

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT**

BOARD MEETING: April 07, 2021

SUBJECT: Monthly Staff Report

PRESENTER: Rafael Payan, General Manager

REPORT: The following briefly summarizes some of the key tasks and projects MPRPD's Staff undertook from mid-February 2021 through mid-March 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 shelter-in-place orders.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

- 1. Asset Mapping and Long-term Financial Planning:** Staff has been working with MPRPD's GIS consultant to create a mapping system that captures all District assets by park and parcel. The map can be updated by field staff when a new asset is discovered, added, or divested. A downloadable spreadsheet is available from the map that contains the location, photo, condition, and basic information. The plan is to add additional information about each asset that allows for future planning/budgeting cycles and the implementation of a cyclical maintenance/replacement/repair program. This will assist in creating long-term financial plans for every property MPRPD both owns and operates.
- 2. Budget:** Staff continued to meet, discuss, and plan the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget. This document will likely be presented to the Board in May 2021.
- 3. California Coastal Trail (CCT):** MPRPD is spearheading and coordinating the formation of a coalition of various trail enthusiasts to determine what their specific and general needs are. Parties include FORTAG's proponents, hiking, biking, and equestrian groups. These groups will help MPRPD refine MPRPD's plans that will eventually allow the opening of Palo Corona Regional Park's backcountry. The CCT's first segment in this part of California includes Palo Corona Regional Park.

This coalition will soon be expanded to include the region's jurisdictions to link Palo Corona to other trail networks in hopes of developing a new Regional Trail Master Plan that will help integrate what may become the region's multi-modal trail system.

- 4. Carmel River Watershed Conservancy (CRWC):** The CRWC and MPRPD re-kicked-off discussion and planning for the potential development of several high

impact science-based exhibits including the video flyover of the Carmel River from its headwaters to the Pacific Ocean.

This video will be integrated into an exhibit at Palo Corona Regional Park's Discovery Center. This video will also help current and future scientists study the river and determine if and what modifications it undergoes because of climate change, sea-level rise, and the effects of drought, wildfires, sedimentation and continued pumping of the aquifer.

- 5. COVID-19:** Staff continued to carefully track the County Health Officer's orders to ensure alignment with the latest protocols. As of March 17, 2021, Monterey County was deemed to qualify for the "Red Zone." The county was previously in the purple zone, which was the most restrictive.

MPPRPD's Headquarters' and Discovery Center's will be sanitized via high touch & electrostatic cleaning on a bi-monthly Sunday cycle. The first high touch & electrostatic cleaning began on March 03, 2021.

In alignment with, and adherence to, the latest orders, MPPRPD's ball fields were reopened for public use.

- 6. Cross-country and Fitness Course:** The Big Sur International Marathon, Carmel Unified School District, the Santa Lucia Conservancy, and others continue to meet with MPPRPD in the planning of this multi-use trail. More information is provided in the Operations section of this report.
- 7. Dog Park Planning Meeting:** A volunteer ad hoc design committee composed of local canine-enthusiasts met with staff to review and discuss schematic designs for the proposed fenced dog park at Palo Corona Regional Park's Rancho Canada Unit. The proposed site is immediately east of the park's maintenance complex. The volunteer committee has begun exploring potential grants and other funding sources to help accelerate the dog park's construction.
- 8. Finance Committee Meeting:** MPPRPD's Finance Committee and staff met to discuss the agency's fiscal health, which due to staff's concerted effort, remains to be strong. A follow-up meeting originally scheduled for April 1, 2021 is being rescheduled for April 08, 2021 or there about to ensure all key Finance Committee members and staff can attend.
- 9. Grants:** Regional Government Services (RGS) is consulting MPPRPD staff on how to best create project application packages for the already awarded Proposition 68 Per Capita Grant (\$400,000) and the Recreation Infrastructure Revenue Enhancement (RIRE) Grant (\$250,000). MPPRPD has obtained the services of a grant writer

through RGS who is working with the RGS project consultant and District staff to put these packages together. The plan is to apply the Per Capita Grant to Project-B's restroom facility and the RIRE funds towards that same project's bus drop off & pick up area. Several other grants are also being researched, with the most likely ones selected for success, being applied for. The Board will be provided additional information on recommended grants as they are identified.

