

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT**

BOARD MEETING: November 4, 2020

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-September through mid-October 2020 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

Audit: MPRPD's annual financial audit, conducted by White Nelson Diehl Evans, LLP (WNDE), is in full swing.

On Thursday, October 01, MPRPD's Finance Committee and staff met with the auditor's Partner-Robert J. Callanan and Senior Audit Manager-Robert Perl to kick off the field portion of their "remote visit". Due to COVID-19, the auditor's and staff have conducted all correspondence and materials reviews through email, secure online portal, Zoom, and Facetime.

As in previous years, most audit sample requests were uploaded to a secure portal. Normally, there are substantial follow-up items that are subsequently requested and reviewed in person when the auditor is physically on site. This year, a combination of methods were used, including visually showing requested documents that were simply too large and voluminous to send through Facetime camera. This included items like RFP and Public Works bidding responses. The Draft Audited Financial Statements are scheduled to be presented to the Board at the December 02, 2020 Board meeting.

On October 14, 2020, WNDE informed MPRPD that it will join national professional services firm of Clifton Larson Allen (CLA) effective November 01, 2020. As one of the nation's

leading professional services firm, CLA has retained the agility to serve clients of all sizes and locations, while expanding service offered to clients. CLA has a national presence in the state and local government sector and has 120 locations nationwide, a staff of 6,200 serving approximately 3,400 governmental clients, and is recognized as the largest Single Audit provider in the nation. The District's services will continue to be provided by the partners, managers, and staff whom we have worked with, based out of their current Irvine, CA office. It is WNDE's and CLA's intention to make a seamless transition as it relates to the services currently being provided to MPRPD.

COVID-related Orders, Meetings, and Updates: Staff continued to participate in regular meetings held by the County Health Officer to ensure we have the latest information, and that planning and implementation practices align MPRPD with the CDC's, State's, and County's latest guidelines. This information is vital to the development of Return to Work policies and procedures.

Staff is also in the process of refining protocols for the use of and interaction with Inmate Labor Crews on MPRPD projects.

Cross Country/Fitness Course at the Rancho Canada Unit: The proposed project's coalition met to discuss this project and options that may help advance its construction as early as the spring of 2021.

FEMA – Carmel Fire: Staff attended the FEMA Applicant's Briefing on Tuesday, September 29, 2020. Staff will determine if the District needs to apply for assistance upon completion of both the Fire Damage Assessment and CJPIA's review. FEMA will not cover anything that is covered by insurance (CJPIA). Once the insurance authority makes their determination, staff will know what if anything to apply for.

Financing of Capital Improvement and Other Projects: Staff met with a team from the California Special Districts Association to explore financing options for capital improvement projects and unfunded pension liabilities. In today's financial climate, low interest rate financing is viable

and attractive option to lower the District's unfunded pension costs and to amortize capital projects over time, thus protecting MPRPD's limited cash reserves for other needs, like emergencies or the Board's authorized discretionary expenditures.

Underwriting sizable capital improvement construction costs, like those associated with Project-A and Project-B, are a prime example demonstrating the benefit of securing a low interest construction-focused loan. Due to their large scope, these projects will be costly to construct.

Rather than expending time, effort, and funds in pursuit of a ballot Capital Improvement Bond Measure -- that may or may not be approved by the electorate, or waiting until MPRPD's cash reserves can fully fund these projects outright, securing a low interest rate loan may be the best option for MPRPD. Such a loan will allow MPRPD to advance our proposed construction projects in a timely manner, while construction costs are relatively low in response to COVID-19's impacts on the construction industry and economy. Conversely, waiting to secure funds via a ballot measure or thru savings may prove to be costly because construction costs typically increase after an economic downturn.

Now may be the best construction market with respect to MPRPD maximizing its buying power. Most importantly, MPRPD would like to provide the public the many benefits Projects-A and B, and other capital improvement projects will offer, as soon as possible. Concurrent with the pursuit and expenditure of low interest loan funds, MPRPD will also pursue grants and stimulus funds that are, or will become, available.

Staff will be reaching out to the Finance Committee to schedule a meeting soon. The goal will be to have the Finance Committee develop a basic understanding of the key concepts, including UAL payments, Amortization Payments, targeting strategies, and the impact of changing assumptions and investment performance. The discussion will focus on potential funding strategies, including the use of reserves (making ADPs), tax-exempt exchange, and merging bases. The discussion will also address Pension Obligation Bonds, and why they are not recommended in the case of the District. Finally, we will discuss the benefits of a

private placement loan versus a public offering. More information will be provided to the Board after staff have had the opportunity to discuss these and other subjects with the Finance Committee.

