

PRESENTATION

Marina Dunes Preserve Restoration Action Plan Findings and Summary

SUMMARY:

On October 30, 2020, Burleson Consulting Inc. (Burleson), A Terracon Company, entered a professional services agreement with Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) to develop an updated restoration plan for Marina Dunes Preserve (MDP) and to assist with land stewardship tasks for the property. Burleson's central coast office specializes in native habitat restoration and has extensive experience with dune restoration in the Monterey Bay Area.

In 2005, Native Solutions (Joey Dorrell-Canepa) developed the Dune Habitat Restoration Plan for Marina Dunes Preserve. The purpose of the plan was "to describe existing biological resources at [the Preserve] and to define procedures and standards for restoration of the native coastal landscape". Since 2005, MPRPD implemented many of the recommendations, however an updated plan was in store to refocus restoration efforts moving forward.

The restoration planning process involved gathering geospatial data for the property (provided by Turf Image), thoroughly assessing the site to identify restoration priorities (MPRPD and Return of the Natives staff were present), and meeting with local partners and neighbors to understand regional land management goals and outreach opportunities. Burleson created a dynamic restoration action plan that provides updated best management practices, prioritized restoration actions, opportunities for community engagement, efficacy monitoring methodology, suggestions for monitoring special status species, adaptive management measures, and a project schedule and budget based on the fiscal year for the next five years.

The land stewardship tasks are ongoing and include project coordination assistance, Smith's blue butterfly (SBB) rapid assessments, special status plant surveys, invasive species abatement (treatment of one acre with herbicide), installation of 200 linear feet of sand stabilization materials, baseline vegetation monitoring, and USFWS-permitted collection of coast buckwheat seed (Smith's blue butterfly host plant). Burleson completed the sand stabilization task in February, visible at the western end of the MDP beach access trail. All other tasks are either ongoing or will be completed in the spring or summer.

FINDINGS:

Burleson's in-depth site assessment of MDP illuminated various needs for restoration. The highest priority actions across the Preserve are sand stabilization and invasive species abatement (primarily of iceplant). Many of the previous plantings were compromised due to inadequate protection from prevailing winds making sand stabilization prior to future plantings imperative. Burleson did, however, identify the area immediately south of the northern beach access trail and the interior basin as appropriate places for near-term planting by Return of the Natives. Over the next three years, Burleson recommends focusing restoration efforts on the northern half of the

property to increase public awareness of MPRPD investment and enhance visitor experience once the dunes are restored.

Burleson also identified opportunities for increased community engagement and special status species recovery. They suggest engaging the scientific illustration graduate students at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) to help develop updated interpretive signs, working with CSUMB undergraduate students to perform annual restoration success monitoring, and continued planting events with Return of the Natives. Special status species recovery will require surveys to assess population statuses, working with neighboring landowners and partners to coordinate efforts, and habitat creation or enhancement.

NEXT STEPS:

Burleson will fulfill their Fiscal Year 2020-2021 contract and is committed to assisting MPRPD into the future to bring priority restoration and community engagement actions to fruition. MDP has incredible potential to be a vibrant coastal habitat, supporting species recovery and inspiring visitors to be stewards of their public land. Immediate next steps include surveying for special status plant species, treating invasive plant species in priority areas, performing baseline vegetation monitoring in areas to be planted, continued plantings facilitated by Return of the Natives, and developing a monitoring template and protocol that can be easily used by student groups in the future.