

AGENDA TOPIC NO. 8-B
MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
MID-MONTH STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING: April 1, 2026
SUBJECT: Monthly Staff Report
PRESENTER: Eric Morgan, General Manager *E. S. Morgan*
REPORT: The following briefly summarizes some of the key tasks and projects the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) Staff undertook from mid-February through mid-March 2026, in addition to performing MPRPD's regular business.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

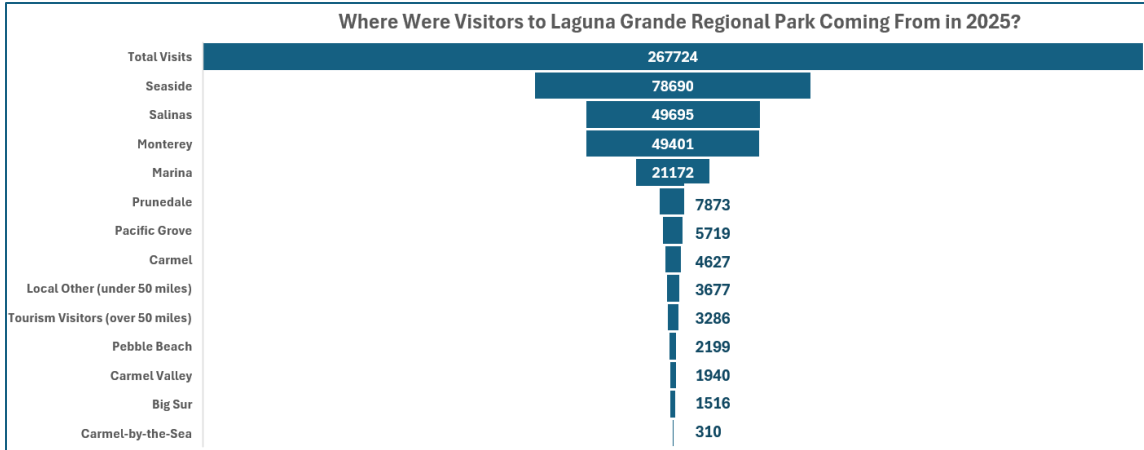
1. Recruitment

Staff are currently reviewing applications for the part-time Administrative Assistant position for Operations and Maintenance, and recruitment for the Finance Manager position closed on March 31. Staff will begin reviewing, with the goal of conducting interviews in the month of April.

2. Data Analytics

To better serve District residents, MPRPD staff continue to use a location-analytics platform that uses anonymized mobile device data to estimate foot traffic, dwell time, visitor origins, and movement patterns at real-world places. Staff have been using this tool over the last several months to generate ward profiles showing where residents choose to recreate outdoors and park profiles showing who is using various MPRPD park units, where they are from, how they are getting to those parks, and when they visit. The goal of this new initiative is to better understand our MPRPD customers and the residents we serve in hopes of improving our product delivery – our product being “your parks”.

This month we are sharing visitor estimates for Laguna Grande Regional Park because the Joint Powers Agreement overseeing the park turned 50 years old. The park, especially the regional visitation to the park for special events and the weekly farmers market, is an important hub for recreation, tourism and socialization. MPRPD Staff have been coordinating with the City of Seaside and Monterey on a celebration planned for April 19, 2026, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



3. Training

Staff completed the following training: Public Records Requests (CSDA), ADA Digital Accessibility (CJPIA) and Implementing Public Employee Discipline (CJPIA).

4. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Financial Audit

Staff completed work on the FY24-25 audit. Due to a variety of unforeseen delays and retirement of the former Finance Manager the process was more protracted and started later than usual. Also, because the District received federal grant funds for the Floodplain Project, a Single Audit, not normally prepared, was required, in addition to the standard Financial Statement audit. Also, because of the Single Audit, the District was required to submit this information to the federal government by March 31. Although not required by law or any known District policy, the Board was not afforded the opportunity to review the financial statements before finalization, but staff hope to provide copies within the next week or so.

5. Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget

Staff continue working on the budget for next fiscal year. Draft information from the proposed document will be reviewed with the Citizen Oversight Committee and the Board’s Personnel and Finance Committees before being finalized. The proposed budget will be presented for Board consideration at its June 3 meeting.

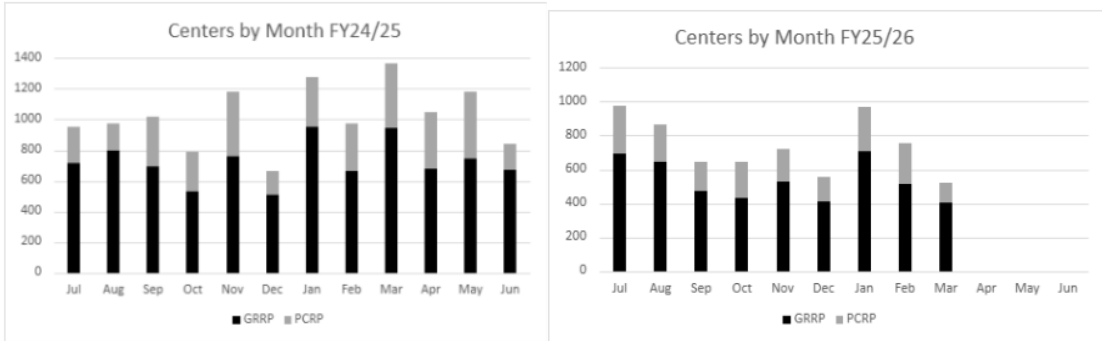
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH DIVISION

