

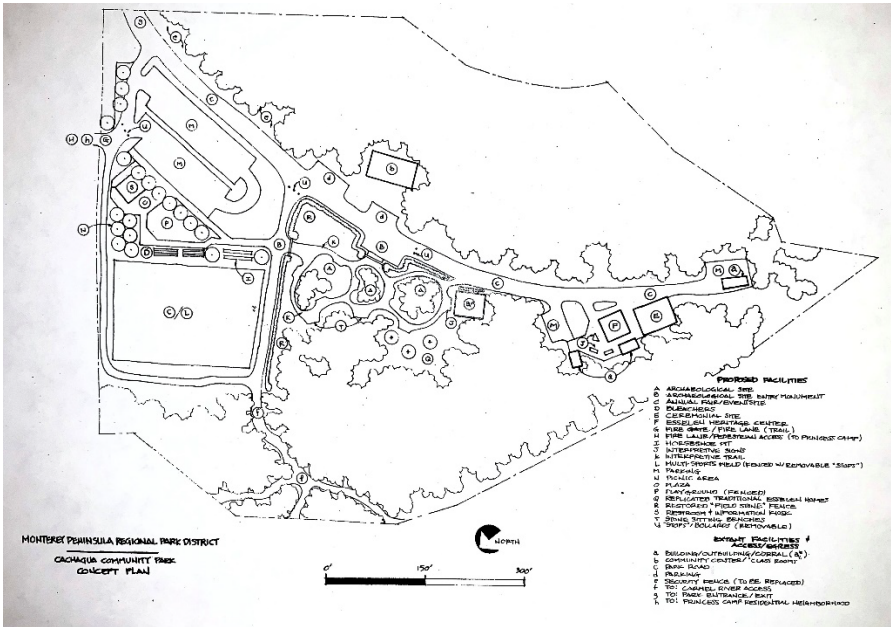
MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING: August 03, 2022
SUBJECT: Monthly Staff Report
PRESENTER: Rafael Payan, General Manager

REPORT: The following briefly summarizes some of the key tasks and projects the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPPRD) Staff undertook from mid-June 2022 through mid-July 2022 in addition to performing MPPRD’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. **Cachagua Country Fair:** Based on earlier public meetings and input, MPPRD staff developed a concept plan for the park, inhouse. That rendition was made available during this year’s fair, serving as a springboard for discussion. Visitors attending the fair were asked to provide additional input to help refine the concept plan. The plan shall be revised inhouse to reflect information and recommendations compiled during the fair.



Cachagua Community Park Concept Plan

2. **Del Monte Forest Property Owners Presentation “THE LITTLE TRAIN THAT CAN!”:** Staff was invited by the DMFPO to give a presentation highlighting the many wonderful land acquisitions, projects, and programs that MPRPD has accomplished. The 60-minute presentation and question and answer session were well-attended and well-received. Several attendees complimented MPRPD’s ability to “get so much done with so few staff and very limited resources.”
3. **Fuel Load and Fire Management Meeting and Providing Public Facilities:** MPRPD continues to engage the public, emergency service and fire response experts and organizations, and elected officials for the purpose of discussing MPRPD’s plans to prepare for fire-based concerns, mitigation efforts, and emergencies in our region.

At the latest meeting, which was held at the Palo Corona Regional Park’s discovery center, Senator Laird and his Chief of Staff thanked and complimented MPRPD for the actions MPRPD has taken, is taking, and is planning to take and coordinate regarding this matter.

The Senator and his staff also complimented MPRPD for the prompt manner in which Palo Corona Regional Park was opened to the public, and the many facilities and trails that are being or have been constructed to better serve the public. The Senator’s team stated, “The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District really gets things done!”

4. **Palo Corona Project B Construction:**

- A. **Restroom Building:** Construction activities continued on schedule during the month of July. The construction permit was issued by Monterey County in late June and County inspection staff feedback has consistently been positive. The building’s foundation and slab were poured, and installation of walls and door frames began.
- B. **Multipurpose Event Pad:** Placement of the pad’s aggregate-based foundation and other construction-related activities began. Utility line trenching continued and water, electrical, and sewer lines were installed, with an anticipated connection to new water service in August of this year.
- C. **Visitor Drop-off and Trailhead/Gateway Plaza:** Parking lot, drop-off vehicular/bus pullout, and gateway plaza improvements are also planned to begin in August.
- D. **Project Coordination:** Progress meetings and reports are regularly prepared by Rangers and the Ausonio (project’s contractor) construction management team.