Frog Pond Habitat Management Plan: Staff has been preparing for the launch of this project by consulting with several parties including the cities of Monterey and Del Rey Oaks, USFWS, TAMC, BSLT, State Parks, and CSUMB to determine the desire to embark on a joint project that will expand the Habitat Management Plan for the recently acquired 6.9-acre FORA parcel to include the entirety of the Frog Pond East and West Units, and other jurisdiction's lands.

Habitat Restoration Plan for the Rancho Canada Unit: Staff met with the California Coastal Conservancy (SCC) and reviewed the RFP the SCC will soon issue to secure the services of a consulting firm that will provide research, design, and project administration services for this very important project. Contact names were also provide by MPDPD to the SCC to facilitate their coordination of this project with the Big Sur Land Trust's Carmel River FREE, MPRPD's Carmel River Bridges, and other projects.

Human Resources: Staff worked on miscellaneous confidential Human Resources projects and issues.

Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve: Staff continued to meet with Architect Stevens. The sign has been constructed and is awaiting the installation of the sign's artwork and lettering. The County has informed MPRPD that attendance for the dedication ceremony will be limited to the Health Officer's numbers, which presently limit gatherings to 12-folks maximum if they do not reside in the same household.

Ms. Stevens has been informed and is working with MPRPD to design a dedication ceremony that may include several means of attendance and participation including an intimate number of on-site attendees, coupled with drive-by and Zoom-based participation, and a recorded option that may enhance convenience. Per Ms. Stevens, the ceremony may take place in November but may possibly be pushed into December or January to avoid conflicts with the Holiday season.

Laguna Grande Regional Park Master Plan and Trail Maintenance Project: MPRPD continues to assist the City of Monterey with their very important project.

The project's consultant selection committee met on October 22, 2020 to review and discuss their respective scores for the four firms' proposals. The panel agreed that it shall submit the top-scoring firm's name and credentials, along with the panel's recommendation to enter negotiations with said firm, to the JPA for its consideration. The firm's name will be announced at that time.

Per the City of Monterey, the JPA will likely be convened by then end of this calendar year or in early January 2021. At that meeting, the JPA will be briefed as to whether the project should be phased. Phasing may be necessary to align the project's priorities with those funds that are presently available or may become available through grants or other sources. The project's complexity, which combines multi-modal transportation, recreation, public safety, and habitat restoration will likely be more costly than originally estimated. A revised cost estimate may be presented to the JPA at this meeting, as well.

Staff will continue to work closely with FORTAG's founders and the cities of Monterey and Seaside to advance this project.

NRPA Members' Think Tank: This think tank, composed of this nation's leading parks, recreation, and resource conservation organizations held a Zoom meeting to discuss topics of concern in our communities and within these industries. Focus centered around the problem of systemic racism that has once again become prevalent in American society, in general. While much research has been done as to the causes and its effects, there is a dearth on information how to effectively extinguish this low-brow human behavior.

Policy Development (revised and new): Staff continued to review existing policies and procedures and identify and draft necessary updates and revisions. Policies and procedures that will benefit MPRPD and our public service but are not currently ratified by the Board are being researched and will continue to be presented to the Board for its consideration as drafts are developed.

As previously noted, one of the most critical items staff is working on is the *Return-to-Work Plan* (RTW). This plan is required to safely reopen MPRPD facilities and worksites. The RTW cannot be implemented until related policies and procedures are in place, and the state's and county's guidelines permit reopening.

Project-B: Staff continued to meet with consultants regarding the design schematic phase of Project-B to further refine the location of amenities, such as the restroom facility. Engineering sub-consultants have been on site to locate and align utilities and other requirements for the project. Visibility, traffic flow, and ease of access are being considered in the placement of the amenities, as well as identifying long-term use and maintenance requirements.

River Field Well: MPRPD's staff and legal counsel met with others to discuss and plan for the protection of this well in cooperation with the County's and Big Sur Land Trust's Carmel River FREE project. This well provides potable water to Palo Corona Regional Park and our partnering in-holding.