1. Community Outreach

a. Visitor and Discovery Center Totals

Recording of visitor contacts at the Palo Corona Discovery Center (DC) and the Garland Visitor Center (VC) is ongoing. We have maintained extended visitation days since April 2024. The DC is open Friday – Sunday, and the VC is open Thursday – Sunday. Both centers are open from 10am – 4pm

and continue to be open during the Monday holidays. The DC is open for additional days on an ad hoc basis, subject to staff availability.



b. Social Media Posts

Facebook stats	@MPRegionalParkDistrict @PaloCoronaRegionalPark @garlandranchregionalpark	
Followers on March 16	8,584	+112 from last month
Total Impressions	68,757	-0.7% from last month
Top 3 posts	Mar 03: Snowy Plover Nesting Season	50,058 impressions 2,388 engagements
	Mar 05: James Covell Joins Board of Directors	7,001 impressions 365 engagements
	Feb 28: Star Party	3,535 impressions 159 engagements
Instagram stats	@mprpd_lgo	
Followers on March 16	2,136	+44 from last month
Total Impressions	38,651	-78.4% from last month
Top 3 posts	Mar 03: World Wildlife Day	2,301 impressions 159 engagements
	Feb 23: Feel the Falls	2,137 impressions 117 engagements
	Mar 01: Snowy Plover Nesting Season	1,054 impressions 74 engagements

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD)'s Post

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD)
Published by Sprout Social · March 1 at 10:15 AM

It's March 1st, meaning we have officially entered western snowy plover nesting season!


These threatened birds come together to nest on Monterey's sandy beaches every March through September. This is a vulnerable time for plovers, who have to navigate beachgoers, predators, and habitat disturbances while raising their young.

Everyone can do their part to protect the plovers by:

- Keeping dogs on-leash year-round at Marina Dunes Preserve
- Cleaning up trash and leftover food to keep from attracting plover predators
- Staying clear of posted nest area fencing and sensitive habitat areas

Thank you for doing your part to protect plovers! Learn more about these interesting birds at mprpd.org/western-snowy-plover and keep an eye out for plover updates and activities at our community events this season!

Stephanie Coates Point Blue Conservation Science



See insights and ads Boost post

677 likes 17 comments 126 shares

Like Comment Share

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD)
Published by Sprout Social · March 5 at 10:54 AM

We are excited to have James (Jim) Covell join our Board of Directors for the W... See more




See insights and ads Boost post

Carmel River Steelhead Association and 97 others 19 comments 1 share

Like Comment Share

c. ENewsletter

Staff worked with public relations consultant Spoke to produce the monthly e-News. The February eNews featured: the California Wildlife Day announcement and save the date, Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project updates, and highlighted new Ward 2 board director James Covell. The enews also advertised the Weed Warriors program and upcoming LGO! Events.

d. Discovery Center Tours

Environmental Education Coordinator, Debbie Wyatt led a group of seniors from the Cottages of Carmel on a tour of the Discovery Center.

e. Science Saturday Outreach Booth at the PGNHM

Staff member, Megan Mach, and new volunteer, Angus, participated in Science Saturday at the Pacific Grove Natural History Museum (PGNHM), a MOU partner, on February 28th. The theme of the day was reptiles and amphibians. Content focused on local snake models and a frog folding and jumping activity, while connecting families to our Let's Go Outdoors!

programs. Around 100 children and adults interacted with the table, with 415 people attending the event. Children were generally 8 yrs and under.



EECO staff and volunteer at PGNHM's Science Saturday event. Volunteer Angus is helping interested visitors fold their origami jumping frogs.

f. Wild Wednesdays at the Marina Library

Staff presented an outreach booth at the Marina Monterey County Free Library (MCFL) during their monthly Wild Wednesday (previously Family Crafternoons) event in February, educating visitors about Let's Go Outdoors! programs and the threatened western snowy plover. Approximately 19 contacts were made, mostly with children under 8 and their families. MPRPD engaged families with an interactive activity about the plovers foraging and nesting habits in preparation for the upcoming snowy plover nesting season. This was a part of a monthly tabling program at the Marina Library.

g. Special Events

i. California Wildlife Day

Promotional efforts by staff for the annual California Wildlife Day (CWD) have included: posting a banner outside the park entrance, posting flyers around our parks, social media posts, eNewsletter highlights, advertisements in the local papers, radio talks, and webpage support to enhance visibility and raise public awareness of the event.



