

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT**

BOARD MEETING: August 8, 2018

SUBJECT: Environmental Education/Community Division Update

PRESENTER: Jackie Nelson, Environmental Education Supervisor

REPORT: EECO volunteers and staff were very busy preparing for the Palo Corona Regional Park Rancho Canada Unit's soft-opening. Staff and volunteers created and installed several interim interpretive exhibits that are presently, or will soon be, displayed.

An estimated 1,000 visitors attended the July 28, 2018 soft-opening. Visitors, ranging in age from a few months to nearing the century mark, visited the park's Discovery Center. The Discovery Center's interim exhibits provide information on California condor and steelhead trout recovery efforts, Carmel River restoration, a summary of Palo Corona Regional Park's history (including the Rancho Canada Unit), and information on the park's common, threatened, endangered and extirpated fauna and why we should care about these and other species.

Other themes will be included as the Discovery Center (DC) evolves. Momentum is already gaining on the DC showcasing other organizations' scientific research, findings and conservation contributions.

Subject to Board approval, the DC has the potential of becoming the coalition-based "*CENTRAL COAST NATURAL & CULTURAL SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION CENTER*," driving home the point that this part of the world is replete with very important projects that may potentially be adapted to other venues. Further, not all potential partnering organizations have a visitor center, nor does MPRPD have the resources to replicate other organization's scientific and conservation efforts or fabricate numerous exhibits. The DC may provide a venue to achieve the greatest opportunity to provide high-caliber, current and updated information, and visibility.

Delivery of interpretive and educational information may additionally be achieved in a novel way if the exhibits are designed and developed, in partnership, between each respective organization and local artists. Thus, the DC will concurrently serve as a conservation science/art assemblage.

This concept is loosely analogous to an antique mall (and may be the first or one of the very few Discovery Centers of this type in the USA): MPRPD is the landlord; the “vendors” are the organizations that will design, occupy and update their respective areas/booths. Information may include their respective logos, stories, artifacts, boards, contact info, and directions how to get to their respective venues. Thus, the DC may serve as a “launch pad” for our visitors to further expand their knowledgebase. Tourists may decide to spend an additional night or two as they discover these other great places to visit.

So far, the following individuals/organizations are developing interpretive/educational exhibits to showcase their regional scientific/conservation efforts: Linda Yamane/Rumsen Tribe, Mrs. Fish/Emily Paddock, Hatton Family, VWS, NOAA, Trout Unlimited, Carmel River Watershed Conservancy, and local geologists/paleontologists.

The Point Lobos Foundation, PG Museum of Natural History, Carmel Valley Historical Society, Elkhorn Slough, and others have also shown interest in displaying at this venue, too. We will soon be meeting with them to explore options.

FISCAL IMPACT:	N/A
FUNDING SOURCE:	N/A
FUNDING BALANCE:	N/A
RECOMMENDATION:	For Information Only