Roof & Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Replacement Project: Staff continued to meet with the roofing consultant, and HVAC and Structural Engineers to keep this project moving forward. As previously reported, replacement of the HVAC units will require additional analysis and scoping of the project's HVAC and structural support to complete the bid package. Timing of placing this out to bid will be dependent on completion of the bid package. The actual construction schedule will be weather dependent.

Rotary Club Fund Raisers: Staff met with the Rotary Club to explore different fund raiser opportunities at Palo Corona Regional Park. These will be presented to the Board as more information becomes available. Rotary will reinvest funds on community and MPRPD projects.

Rumsien Tule House Exhibit: Staff is working with members of the Rumsien Tribe and EECO personnel to design and construct a life-size Rumsien House that will be exhibited within the Palo Corona Regional Park Discovery Center.

San Jose Creek Trail: Staff and legal counsel visited the site to explore options that may help open this trail soon. More information will be provided to the Board once staff has reconvened with State Parks, Big Sur Land Trust, and others.

Sherar Property Acquisition: The escrow company has recorded this property's acquisition with the County. The Carmel Pine Cone has shown interest in writing an article about this property's acquisition by MPRPD.

Strategic Plan: Staff completed drafting all but the final section on the 2021-25 Strategic Plan. The draft is under review by MPRPD's President and staff. Once comments are provided, the penultimate draft will be developed, including the final section which will list the plan's anticipated outcomes. It is anticipated that the penultimate draft will be submitted for the Board's review and action at the Board's December or January meeting.

As previously mentioned, the Ventana Wildlife Society has graciously allowed MPRPD to use their latest strategic plan as a template. Mr. Steve Dennis is generously volunteering his consulting services to both organizations, guiding their respective strategic plans, as he did in the development of the 2016-2020 renditions.

Task Force: Staff continues to work with several parties to develop the Habitat Restoration and Monitoring Task Force and hold a kick-off meeting. This team will help MPRPD develop various options that will be employed in the restoration and long-term monitoring of the District's critical habitat and other lands.

Training Continued: COVID-19, Technology & Recruitment, Worker Classification, CA Family Rights Act, Employee Supervision, and HR and Risk Management virtual conferences were the primary topics. Training sessions and conferences were presented by California Joint Powers Insurance Authority (JPIA), CPS HR Consulting, IRS, Liebert Cassidy Whitmore, BambooHR and IPMA-HR. Staff also participated in the California JPIA Risk Manager's Forum and the CalPERS Annual Education Forum.

EECO DIVISION

California Wildlife Day (CWD): The Carmel River Watershed Conservancy and MPRPD are the event's co-sponsors. This coalition's staff held a "kick-off" meeting to begin planning for the 2021 CWD event. Celebrated on the spring equinox each year, this upcoming online two-day event will run the weekend of March 20-21, 2021. The new virtual platform, with the potential of interactive in-person activities, presents opportunities to reach a more diverse and larger number of participants.

The CWD's initial design includes a live streaming conference-style setting with students sharing their art, science, and poetry submissions; keynote and subject expert presenters; exhibitor rooms, arts and crafts activities; personal challenges and commitment pages; with more to come as the event is further refined.

Recognizing the annual State event statewide with partnerships and inclusivity is a high priority for the sponsors.

On October 14, 2020, during Supervisor Mary Adams' townhall meeting, Senator Bill Monning discussed his impact and achievements on the California State Senate. The heartfelt interview included a recognition of Lorin Letendre and Beverly Eyre's efforts to create a day honoring California's diverse wildlife. The "shout out" begins at 39:36, out of the 56:02-minute discussion, and can easily be accessed on a recording posted via the Facebook link - [The STATE of Our District w/Senator Bill Monning](#).

Drone Imagery: In response to the recent Carmel Fire that burned portions of MPRPD's San Clement/Blue Rock and Cachagua properties, staff researched drone imagery options and contacted vendors to determine aerial imagery feasibility for the regions, and specifically, for the Carmel River Watershed. Options to expand MPRPD's collection of images and videos included taking drone imagery of our parks – especially those areas affected by fire and restoration efforts, and developing photo monitoring points to document ground-cover changes and seasonal variability through a photographic time-series. The photo/video

collection will greatly expand MPRPD's visual library for use in restoration efforts, historic documents, "story mapping", virtual tours, damage assessment, and more.