CWD promotional banner posted out front of Palo Corona entrance gate

ii. Marina Earth Day

Planning efforts by staff and Sustainable Marina for the 20th annual Marina Earth Day Celebration continue for the free public event on Saturday, April 18 from 10am-2pm at Locke-Paddon Wetland Community Park. Activities include trash pick-ups, weed pulls, complimentary food for volunteers, outreach booths for environmental groups, and craft activities. MPRPD will be supporting volunteer activity sign-ins and environmental education and outreach.

iii. 50th Anniversary for Joint Powers Agency (JPA) and Seaside Earth Day

Planning efforts by staff for the 50th anniversary celebration for the JPA between MPRPD, City of Seaside, City of Monterey, and Sustainable Seaside are underway for the free public event on Sunday, April 19 from 10am-12:30pm at Laguna Grande Park. Initial plans and activities were shared at the March 9th JPA public meeting in Seaside. MPRPD will be providing logo and flyer design, advertisement, an outreach booth, cordage making activity, and coordination with volunteers for a nature walk and a bird walk around the lake. The Seaside Earth Day celebration will commence at 1pm following the 50th celebration, where MPRPD will be providing an outreach booth and cordage making activity throughout the day.



Logo for the 50th Anniversary of the JPA

2. Education

a. Let's Go Outdoors!

During this reporting period, Fall 2025/Winter 2026 LGO! Guide programs served over 124 participants. Featured programs included Winter Wildflowers, Discover San Jose Creek, Ishxenta State Park, and Palo Corona Back Country – San Jose Creek. A couple of programs were canceled due to weather and other circumstances.



Volunteer Naturalist, Bruce Merchant introduces padre shooting star wildflowers to participants on the Lupine Loop trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park.



Dr. Jean Perkins, Monterey Institute for Research in Astronomy (MIRA) Astronomer leads a Solar System Program at Palo Corona Regional Park.

3. Volunteers

a. LGO! Program Volunteers

Volunteers led or facilitated the following LGO! Programs and hikes during this reporting period: Exploring Nature with Children, Sensory Stream Stroll, Palo Corona Back Country Hike-San Jose Creek, Walk with Poems, Feel the Falls, Winter Wildflowers and Plants, Steinbeck Views, Solar System Stroll, Star Party, and Beginning Birding at Laguna Grande. Leaders and facilitators included: Bruce Merchant, Steve Ibrahim, Brett Ritchie, Marikay LeValley, Mary Dainton, Sharon Osgood, Lisa Hogan, Patty Armstrong, Andrea Eisler, Susi Diallo, Claudia Galvan, and Angus Jansen.

b. New Volunteers

Staff coordinated and presented two (2) volunteer orientation sessions during this reporting period, and three (3) potential volunteers are in the onboarding process. Please welcome our newest volunteers, Tim Wilson and Jackie Nelson.

c. Visitor and Discovery Center Volunteers

Volunteers Coral Amende, Laurie Benner, Jon Benner, Shannon Mandel, Mark Laycox, Eric Hartwell, Leigh Fitz, Deb Kramer, Marikay LeValley, Angus Jansen, Jordan Goldman, Ameila Craig, Sam Ross, Tim Wilson, Barbara Barrett, and Rebecca Law greeted and guided visitors at the Palo Corona Discovery Center and Garland Visitor Center. Tempe Wennerholm greeted visitors at the Palo Corona Trailhead.

d. Weekend Weed Warriors

EECO staff supported the Planning and Conservation staff by providing promotion via newsletter and social media. One dedicated volunteer came to our Weekend Weed Warriors event on Saturday, March 14th. Volunteer and staff successfully removed 17 contractor bags worth of French Broom (*Genista monspessulana*) from a 1/10th acre space in Palo Corona Regional Park.

e. Western Snowy Plover Volunteers

EECO staff and volunteer, Toni McDaniel attended a Western Snowy Plover outreach table with Amanda Preece, CA State Parks environmental scientist at the entrance of Marina Dunes Preserve (MDP) on Friday, March 6. The team contacted 16 adults and 5 children during their 2-hour morning session.



Amanda Preece and Toni McDaniel share information about the Western Snowy Plovers.

4. Partnerships and Training

a. Western Snowy Plover Guardian Volunteer Training

Volunteer Coordinator, Debbie Wyatt partnered with California State Parks, environmental scientist, Amanda Preece and Point Blue avian ecologist, Esther Haille to provide a Western Snowy Plover Guardian virtual spring training in preparation for joint outreach efforts at Marina Dunes Preserve. Seven (7) MPRPD volunteers and three (3) potential new volunteers attended this 1.5-hour training session.