The team also continues to coordinate closely with Wedgewood to ensure no impacts to its events, as well as monitor site deliveries and public access to the clubhouse and modified trail entrance.

The tribal monitors remain on-call to assist with any potential artifacts of historical significance. No such items were encountered in the past month.

The site's construction-related directional signage has been highly effective in navigating our visitors throughout the park site. Public feedback has been positive.



Multipurpose Event Pad Foundation Under Construction



Restroom Building's Concrete Foundation Placement



Site Utilities' Installation



Restroom Building's Walls and Door Frames Installation

E. Annual Audit: Staff are coordinating with the District's audit firm on the District's annual financial audit and preparation of the annual Financial Statements and Supplementary Information. The audit firm of CLA anticipates performing "interim" work the week of September 19 and "final fieldwork" procedures the week of September 26. Extensive amounts of work, over several months, by District staff go into the audit process. Staff anticipates the Board receiving a draft presentation at either the November or December 2022 Board meeting, and the final presentation by the December 2022 or January 2023 meeting.

EECO DIVISION

1. Community Outreach:

A. New Addition to PCRPD Discovery Center: Mountain lions (*Puma concolor*) are too often killed crossing busy roads. Thanks to the generosity of California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) MPRPD was permitted to obtain and taxidermy a mountain lion for display at Palo Corona Regional Park.

The four-year old male cougar (pictured below) was hit by a vehicle and killed between the San Benito and Monterey counties' line. Taxidermist Sergio Parra Quezada provided his excellent skills for free with MPRPD only paying for the cost of the materials.

These large apex predators fascinate outdoor enthusiasts of all levels. Through generous donations and permits, MPRPD now displays a cougar at each environmental education center at Garland Ranch and Palo Corona Regional Parks to educate people about the importance of habitat conservation, human and wildlife interfaces, and the need to enhance safe movement of wildlife.



Protect your Puma!

Please look. Do not touch.

Mountain lion (*Puma concolor*)

This young four-year-old male was donated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and preserved for education purposes after expiring from a collision with a car on a local road. He is a reminder to drive with caution, as he shares his home with you.

Did you know?

Mountain lions are solitary animals, unless they are mating. They maintain territories that can be over 100 square miles!

B. Each year, staff strives to participate in a community outreach event once in each ward, at a minimum. The tabling booths listed below are the first staff have participated in since the start of the pandemic.

- i. Wildfire Preparedness Fair – Tabling Outreach – June 18, 2022:** Members from MPRPD’s ECCO, OPS and P&C divisions prepared for the Wildfire Safety and Prepare Fair put on by the Robles Firewise Community at the Carmel Valley Community Park. Staffed by EECO personnel and Chief Ranger Caine Camarillo, the booth focused on current fire safety measures at MPRPD properties, the role open spaces have in minimizing wildfire risks to local communities, and wildfire impacts on local wildlife.

Visitors were eager to ask questions regarding wildfire safety measures currently practiced at Garland Ranch Regional Park and ways to volunteer for MPRPD. Four visitors were also interested in becoming MPRPD Volunteers.

Staff continues to meet monthly with community members of the Fire Mitigation Committee Meeting. Working cross-divisionally, the community members are highly motivated to see the development of a Fuels and Invasive Species Removal Volunteer Program that shall be led by the EECO and OPS divisions.



Booths at Wildfire Preparedness Fair

- ii. Del Rey Park Re-opening – Tabling Outreach – July 9, 2022:** Director Raskoff coordinated with MPRPD staff as the Del Rey Oaks community celebrated the opening of the new playground equipment at Del Rey Oaks Park.

The park was constructed with Prop 68 grant funding in the amount of \$177,000, with an additional 20% match funding by the City of Del Rey Oaks. The playground is 57' x 38' plus a 23' x 20' exercise area.

MPPRPD has been invited to participate in City's annual picnic in October.



Celebrating the new playground equipment at Del Rey Oaks Park

- iii. **Cachagua Country Fair – Tabling Outreach – July 9, 2022:** MPPRPD Staff provided an outreach booth for the annual Cachagua Country Fair - the first one post COVID! The booth's foci were two-fold: (1) General outreach about the natural history, parks, and open spaces MPPRPD provides; (2) Community feedback on the priorities for amenities and infrastructure improvements at the Cachagua Community Park.