Grants: Staff continued to research and pursue grants for programs and projects that support and advance MPRPD's mission, and explored two grants:

SOAR Museum Grant: In September 2020, staff submitted a grant application that, if awarded to MPRPD, will underwrite costs for an interactive, 3-D Carmel River Watershed Exhibit, estimated at \$40,000.

Prop 68 Grant (Round 4 Funds): Staff researched this Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program" grant to underwrite construction costs for an outdoor classroom/shade ramada for Garland Ranch Regional Park (GRRP). Unfortunately, although GRRP qualifies as a site providing opportunities for underserved communities classified as having significant poverty and a critical lack of park space, it was determined that the project did not sufficiently meet the community engagement requirements necessary for the application to be competitive. Staff is not be applying for this grant during this round and is instead looking for other funding opportunities.

Marina Dunes Preserve Restoration Implementation

Strategy: Marina Dunes Preserve is part of the more extensive Monterey Dunes, which extends from Monterey harbor north to the Salinas River mouth. The Monterey Dunes contain a unique blend of coastal species from northern and southern California and many endemic species (native species of restricted distribution), resulting in areas of remarkable plant diversity. Since 1990, MPRPD has gradually been restoring this environmentally sensitive coastal dune/strand habitat to stabilize the exposed dunes and increase wildlife habitat. In 2005, MPRPD adopted the Dune Habitat Restoration Plan and has implemented its restoration strategies.

The 2005 Plan involves the removal of non-native vegetation, seeding/planting native vegetation, installation of sand-drift fencing, community planting, and education/outreach. The 2005 Plan needs to be reviewed and updated to determine prioritization areas of restoration, establishment of current best practices, and course correction of less effective practices. In September 2020, MPRPD issued a public request for proposal (RFP) to update the 2005 Plan and develop a three-year implementation strategy.

Burleson Consulting Inc. (Burleson) was selected as the consultant for their dynamic roadmap of restoring the Marina Dunes Preserve habitat. With the knowledge and experience required to regenerate and advance the restoration progress, Burleson will help evaluate the 2005 Restoration Plan's successes and deficiencies, develop a 3-Year Implementation Plan, monitoring criteria, and reporting requirements, and create a budget for the habitat restoration project's implementation. In addition to the revising the restoration plan, Burleson is committed to networking with adjacent landowners and other researchers to develop a "monitoring template" with comprehensive, repeatable studies, and data collection and best practices techniques.

Concurrently, MPRPD staff negotiated, with the CA State University Monterey Bay - Watershed Institute's Return of the Natives staff to enter into a cooperative agreement for seed collecting, propagating, and planting 6,000 native dunes plants the current 2020-2021 Fiscal Year, with the option to revisit and extend the agreement for an additional two years.

Burleson and Return of the Natives are directed to collaborate on the restoration plan, coordinate planting locations and planting palettes, and develop an annual report on the year's progress.

Monarch Butterflies at Palo Corona Regional Park Rancho Canada Unit (RCU): Monitoring of the RCU's upland habitat restoration sites yielded some exciting

discoveries -- monarch butterfly caterpillars! Known as “cats”, a total of six were discovered on the site’s +/- 103 recently planted native milkweed plants. The site will continue to be monitored in hopes of seeing eggs and or multiple chrysalides. This “monarch butterfly waystation” may be well on its way to expanding critical habitat.



Signage: Interpretive trail entrance signs were created, reminding visitors to be mindful of trash they may generate including, fruit peels, plastic bottles, masks, litter, animal waste, human feces, and toilet paper.

Service Learning at CSUMB: Staff is hosting four (4) service learners during the Fall 2020 Semester for CSUMB students. Two projects have moved forward into the research & design phase:

QR Codes: Improving communication resources for park users

Carbon Footprint Interpretation Materials: Creating sustainability/carbon footprint interpretive materials addressing climate change

Social Media/Public Outreach: Staff continues to post park updates, recent sightings, PSAs, and research technology to connect the public and volunteers to parks and open spaces.