5. Special Use Permits (SUP) & MOU Events

a. Big Sur Land Trust – Annual Guided Hikes (SUP)

Staff issued an annual special use permit for the free guided tours that Big Sur Land Trust offers at Palo Corona Regional Park. This permit was in progress before establishment of the interim permit fee structure.

b. Susan Bancroft – Independent Equestrian Trainer (SUP)

Staff issued an annual special use permit for paid guided tours that are offered to small groups at Garland Ranch Regional Park. This permit was in progress before establishment of the interim permit fee structure.

c. Year in Nature Development Program – Youth Trail Run (SUP)

Staff is processing a youth trail run special use permit for a competitive, community race at Garland Ranch Regional Park for April 12, 2026. There are an expected 200 participants under 18 that will participate in either a 1-mile or 3.2-mile circuit, depending on age and ability. This permit was in progress before the establishment of the interim permit fee structure.

d. Big Sur Land Trust – Race for Open Space Trail Run (SUP)

Staff is processing a trail run special use permit for a competitive, fund raising race at Palo Corona Regional Park for May 9, 2026. There are an expected 500 participants of all ages that will participate in various races between 1-mile to 25-kilometer circuit. This permit was in progress before the establishment of the interim permit fee structure.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE DIVISION

1. New Phone System at GRRP Ranger Station

Rayne Technology recently installed new VoIP phones at the Garland Park Ranger Station, allowing for additional call features and Ranger-on-Duty forwarding options. Transitioning to VoIP phones also avoids the need to replace aged, rodent-damaged wiring underneath the Ranger Station, and consolidates Ranger staff to a single phone directory.

2. FY 2026-27 O&M Budget

Ranger staff met to discuss and develop the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Operations and Maintenance Division budget, which was then presented and discussed at the DL budget meeting on March 11. The O&M workplan is still being developed and will be included in the draft FY 2026-27 District Budget to be presented to the Board at a later date.

3. GRRP Trail Work

a. Vasquez Trail

Ranger staff is reconstructing drain dips and outsloping segments of Vasquez Trail that have become entrenched and/or been impacted by runoff and other projects.



Before



After

b. Rock Wall along River Trail

Saturated soil conditions caused a section of the rock retaining wall along River Trail to collapse, requiring reconstruction and the retrieval of displaced rocks.



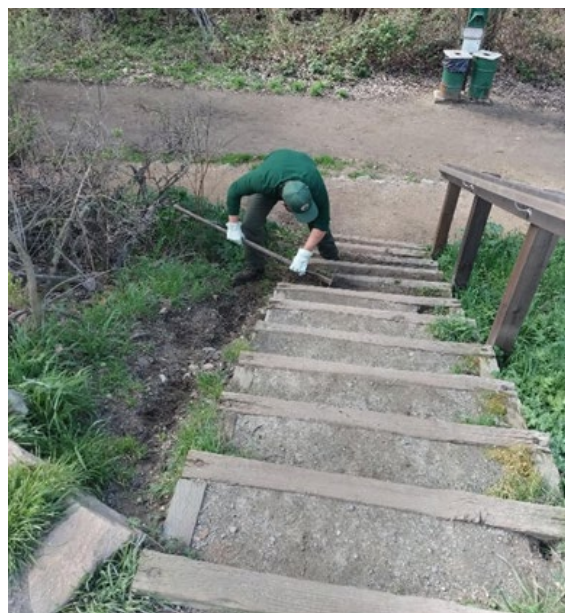
Before



After

c. Parking Lot Stairs

The stairs leading from the upper parking lot to the entrance trail required some maintenance and backfill.



d. Terrace Trail

Ranger staff removed several small slides along Terrace Trail that occurred during the most recent rain events.



4. Kahn Ranch Cabin Project Bid Opening

Ranger staff, with assistance from Ausonio project management staff, conducted the bid opening for the Kahn Ranch Cabin Repair Project. The District is discussing options and weighing alternatives considering we only received interest from a single contractor.

5. Frog Pond Encampment Cleanup

After being notified of its presence by DRO City staff, Rangers removed a truckload of abandoned property from MPRPD land adjacent to the Frog Pond Wetland Preserve along South Boundary Road.

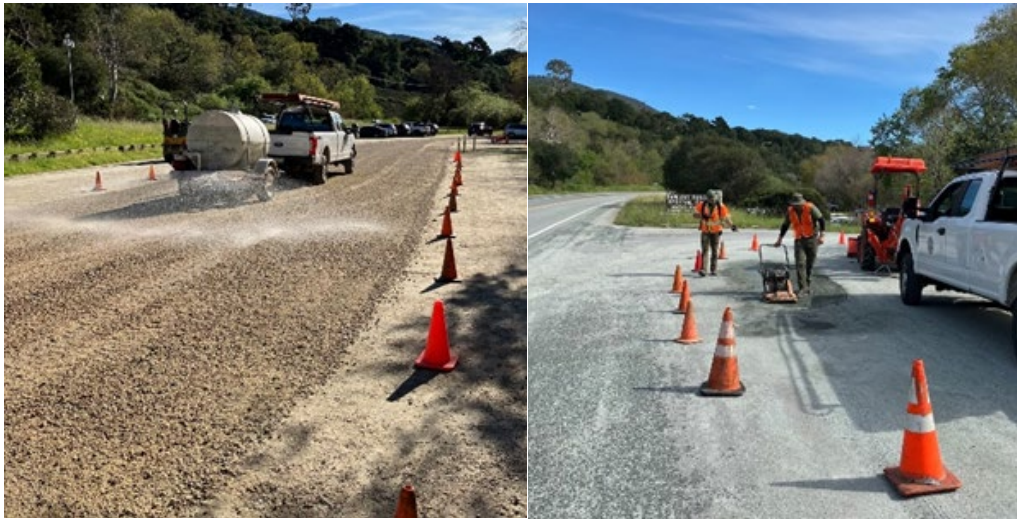


6. Mowing Tractor Bid Opening

Ops and Admin staff conducted the bid opening for acquisition of a new Mowing Tractor. After reviewing the 4 submitted bids, Staff determined that RDO Equipment Co. met all of the specifications set forth in the District's RFB package and is recommending moving forward with purchasing from RDO.