- 10. Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve:** In alignment with County orders related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Preserve's advocates and MPRPD staff are working together to optimistically hold the Preserve's dedication ceremony in early spring 2021.
- 11. Laguna Grande Regional Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA):** The cities of Monterey and Seaside continued to plan the forthcoming JPA meeting. It is now anticipated that the meeting will take place as early as April 2021.
- 12. League of Women Voters Presentation:** MPRPD was invited to give a presentation on MPRPD's recently ratified Strategic Plan and other related matters. The presentation was well received.
- 13. ProcureNow:** Staff continues to work with the team at *ProcureNow* to develop District templates for RFP's, Public Works Bidding, Quotes, and more within the online system. Staff are in the process of inviting vendors to register for the system, which is free to vendors.

Once invited, vendors receive the following message: "Hi there, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District has invited you to join the vendor list on their Vendor Portal hosted by *ProcureNow*. Please click the button below to create your account. Once activated, you can receive notifications about upcoming projects and respond to opportunities with your account."

Vendor's can also find MPRPD's website and register without an invitation. Staff have met with other California and out-of-state agencies to view their respective public works sealed bid opening process, which can be done entirely online. Anyone who is interested in viewing the public opening can attend and view the process via Zoom online. MPRPD's Division Leads have had an initial preview of the system. Staff will begin training in April and begin using the system shortly thereafter.

- 14. Project-B (Restroom and Various Site Improvements):** Project-B's Design Team which includes Page & Turnbull - Architects, RGS, and MPRPD staff met to review the project's deliverables for the Schematic Design Phase. It was deemed that everything was complete to MPRPD's satisfaction.

MPRPD directed the consultants to begin the Design Development Phase. In the Design Development Phase, the schematic designs are refined in advance of the

next phase which entails the Construction Documents Phase wherein drawings and specifications are developed in advance of bidding the project. During Schematic Design review, it was determined by the Design Team that the first phase of construction will include the prefabricated restroom building and bus drop off/pick up area.

Staff also met with State of California providers of prefabricated restrooms, to begin exploring the process of determining how to acquire the prefabricated building through a State of California vetted process. More information on this will be presented in future updates.

Staff also met and reviewed the project site's irrigation system with consultants. The entire irrigation configuration currently within Project-B's footprint will be affected by the proposed amenities due to trenching and the likelihood of new structures' blocking the system's spray. Staff has requested a proposal for a Master Irrigation Plan to address this concern. Updates will be presented to the Board as additional information becomes available

15. Proposition 117 Funding: This grant's funds were created by the California Legislature for the express purpose of acquiring, protecting, and restoring mountain lion habitat. Proposition 117 funds were used to purchase the Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Forest Preserve. MPRPD continues to have an interest in accessing this funding mechanism as follows:

A. Residual Funds (\$550,000): Approximately \$550,000 Proposition 117 remained after MPRPD's purchase of the Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve. Staff met with State Parks' Office of Grants and Local Services (OGLS) Grant Officer to request that these residual funds be applied to another qualifying MPRPD property. The State is favorably considering MPRPD's request and provided direction as to how to proceed in filing a request. An update will be presented to the Board as additional information becomes available.

B. Next Ten-years' Available Funds: Staff also met independently with State Parks' Grant Officer and local State Park staff to discuss this funding mechanism's future, including the next 10-year's allocation(s). Local State Park staff expressed their support for, and agreement with, MPRPD using these funds during the first 2-year period these funds are available. Discussions regarding the subsequent eight-years' allocation(s) will continue.

It was deemed that MPRPD's Rancho Canada Unit Habitat Restoration Project may be "shovel-ready" as early as this fall, in alignment when the first allotment of these funds will become available thus, warranting the first two-years moneys totaling up to \$3,000,000 towards this project.

OGLS will contact State Parks' local staff to determine next steps, which may include a possible Amendment to the existing Agreement between the State and MPRPD or may require a new Agreement. An update will be presented to the Board as additional information becomes available.