Hosted every two years, this event attracts a substantial number of attendees, including many Cachagua and Monterey Peninsula residents and visitors. The Fair is the largest fundraiser for the Cachagua Community Park Board which uses the funds for park improvements.

Local feedback about future park amenities showed that the primary requested amenities are restrooms, improved access to the Carmel River, and protecting prehistoric and historic sites.

A special thanks goes to Board President Monta Potter and Volunteers Mary Dainton and Cath Farrant for staffing the booth, General Manager Rafael Payan for providing park conceptual designs and soliciting public input, and the Cachagua Community Park Board members for their commitment to serving the community and outreach efforts.



C. Social Media Posts: For this reporting period, posts consisted of highlighting park happenings and educational content related to *Summer at the Parks*. MPRPD used social media for relaying relevant trail updates, highlighting new exhibits, and advertising upcoming Let's Go Outdoors! events. MPRPD social media accounts' following grew in June-July.

i. Facebook stats - @MPRegionalParkDistrict:

1. July 15 follower count: 1,868
2. Facebook Page Reach: 3,090 (↓ 51.8%)
3. Top 3 most popular posts: June 15 – July 15
 - a. 7/6 Star Party (1,294 views)
 - b. 7/7 Call for Instructors (1,229 views)
 - c. 7/10 Fire Management with Goats (828 views)

ii. Instagram stats - @mprpd_igo:

1. July 15 follower count: 818
2. Instagram Page Reach: 451 (↓ 12.4%)
3. Top 3 most popular posts: June 15 – July 15
 - a. 7/6 Star Party (251 views)
 - b. 6/24 Flowing Carmel River (225 views)
 - c. 7/8 Call for Instructors (209 views)



Sample Posts

2. K-12 Education Programs:

- A. STEM SCOPES:** Working with Seaside Middle School teachers and the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) program coordinator, staff has identified program timeframes to enhance and reinforce current life science curriculum (STEM Scopes) through accessing PCRCP and the park resources.

Onsite programming is projected to occur this spring's 2022/2023 school year for nearly 300 7th grade students. Staff plans to include the LGO! transportation grant to bus students to the site.

- B.** Staff continues to research potential partnerships with state and local entities such as State Parks PORTS program and Pacific Grove Museum Watershed Guardians program.

- 3. LGO! Fund & Transportation Grant:** Coordinating the Inter-divisional planning efforts, staff are collaborating with the Community Foundation of Monterey County to create the Let's Go Outdoors! Fund which includes the transportation grant program for community organizations, schools, and partners to visit MPRPD properties.

Transportation Grant discussions include transporting Seaside Middle School students to PCRCP in spring 2023, and Cachagua and Big Sur Carmel Unified School District summer camp participants to GRRP and PCRCP in the summer of 2023.

4. Improving Communication Intra- and Inter-divisionally and Publicly:

- A. Lost and Found Procedures:** Staff is evaluating and updating the lost and found procedures for environmental education centers and administrative offices at Palo Corona and Garland Ranch regional parks. Policies will be posted on the center front doors and online to ease access by the public and Staff shall set communication standards and practices for items found or reported as lost.

B. Shared Resource Pool:

- 1. Photo Archive:** EECO staff are organizing and populating a shared image/photo archive for events, outreach activities, programs, maintenance, and other occurrences for access by interdivisional staff.
- 2. Share Drive:** EECO team is reorganizing and modernizing their shared drive to allow for increased efficiency and better interdivisional teamwork.

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

- A. Call for Instructors and Community Happenings:** Staff sent out requests for instructors and community organizations to submit their respective October-February/March program proposals and community events calendars for the upcoming Fall/Winter 2022/2023 season of LGO! Proposals and descriptions will be due the first week of August. The LGO! guide is projected to be delivered the last week of September.
- B. Summary Statistics:** Staff is conducting an audience analysis of participants attending LGO! programs pre-pandemic (2008-2019) and post-pandemic (January 2022-September 2022).

This statistical summary is designed to provide a basic understanding of who the District serves through LGO!, and will include demographic information such as: gender, age, resident's location, and number of participants.

Board members are invited and respectfully encouraged to submit specific demographic or programmatic questions, that can be answered through basic data retrieval and statistical analysis, to Ms. Savannah Peña, EE Coordinator for Programs at eeordinator@mprpd.org by September 30, 2022.