7. GRRP Parking Lot Grading

With the rainy season likely over, Ranger staff regraded the Garland Park parking lot for possibly the final time this season. It was so dry that water needed to be added to achieve proper compaction.



8. GRRP Apartment Plumbing Repairs

Ranger staff was recently notified by (and coordinated with) the GRRP Apartment tenant of a clogged restroom drain line. Ranger staff removed the p-trap, snaked the line, and flushed it to confirm proper drainage.



9. Gate Replacement in Palo Corona Backcountry

Ranger staff replaced the gate that was damaged during a significant wind event in December, causing a tree to fall onto it.



10. New Operations and Maintenance Division Pickup Trucks

After receiving Board approval to purchase 3 pickup trucks on the open market, Ranger staff obtained 4 quotes from local dealerships that met the District's specifications. Staff is recommending and requesting approval this month to purchase the trucks from Santa Cruz Toyota.

11. Roadside Brushing at PCRP Front Ranch

Gabilan inmate crews assisted with roadside brushing along the main road into the Palo Corona Front Ranch, which also parallels the property boundary with BSLT.



12. Failing floor joists at Rancho Canada

Ranger staff recently placed a metal plate over a hole outside of the Admin office door that developed due to rotten floor joists underneath the concrete walkway. A contractor will need to be hired to complete this repair.



13. Kiosk Replacement at Garland Park Mesa

The kiosk at the Mesa that was destroyed during December's wind event was replaced with a new kiosk. The information panels from the previous kiosk were able to be reused.



14. Training

Ranger Stephen Sheeter attended PC832 training the week of March 16, which is the 40-hour certification that authorizes Ranger staff to issue citations on District lands. He is also scheduled to attend ATV training in April.

Several members of the Ranger staff will be attending Basic Trails Maintenance and Management the week of April 26, and the California State Parks Trails and Greenways Conference the week of April 13.

15. Winter/Spring Mowing Season Begins

February rain events followed by a March heat wave caused early-season grasses to sprout rapidly, requiring an early start to seasonal mowing and brushing at all District properties.



16. All Staff Meeting BBQ Lunch

Ranger staff coordinated a BBQ during the March all-staff meeting, which was held at the Dedampierre ballfields. EECO staff coordinated some team-building relay-based activities, which were enjoyed by all in attendance. Thanks to the entire DL team for your monetary contributions toward a delicious lunch!

17. Marina Dunes Preserve Symbolic Fencing Relocation

Ranger staff worked with Point Blue Conservancy staff to relocate the Snowy Plover nesting habitat symbolic fencing at Marina Dunes Preserve. This fencing encircles the ideal nesting habitat for WSP (foredune) and is moved twice a year to coincide with the seasonal high-tide line.



18. Memorial Bench along GRRP River Trail

A memorial bench was recently sponsored and installed along River Trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park honoring Lorin Letendre, the plaque reads:

*Dedicated to Lorin Letendre for his decades of
service in restoring and protecting our watershed.
Your colleagues at the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy*



19. Carmel Youth Baseball Opening Day 2026

Opening Day at Dedampierre Ballfields brought warm weather and large crowds. The 2026 Carmel Youth Baseball season is officially in full swing. Batter up!!!

20. PG&E Transformer Replacement at Garland Park

Ranger staff coordinated with PG&E who requested access into Garland Park to replace a failed transformer serving two Cal-Am well sites. Electrical service to MPRPD facilities was not interrupted, and Ranger staff ensured that PG&E properly rehabilitated the area prior to their departure.



21. Winter Heat Wave

An unusual heat wave during the last week in winter caused a significant spike in visitation, particularly at Garland Ranch Regional Park and Marina Dunes Preserve, as visitors sought refuge at the coast and along the Carmel River. This trend brings with it an increased need for patrol and enforcement to ensure visitors are not disturbing vegetation or accessing closed areas.

22. Trees Down

Ranger staff finished removing large oak rounds from a fallen tree on Cougar Ridge trail previously bucked-up by a Gabilan inmate crew. Ranger staff removed a large oak tree that fell across Rancho Loop, temporarily blocking the trail.



PLANNING & CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT DIVISION

1. Palo Corona Regional Park

a. Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration:

i. **Project Construction:** An update on the status of the floodplain project is provided in item 8-C of the board agenda packet

1. **Rancho Cañada Floodplain Photomonitoring:** The Planning & Conservation Management (PCM) Division continues to utilize drone-based photomonitoring to document the ongoing evolution of the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project. Following the successful completion of Phase 1 construction in December 2025, high-resolution aerial imagery is being collected to track geomorphic shifts and native vegetation establishment across the restored project area.