16. Redistricting of MPRPD's Boundaries: Staff met with President David Martin - Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) and the institution of higher learning's staff to discuss the potential of MPC and MPRPD partnering in the development of a Redistricting Plan. Redistricting may be necessary in response to the 2020 Census. Because both parties share a common jurisdictional footprint, said parties agreed to work together subject to statutory parameters. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

17. Roof/HVAC Replacement: The project's engineering teams have sent their respective plans and specifications to the project architect to combine these documents into one bid package. When this is complete, the plans and specifications will be submitted to the County for plan check. Plan checks are currently taking 4 – 6 weeks, per County staff, but may be expedited if an emergency exists. Updates on the timeline will be presented in future reports to the Board.

18. Training: Staff participated in a Human Resources Conference and the Liebert Cassidy and Whitmore's Fair Labor Standards Act Academy.

19. Wage and Benefits Analysis: Staff researched, compiled, and initiated drafting the initial study's Request for Proposal. The Study's scope and objective is to perform an analysis of the District's employee classifications, job descriptions, compensation, and benefits to ensure competitiveness in the industry. The Study shall develop recommendations and propose options for classification, compensation, and benefits of positions. The recommendations should be based on the like size comparable public agencies. Variables for comparison could include, but are not limited to size of the agency, type of operations, scope of responsibilities, community served, etc.

The Study will also evaluate the current organizational chart and provide recommendations on its modification. The Study may also provide recommendations on staffing models to ensure the District can effectively and efficiently operate the organization's current responsibilities and forecast if and what additional resources may be necessary, including their projected costs, if the organization adds additional properties.

Coincidental to MPRPD's timing, the National Parks and Recreation Association has also issued a national survey regarding these topics. Several samples are being

used to help MPRPD develop its RFP. The final draft will be presented to the Board for its consideration as early as the May Board meeting.

EECO DIVISION

- 1. California Wildlife Day:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth annual California Wildlife Day was held as two-day virtual event. Guest speakers and MPRPD's partners presented an array of topics including natural and cultural history, the Blue Zones project, students' showcase of art and science, and other subjects related to California's wildlife. The event was held on the weekend of the spring equinox, March 20-21, 2021.

Thousands of hours were spent by EECO team members, in conjunction with Carmel River Watershed Conservancy's staff, editing content, managing the online app, orchestrating service learners, volunteers, and partners, and assisting presenters. More than three-hours of pre-recorded content, along with 3- live sessions over 10-hours of the event were made accessible to the nearly 500 registered participants.

- 2. Exhibits:** With ranger support, staff is designing and fabricating exhibits at Palo Corona Regional Park's Discovery Center in preparation for re-opening the center. Rangers are constructing a platform for the tule boat exhibit. EECO staff met with aquarist to discuss the design of a live fish (rainbow trout) tank, and with a graphic designer and volunteer Donna Zahn to update geology exhibits while adding a new "Anthropocene" panel.

3. Meetings and Webinars:

A. National Park and Recreation Association (NPRA) Grant: Staff attended a webinar to learn about the NPRA Resilient Park Access grant's criteria. This will help staff in their submission of a grant. This grant provides funds to help create and enhance access to parks in underserved areas. The Grant is based on 3-Pillars: 1. Advancing Community Health & Wellbeing; 2. Equity; 3. Creating Climate ready parks.

B. Blue Zones: Staff attended the Blue Zones Monterey County Built Environment Policy Summit to hear their report on data collected from numerous interviews, and to talk about strategies for county-level opportunities and collaboration to create a healthy built environment for all.

- 4. MPRPD/ LGO! On the Go App:** Staff continues to review and provide feedback to the Beta version of the *MPRPD/LGO! on the Go* app designed by Turf Image.

- 5. Service Learning at CA State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB):** Staff is hosting nine (9) CSUMB Service Learners during the Spring 2021 semester, while adhering to COVID-related safety measures. Performing the role of mentors, staff is engaging the students in activities around and related to California Wildlife Day and other tasks. Service Learners projects include creating social media posts, hosting scripts, accessible agendas, training staff and fellow service learners on Zoom controls and Whova (event platform) navigation and hosting live speakers for the California Wildlife Day event and other endeavors. Service Learners continue to work on various video editing projects post-event.