- 6. Partnership with Blue Zones Project of Monterey County (BZPMC):** EECO staff met the Senior Policy Leader and Community Program Manager from BZPMC to brainstorm partnership opportunities between the two organizations. Discussions included plans to incorporate the National "Take a Hike" Day in November into the 50th anniversary celebration, and to expand the *Take a Hike Day* into a "*Let's Go Outdoors! Take a Hike*" social media campaign where participants visit several parks to receive a reward. This is planned to also occur in the month of November 2022.

In addition to the Take a Hike Day event(s) plans, staff has reached out to the United Way, inquiring about the "Born Learning" program, and to explore opportunities to underwrite costs for signage at District parks including Frog Pond Wetland Preserve and Locke-Paddon Community Wetland Park.

7. Volunteers:

- A. Golf Ball Pick-up Event:** Various projects at the Rancho Canada Unit (RCU) of PCRP have unearthed thousands of golf balls found in the former Rancho Canada Golf Club's driving range. This golf course operated for over 45 years, between 1970 and 2016.

In preparation of a large volunteer golf ball clean-up event, volunteers Rex and Kathy Pryor assisted staff with a site survey and walk-through to assess required planning efforts for the "Golf-Ball Pickup Events."

B. Volunteer Program Partnership: Working with a Point Lobos Foundation (PLF) docent, MPRPD staff conducted a preliminary walk-through of the PCRPD Discovery Center (DC) in preparation for a “tour swap.” Designed to build and fortify relationships with various peninsula volunteer programs and enhanced shared messaging, this partnership program provides educational opportunities while building cooperative relationships with PLF and MPRPD volunteers. The PLF volunteers will visit PCRPD to view the ever-evolving exhibits in the Discovery Center and hike the trails. In exchange, MPRPD volunteers will visit Point Lobos and their centers and hike their trails.

This is one of many planned volunteer program partnerships with various local organizations for enhancing our region’s volunteer programming.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION – July 2022

- 1. Cachagua Community Fair:** The annual Community Fair at Cachagua Community Park, held on July 9, 2022, was a tremendous success, and included an MPRPD outreach booth staffed by EECO staff, volunteers, and GM Rafael Payan.

In preparation for this year’s Fair, Rangers (with the assistance of a Gabilan Conservation Crew) assembled vendor booths, weed-whipped the site, prepped trails and walkways, and provided a portable restroom near the horseshoe tournament venue. Unfortunately, there was an incident involving vehicles damaging the multi-sports field, which is currently under investigation by Rangers and MPRPD’s Legal Counsel. The Fair is the most significant annual fundraising event for the Cachagua Community Park Board, which oversees this park on behalf of MPRPD. Funds generated from this year’s event may then go toward improvements including shade structures, drinking fountains, etc.

- 2. Garland Park Visitor Center Mowing/Brushing:** Rangers completed a second round of mowing/brushing around the building and restrooms at the Garland Ranch Regional Park Visitor Center. Rangers also brushed around the Visitor Center Arboretum and along the access trail from the GRRP lower parking lot.



GRRP Arboretum and Access Trail

- 3. Goats at Laidlaw-Apte Preserve:** Goats were utilized by Cal Fire at MPRPD's Laidlaw-Apte Preserve to reduce ladder fuels and vegetation from July 7 thru 11, 2022. The goats received a warm welcome from adjacent property owners and the surrounding neighborhood. Additional fuel mitigation projects are being considered, including goats, large woody debris removal and/or mastication.



Goats grazing fire fuels at Laidlaw-Apte Preserve

- 4. Kahn Ranch Barn Roof:** The Goat Barn at the Kahn Ranch Addition at Garland Ranch Regional Park is getting a new roof. This outbuilding is the final structure that required new roofing at the Kahn Ranch and will be completed in-house by Rangers. During the project, it was discovered that the roof's underlayment was in very good condition and required minimal maintenance prior to installation of the new wood-shake roof.



Kahn Ranch Goat Barn Re-roofing Mid-project

- 5. Palo Corona/Quail Meadows Fuel Break Project:** MPRPD recently partnered with Cal Fire and the Quail Meadows Homeowners' Association to allow maintenance improvements of a former fuel break/fire road between Palo Corona Regional Park and the Quail Meadows Community. This fire road will serve as an escape route for Quail Meadows' residents in the event a wildfire blocks their single egress route, as well as allowing firefighting access between properties to engage a wildfire. This project was completed by a local contractor (Mike Bleck) and came at no charge to MPRPD and will better prepare Cal Fire firefighters and heavy equipment operators with initial attack strategies if/when an incident occurs.