March 12th, 2026: Phase 1 floodplain restoration

2. **Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Mowing:** The project contractor, Teichert Construction, has begun seasonal mowing at the Rancho Cañada unit to prepare the site for Phase 2 of the restoration effort. This work is essential for controlling invasive weeds and clearing the area before major construction activities resume. To ensure the protection of local wildlife, all mowing is being conducted under the strict supervision of project biologists, who perform nesting bird

over District property with Cal Am Water and the Carmel Area Wastewater District. This work also includes notification to the state agencies that funded the acquisition of the property to ensure the proposed easements are consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant funding. Staff have received approval from 3 of 4 funding agencies for granting the CAWD easement to RCV.

- d. Conservation Grazing Program Lease RFP:** The District utilizes conservation grazing as a critical land management tool to reduce fine fuel loads, manage invasive species, and enhance native grassland biodiversity. On February 13, 2026, staff released the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Palo Corona Regional Park Conservation Grazing Lease. PCM conducted the mandatory virtual information meeting for the RFP on February 23rd, led by Resource Conservation Specialist Jacqueline Brenton. Seven interested parties attended the session to review the conservation program background, ecological objectives, grazing rotation, adaptive management, infrastructure, lease responsibilities, and specific RFP requirements. Following the meeting, PCM hosted an optional property tour for interested proposers at Palo Corona Regional Park on March 5th. Ranger Jake Sanderson accompanied PCM staff to provide site-specific knowledge as the team guided a caravan of proposers through the property. Attendees observed important features such as ponds, riparian areas, archaeological sites, and grazing infrastructure while learning about long-term grassland management and special-status species habitat. Proposal submissions are due March 27, 2026. The District anticipates selecting a recommended lessee on April 9, 2026, with Board consideration of the final grazing lease agreement scheduled for the May 6, 2026 meeting. If approved, the new lease term will begin on July 1, 2026.



Interested Cattle operators attending a pre-proposal meeting at Palo Corona Regional Park.

- e. **Low Effect Habitat Conservation Plan:** To secure an Incidental Take Permit under the Endangered Species Act for operations and restoration at the Rancho Cañada Unit, the District is developing a Low-Effect Habitat Conservation Plan (LEHCP). On February 11, 2026, the District submitted the administrative draft of the LEHCP, along with supporting environmental and cultural resource documentation, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for initial review. Staff and the District's consultant, SWCA Environmental Consultants, have scheduled a technical review meeting with USFWS staff for March 25, 2026. This working session will allow the project team to walk agency staff through the proposed covered activities, species protections, and the overall conservation strategy to ensure the draft meets all federal permit issuance criteria before moving toward formal submittal and public review.

- f. **Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) Biological Monitoring:** To fulfill the monitoring and reporting requirements outlined in the Palo Corona Regional Park Safe Harbor Agreement, the District is partnering with Denise Duffy & Associates (DD&A) to conduct comprehensive pond surveys for the California tiger salamander (CTS) and California red-legged frog (CRLF). Fieldwork officially commenced on March 17th and is scheduled to continue through the spring season. In addition to meeting state and federal compliance mandates, PCM staff are actively participating in these surveys to gain necessary field hours under a permitted biologist. This hands-on experience is a critical professional development step that will help qualify staff for their own federal 10(a)(1)(A) recovery permits for species handling and relocation. Preliminary results from the initial survey rounds are highly encouraging, with 1,063 California tiger salamander larvae, 142 California red-legged frog larvae, and 12 adult red-legged frogs documented to date. These findings will be utilized to evaluate the success of the District's ongoing pond enhancement efforts and will be included in the annual monitoring report submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Pond Surveys at Palo Corona: PCM and DD&A surveying for California Red-legged Frog and California Tiger Salamander.

2. Laidlaw-Apte Bird Sanctuary (and Palo Corona regional Park): In March, staff met with Carmel Highlands Fire Protection District personnel, including Captain Greg Leonard (a CAL FIRE Fuels Management Specialist), for a site visit to the Laidlaw-Apte Woods Bird Sanctuary and Palo Corona Regional Park backcountry. This field meeting served to identify specific fuels reduction needs, multi-resource management concerns, and best management strategies for these areas. See the section later in this report regarding Fire Department Access Agreements for more information.

3. Marina Dunes Preserve

a. Coastal Dunes Restoration and Enhancement Project: The breeding season has begun and Marina Dunes Preserve already has one active nest! Surveys are conducted by the District contractor, Point Blue staff. PCM coordinated with Harris Environmental Group and agency representatives to ensure the accurate delivery of two mitigation reports, fulfilling the District's annual reporting obligations under existing agreements. These submittals included the MST Surf! Mitigation Agreement March 2026 Technical Memorandum Annual Report to Monterey-Salinas Transit and the 2025 Annual Report for the Marina Dunes Preserve Habitat Restoration and PG&E Mitigation Project. Restoration activities conducted for these projects throughout March included sand stabilization, targeted herbicide application for iceplant control, and the continued propagation of seaside buckwheat, with the onsite nursery inventory now totaling 9,776 plants. Staff will be meeting of representative of PG&E onsite to tour the restoration area

4. Laguna Grande Regional Park- Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan (EPP): staff have secured state approval to begin critical wildfire safety work through the Governor’s Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan (EPP). Staff will now compare this new state-level fast-track against our existing Trail and Vegetation Maintenance Strategy permits and approvals to determine if this new exemption will allow vegetation treatments to occur more quickly and effectively for the upcoming season. We will provide a final recommendation to the JPA agencies and the Board as soon as this comparison is complete. See the Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan (EPP) write up later in this report for more details.