Some of the students' creative designs can be seen on the MPRPD social media posts. Please see **EXHIBIT 1** below for a few examples.

- 6. Special Use Permits:** The Big Sur Land Trust's annual special use permit (SUP) to access Palo Corona Regional Park's backcountry and other MPRPD properties was issued on late February 2021. BSLT also requested a SUP for their "Race for Open Space" event to access the PCPR backcountry during the month of April 2021. This three-weekend fundraising event challenges the community to collectively log 10,000 miles hiking or running Monterey County trails. MPRPD staff continues to work interdivisional to ensure this and other events are a success. Staff also worked on developing "Beach Event" component for the special use permits. More information will be provided on this endeavor as it is refined.

- 7. Training and Conferences:** Staff attended NAI's virtual 2021 Sierra Pacific Workshop entitled "Resilient Interpretation: Adapting to Our New World". The conference was engaging, collaborative, and educational, from the event's inception including an inspirational keynote address by National Park Service Ranger, Shelton Johnson, to the ending panel entitled "What Lessons are We Taking into the Future" which considered 2020's events including coronavirus, mass protests against brutality and racial injustice, devastating natural disasters, and one of the most combative political elections in modern American history. Our field of work has felt the effects and has adapted through innovation, collaboration, and our shared mission to connect, empower, reshape, and redefine the future of interpretation.

- 8. Volunteers:** Rachel Anderson, an amphibian biologist who has been studying California Red-legged Frogs and other amphibians at MPRPD properties since 2013 gave an exceptional talk about the basic biology and ecology of this species, their threats, and what is being done to protect them, during the March Volunteer Enrichment session. A copy of the March Newsletter is attached ([ATTACHMENT 1](#)).

California Wildlife Day 2021
SOCIAL MEDIA



CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE DAY 2021
**Amphibians that
breed in the Carmel
River**
Saturday
March 20th



DAWNRELS



California Wildlife Day 2021
March 20th-21st 10am-3pm
LEARNING TO TRACK WITH INATURALIST
Bart Kowalski
Photos by Michael Troutman

California Wildlife Day 2021
Tiny Organisms in the Elkhorn
Slough's Mudflats



Elkhorn Slough Foundation

*Nature
Journaling*

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE
DAY 2021



Tracking Mammals
Santa Lucia Conservancy

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION

- 1. BSIM Cross-Country Course:** Ops and Admin staff recently participated in a meeting with Big Sur International Marathon (BSIM) staff to discuss the possibility of BSIM underwriting trail improvements at Rancho Canada, in exchange for an agreement to host cross-country meets. The course would be limited to the east course and south of the Carmel River to allow for unobstructed public access to the Front Ranch even during a BSIM-sponsored event. Rangers are working with BSIM staff to develop the alignment and plan specifications.



Proposed Cross-country Course/Fitness Trail at the Rancho Canada Unit

- 2. BSLT “Race for Open Space”:** Ops and EECO staff are working with the Big Sur Land Trust to facilitate the “Race for Open Space” at Palo Corona Regional Park. This event will traverse the Palo Corona backcountry, leading runners into the BSLT’s Mitteldorf Preserve, and back. This event is proposed to happen in April 2021 following the cooperative planning of the event and the issuance of a Special Use Permit by MPRPD.
- 3. California Coastal Trail:** Rangers have been coordinating with the California Coastal Trail working group to identify the alignment for Segment 1, which traverses Palo Corona Regional Park from Carmel to the park’s southern boundary. A team of experts was convened to assist with the planning and coordination of interested stakeholder groups. Ops staff issued a Special Use Permit to the Monterey Off-Road Cycling Association for access into the Palo Corona backcountry to conduct reconnaissance prior to the next meeting scheduled for April 12, 2021.
- 4. CAWD Sewer Line:** Staff continues to coordinate with the Carmel Area Wastewater District to identify allowable access routes and staging areas for CAWD’s sewer

main line replacement project. CAWD's sewer main parallels the Carmel River as it cuts across the low-lying area of the Rancho Canada Unit north of the river. This project's construction will likely begin sometime this summer and will require coordination with Wedgewood so as not to interrupt any wedding ceremonies.