Palo Corona/Quail Meadows Fuel Break – North



Palo Corona/Quail Meadows Fuel Break - South

- 6. Parking Lot Improvements at GRRP:** Rangers recently constructed an additional section of corral-board fencing at the Garland Ranch Regional Park parking lot. This will prevent visitor-parked cars from encroaching into the bottleneck separating the lower lot and equestrian parking lot.



Rangers Joe and Hatton Installing Fencing at GRRP

- 7. Pine Tree Removal at GRRP:** A very large, dead pine tree overhanging a neighboring property was removed recently along the River Trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park. Tope's Tree Service was contracted to remove the 80' tree using a crane and skilled climber.



80' dead pine tree being removed at GRRP

- 8. Project B Construction Project:** Rangers continue to be engaged with Avila Construction and provide support to Project B, including scheduling access into the RCU maintenance building to stored and retrieve construction supplies, equipment, and materials. Other coordination efforts also include updating construction signage, enforcing construction closures, and participating in weekly meetings.
- 9. Southbank Trail Fence Repairs:** The fence bordering the Southbank Trail is in need of significant repairs, including new posts, braces, and wire. During original fence line construction, non-treated materials were utilized which have a much shorter lifespan than pressure-treated materials. Rangers are conducting an inventory, purchasing materials, and utilizing a combination of in-house and inmate labor to replace sections of failing fencing.



Southbank Trail Fence - North

PLANNING & CONSERVATION DIVISION

1. Project Updates:

- A. Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration Project -- Uplands Enhancement and Trail Integration Planning:** The Project Team is in the process of completing 65% designs for the project and are expecting to seek input from its Technical Advisory Committee sometime in September. The Project Team also met with representatives from the Coastal Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and Big Sur Marathon Foundation to discuss options to realign sections of the trail away from the uplands wildlife corridor and integrate a new trail alignment within the restored floodplain corridor. The project team plans to provide a presentation to the Board on the project as soon as October 2022.
- B. Marina Dunes Preserve PG&E Mitigation Project:** Staff are collaborating with representatives from the Coastal Conservancy and PG&E to ensure that mitigation activities on the preserve comply with deed restrictions that the Conservancy holds over the Preserve.
- C. Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Mitigation and Management Plan:** The project team is on track to launch the project website by August 15, 2022, and is continuing to make progress on the background conditions memo and preliminary assessment of treatment options for eucalyptus groves at GRRP.

A draft schedule for the project can be found below.



D. San Jose Creek Trail Public Access Planning: MPRPD hosted a focused All-Staff Meeting to discuss the proposed opening of the San Jose Creek Trail and different options of managed public access to the trail. Staff are now coordinating with representatives of California State Parks, Big Sur Land Trust, and Point Lobos Foundation to coordinate next steps and to see if it is possible to have an opening ceremony for the trail by fall of this year, in celebration of MPRPD's 50th Anniversary.

2. Meetings, Conferences, and Notes from the Field:

A. Former San Clemente Dam Site Tour: Staff visited the former San Clemente Dam site with representatives of the Coastal Conservancy, Cal Am Water, and Wildlands Conservancy to see how restoration of the site is progressing. Staff also discussed potential opportunities to provide public access to the site. In the next few months, the California Coastal Conservancy plans to schedule a convening of local conservation organizations to discuss public access options for the site and potential connections to surrounding parks and open space areas, including District lands.



Restored Dam Site

- B. Lapis Sand Plant Tour:** Staff toured the Lapis Sand Plant to see the site, and to learn about operation of the Lapis Sand Plant and the status of reclamation and restoration activities for the site. This information will help MPRPD in its restoration efforts at the Marina Dunes Preserve, and to coordinate and integrate restoration efforts with and at the Big Sur Land Trust's Martin Dunes site and adjacent California State Parks' properties.
- C. Santa Lucia Preserve/Palo Corona Regional Park Pond Coordination Field Visit:** Staff met with representatives of the Santa Lucia Conservancy (SLC) to visit breeding ponds for California Red Legged Frog (CRLF) and California Tiger Salamander (CTS) within the Santa Lucia Preserve and Palo Corona Regional Park. MPRPD and SLC staff discussed the need to develop and "permit relocation plans" that will authorize staff to move juvenile CRLF and CTS from ponds at risk of drying during drought conditions to safer pond locations.