5. Garland Ranch Regional Park

a. MPRPD/CalFire Fuel break Planning: The District is significantly strengthening its partnership with CAL FIRE to expand wildfire resilience efforts at Garland Ranch Regional Park. Following a recent field assessment with Fuels Battalion Chief Brice Muenzer, CAL FIRE has offered to fund and develop a comprehensive environmental clearance document "tiering off" the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP). By leveraging CAL FIRE’s technical resources to include the entire park in this document, the District will have a multi-year environmental clearances for diverse management activities, such as mechanical thinning and broadcast burning, facilitating a streamlined implementation process for years to come.



District and Cal Fire Staff identifying fuel reduction opportunities at Garland Ranch Regional Park.

- b. Garland Ranch Regional Park Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan (EPP):** District staff have secured state approval for two high-priority wildfire safety projects—the East Garzas Fuelbreak Expansion and the La Mesa Prescribed Burn—through the Governor’s Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan (EPP). Two additional efforts, focusing on strategic roadside thinning and meadow management, are currently in the final stages of state review. See the Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan write up under the Other/General PCM Division Updates section of this report for more details
- c. Garland Defensible Space Project:** California Conservations Corps (CCC) Forestry Crew was at GRRP for two weeks, conducting defensible space fuels reduction maintenance surrounding critical park infrastructure, specifically the built structures of the Ranger Station and the historic Cooper Barn complex, as well as primary ingress/egress access roads leading to the same. A total of ~10 acres will be maintained under this project, including ~6 acres of defensible space treatments around structures, and ~4 acres of roadside fuel buffer treatment. The goal is to increase safety from the threat of wildfire, increase firefighter safety and efficiency in controlling wildfires, while retaining ecological function. Work will recomense next week (March 23rd - 26th).





California Conservation Corp Implementing Defensible Space Clearing at Garland Ranch Regional Park.

- d. Graphic Wildfire Incident Response Plan:** Staff continue developing the graphic emergency response and fire pre-attack plan for Garland Ranch Regional Park. This map-based plan will provide detailed information to help emergency responders access and navigate the park during wildfire and other emergency incidents. Staff continue working with its consultant, TOPO Collective, on final edits and reviewing GIS map files before distributing to core staff and emergency agency partners.
- e. Fuel Mitigation and Fire Management Project (Eucalyptus Thinning & Removal):** Staff continue working with state and federal permitting agencies to confirm available permit-streamlining options that could help advance this critical fuel-reduction effort during the 2025 calendar year.

6. Cachagua Community Park:

- a. **Rock Ridge Shaded Fuel break:** See the “RCDMC Carmel Valley Fuel Break Project” section of the midmonth report for information on this fuel reduction project in Cachagua Community Park.

Other/General PCM Division Updates

7. **Fire Department Access Agreements:** PCM staff are developing a standardized agreement template for facility use and access agreements with regional fire partners, including CAL FIRE, Monterey Regional Fire, and local Fire Protection Districts. In coordination with District Counsel, staff are developing a streamlined "template" approach to support both recurring training exercises and specific fuels management projects across District properties. The objective is to transition toward a more consistent, staff-level authorization process that ensures robust legal protections, adequate insurance coverage, and clear operational notification protocols to better facilitate collaborative fire-readiness activities while ensuring all partner operations remain aligned with MPRPD stewardship goals ahead of the 2026 field season.
8. **Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan:** In response to California’s growing wildfire crisis, Governor Newsom issued an Emergency Proclamation (Executive Order N-05-19) to bypass the typical multi-year red tape that often delays forest health projects. The District is taking full advantage of this by utilizing the Statewide Environmental Protection Plan (EPP), a program that allows us to fast-track critical safety work while still following strict environmental "best practices" to protect local wildlife. We currently have nine high-priority projects in motion covering 422 acres across five of our properties: Garland Ranch, Laguna Grande, Joyce Stevens Mountain Meadow, Palo Corona, and the Frog Pond Wetland Preserve. These projects focus on creating "fuel breaks"—strategically thinned areas that act as speed bumps to slow down a moving fire and give firefighters a safer place to stand. To date, the State has officially approved three of these projects for immediate action, five are in the final stages of review, and one is pending minor clarifications. Staff are now factoring these projects into the workplan and budget for the 26/27FY and coordinating with fire agencies and representative from the California Conservation Corps to plan implementation and report back to the board before taking any action.
9. **Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Authority Act:** Following the publication of formal bill language on March 9, 2026, Assemblymember Gail Pellerin officially introduced [AB 1548](#) on March 10. This legislation proposes the creation of the Monterey Bay Area Stewardship Authority (MBASA), a regional entity designed to secure and allocate funding for land stewardship and climate resilience across Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. The bill has been double-referred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee and the Assembly Local Government Committee, with the first hearing scheduled for April 6, 2026. For the April 1 Board meeting, the General Manager is seeking authorization to submit a formal letter and proposed amendments to the Natural Resources Committee ahead of the April 3 legislative portal deadline.

