff will provide a report on the training in the July staff report.

(end of report)