- 5. Hatton Canyon Fuel Reduction:** Staff issued The High Meadows Homeowners Association a Special Use Permit last year authorizing a Cal Fire sponsored fuel reduction project on the District's Hatton Canyon property. The scope of work included the eradication of poison oak, the removal of invasive weeds (mostly genista), and the creation of a shaded fuel-break along the neighborhood/open space interface. The project utilized inmate crews funded by a Cal Fire matching grant awarded to the High Meadows HOA and was completed last month just in time for fire season.



- 6. Marina Dunes Preserve Patrols:** Rangers increased the number of weekly patrols at Marina Dunes Preserve. This has been accomplished utilizing a combination of on-duty and on-call Rangers. Copy of patrol log available upon request.

- 7. Memorial Bench Installation @ GRRP:** A memorial bench was installed at the end of Acorn Trail, thus replacing the previous plaqueless bench. Rangers Niewenhuis and Vandervort installed this bench with the help of the sponsor, who took this photo (right):



8. **New Discovery Center Exhibits:** Rangers are constructing several new exhibits at Palo Corona Regional Park's Discovery Center, including an exhibit platform for the Tule Boat exhibit.



Ranger John Palaniuk constructing the Tule Boat Exhibit

9. **New Signs/Fences at Garland Ranch Regional Park:** Rangers identified areas that require additional fencing to keep the public from accessing “social trails” that have developed adjacent to the Carmel River. Garland Ranch Regional Park has become a very popular point of access to the Carmel River and Rangers are preparing for another busy summer along the rivers’ banks. Some of the projects being completed include additional fencing along the lower parking lot at Garland Ranch Regional Park and additional signage at various trailheads throughout the District.



10. NRCS Waterline/Infrastructure Improvements: The District's cattle grazing lessee completed a grant-funded infrastructure improvement project at Palo Corona Regional Park's Front Ranch that included the trenching and installation of water supply lines, a 5,000-gallon storage tank, and a cattle trough. This was a District-matched grant/funding project, in its final of a three-year program. The grazing team is considering applying for the next round of EQUIP grants through the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

11. Projects A & B: Rangers continue to provide project management services for Projects A & B at the Rancho Canada Unit. Both projects have been in the Schematic Design Phase and are now in the Design Development Phase.

Replacement of the aged, fragile lateral sewer line from the Rancho Canada Unit's clubhouse to the sewer main was recently added as part of the Project-A scope. Staff recently had the firm PSTS scope and locate the lateral line, followed by a site visit with Whitson Engineers who provided a site graphic for eventual inclusion into a bid packet.

Staff is also coordinating the Schematic Design Phase of the large and small dog parks at the Rancho Canada Unit. The project's plans will be utilized in the District's Prop 68 grant application and must include community meetings and input from the public. A meeting of the Dog Park advocacy group was convened at the proposed Dog Park location. Rangers provided the meeting's attendees a project update, staked the corners of the proposed dog parks, and installed an information board for future fundraising efforts.



Supervising Ranger Caine Camarillo discussing the dog parks' plans with meeting attendees

12. Seasonal Mowing/Brushing: Rangers are gearing-up for another busy Spring season that will include seasonal mowing and brushing of all District trails and open

spaces. Weed-whips, brush mowers, tractors, etc., are being fired-up and tested in preparation of the Operations and Maintenance Division's busiest time of year.

- 13. Trail Work at Garland Ranch Regional Park:** Rangers recently completed tri-maintenance on a section of Mesa Trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park. Out-sloping was reestablished, drain dips reconstructed, and fill-slope berms removed to allow for proper drainage and sheet-flow (see photo below). Staff will focus on Sky Trail next, weather and moisture conditions permitting.



Rangers making trail improvements on existing trails

- 14. Winter Storm Damage:** Rangers continue to address downed trees, clogged gutters, and blocked culverts following each storm that impacts the District. The District's San Clemente-Blue Rock property has been especially impacted due to 2020's Carmel Fire which created a hydrophobic environment in which runoff is not absorbed into the ground, but rather accumulates and deposits sediment into culverts, drain dips, and along roads, all of which need to be removed using hand tools and/or equipment (see photo below).