10. Carmel Valley Strategic Fuel Break (RCDMC Partnership): RCDMC and District Staff have completed fuel reduction efforts across three District park units—Hatton Canyon, Garland Ranch, and Cachagua Community Park (Blue Rock)—as part of the larger regional Carmel Valley Fuelbreak Project. To formalize the completion of these treatments, Planning & Conservation Management (PCM) staff hosted a project closeout meeting and after-action review (AAR). This session allowed the project team to evaluate technical outcomes, document lessons learned, and begin strategic planning for future maintenance cycles and regional needs. Additionally, PCM and RCDMC staff conducted a post-treatment site visit to the Hatton Canyon Open Space alongside representatives from California State Parks. This field coordination focused on ensuring fuel break continuity across jurisdictional boundaries and aligning long-term wildfire resilience strategies between the two agencies.



Drone aerial image of the Hatton Canyon Open Space Preserve after RCDMC and District implemented fuels reduction across the property.

11. 2026-2027 Work Plan and Budget Development: Each year, the PCM Division develops a comprehensive workplan and budget to align District conservation goals with available funding and staffing capacity. Staff have officially begun the

development of the proposed workplan and budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Initial project lists and preliminary dollar estimates have been shared with other District divisions to ensure interdepartmental coordination. PCM staff will continue to refine project specifications and budget allocations as the workplan moves through internal staff reviews and Board committee check-ins.

12. Monthly Weekend Weed Warrior Volunteer Event: The third monthly "Weekend Weed Warriors" event took place on March 14, 2026, at Palo Corona Regional Park. Working alongside a dedicated community volunteer, PCM staff treated an additional 1/10th of an acre of habitat near the park entrance. This round specifically focused on the area across the top of the parking lot, resulting in the collection of 17 contractor bags of invasive French broom (*Genista monspessulana*). Planning and Conservation staff collaborated with the EECO division to promote the event via social media and newsletters. While participation was lower than in previous months, PCM is working closely with the EECO division to implement more focused outreach strategies. Moving forward, the teams will coordinate on sending targeted email notifications immediately in advance of each event to build and sustain volunteer engagement. Despite the smaller turnout this round, the project continues to make steady progress in systematically reducing fine fuel loads and restoring native habitat at the park's main point of public access.



Volunteer pulled and bagged invasive French Broom along the Park entrance road.

13. Special Use Permit- Research and Monitoring Program: The PCM department manages the issuance of Special Use Permits (SUP) to external researchers, conservation groups, and educational institutions. This program ensures that scientific activities conducted on District lands are safe, non-invasive, and contribute to the long-term stewardship of the region's natural resources.

- a. **California Academy of Sciences Castilleja Diversity Study:** Staff issued a permit to the California Academy of Sciences for a research project titled "Discovering and Describing Castilleja Diversity". Principal Investigator Dr. Sarah Jacobs will lead a research team to sample leaf, flower, and seed tissue from approximately five *Castilleja affinis* individuals and collect one voucher specimen at Snively's Ridge and Snively Point within Garland Ranch Regional Park. This work focuses on clarifying species distinctions within the complex "paintbrush" wildflower genus using morphological and genetic data to inform regional conservation and biodiversity efforts.
- b. **CDFW South-Coast Steelhead Monitoring:** The District authorized a permit for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to conduct low-flow surveys for federally listed South-Coast Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) within the Big Sur Coast Biogeographical Population Group. Between June and November 2026, researchers will sample 100-meter reaches in Mill Creek at the Mill Creek Redwood Preserve and Seneca Creek at Palo Corona Regional Park. These surveys utilize electrofishing and snorkeling to determine species abundance and population trends, providing critical data to guide regional recovery and fishery management.
- c. **CDFW Carmel Valley Bobcat Population Study:** The District is collaborating with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Santa Lucia Conservancy (SLC) on a long-term study of bobcat health, behavior, and movement within the Carmel Valley. Staff met with CDFW biologists in February to review the proposed study area and logistics for Palo Corona Regional Park. PCM staff continue to coordinate with CDFW and other District departments to vet and finalize the operational details of the work on District property before issuing a formal special use permit for the study to proceed.
- d. **CNPS Annual Wildflower Show Collection:** Staff issued a permit to the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) for the responsible collection of wildflowers from Palo Corona Regional Park and other District locations. Authorized collectors will gather specimens in mid-April for display at the CNPS annual wildflower show. This recurring permit involves experienced botanists who follow specific road and trail access protocols to ensure the continued protection and stewardship of District botanical resources.