Facebook stats - @MPRegionalParkDistrict:

- October 12 follower count: 1356 ▲
- New followers since September 13: 2
- Post reach: People reached at least once
- Aug. 13 – Sept. 13 average: 602 views per post
- Sept. 13 – Oct. 12 average: 230 ▼ views per post

Reactions:

- Aug. 13 – Sept. 13 average: 20 reactions per post
- Sept. 13 – Oct. 12 average: 7 ▼ views per post

Comments:

- Aug. 13 – Sept. 13 average: 2 comments per post
- Sept. 13 – Oct. 12 average: 1 ▼ views per post

Shares:

- Aug. 13 – Sept. 13 average: 4 shares per post
- Sept. 13 – Oct. 12 average: 2 ▼ views per post
- Top 3 most popular posts:
 - Sept. 15 Tarantula time! (2.7k views)
 - Sept. 21 Bring a bag to collect trash (1.2k views)
 - Sept. 17 Sunset by chrislabasco (539 views)

Special Use Permits: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, MPRPD determined that the issuance of Special Use Permits (SUP) would be curtailed and limited to research activities. During the month of October, two SUP applications were issued to the following researchers.

Schultz (CSUMB): Access to Frog Pond Wetland Preserve and Palo Corona Regional Park to deploy bat detector monitoring equipment to identify species within those parks. This portion of an on-going project is scheduled to terminate in May 2021.

Watson (CSUMB): Access to Palo Corona Regional Park's backcountry for vegetation and trail surveys, with minimal collection of minor plant samples of non-protected species.

Volunteers: Keeping volunteers engaged is of critical importance. Staff issued the October/November 2020 Volunteer Newsletter. This rich and well-designed newsletter included articles written by staff, volunteers, and partnering agencies. The upcoming volunteer enrichment on *Intro to*

Nature Journaling: Opening Your Eyes to Wonder”, previously scheduled for 6 pm, Thursday, October 22, 2020, has been rescheduled to 6pm, Thursday, October 29, 2020 due to conflicts with the national presidential debate. This live interactive session shares techniques on nature journaling with hands-on applications. Participants are encouraged to bring a journal and writing instrument, and optional colored pencils, watercolors, and sketchbook.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION

Cachagua Community Park Water System: Potable water system improvements at Cachagua Community Park are approximately 90% complete. Rangers attended an on-site tutorial provided by the Don Chapin Company addressing system operation and maintenance. An Operation Manual will be provided once the project is complete.



Carmel Fire: Suppression repair work has resumed on MPRPD properties. Osborne Ridge at the Kahn Ranch Addition was recently completed and will remain closed until winter rains provide soil stabilization. Work on Vasquez Trail at Garland Ranch Regional Park is ongoing and is likely to be completed by the end of October.

Rangers escorted our policy's Insurance Adjuster into the San Clemente-Blue Rock Open Space Preserve on Friday, October 16, 2020 to inspect damaged fence lines and assess property damage.

Power and phone service were restored to the Cachagua area approximately 3 weeks ago, following a temporary outage caused by the Carmel Fire.



Former Clubhouse Repairs and Related Projects:

Rangers continue to participate as members of the Project-B and Clubhouse roof/HVAC project teams. This month included participation in multiple design team meetings, site inspections, and providing valuable insight to project engineers and architects. Rangers also continued to address the former clubhouse's and maintenance building's deficiencies as they became apparent.

Hazard Tree at GRRP: Rangers and MPRPD's GIS Consultant determined the hazard tree threatening to crush a neighboring property's fence line is located on District property. Rangers are in the process of issuing bids for a local tree service company to remove the problematic tree. Access through the neighbor's property to facilitate removal has been authorized by the private property's owner.

Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve Sign: Rangers recently hauled several loads of topsoil to the JSMPP monument sign site to blend the prominent slab foundation with the surrounding topography. Using the District's dump truck and heavy equipment saved staff many hours of manually spreading fill material around the sign.

Memorial Benches: Rangers are working with former board member Mary Dainton to install a memorial bench honoring the late Anneliese Sutter. A "lovely, quiet location" along Garza's Canyon Trail has been identified and reserved for this memorial bench.

Palo Corona Regional Park Backcountry/Santa Lucia Conservancy Fence: Staff partnered with Santa Lucia Conservancy to coordinate the replacement of 4.5-miles of aged, dilapidated fence line along the boundary between Palo Corona Regional Park and the Santa Lucia Preserve. Staff representing both organizations met to discuss the project, determine priority segments, and evaluate alignments. Boundary fences in the PCRCP backcountry that were not replaced following the Soberanes Fire are over 50-years old and failing in many areas, allowing cattle to escape onto neighboring properties.

Project-A: MPRPD staff and the design consultants' teams met on October 02, 2020 to review the most recent schematics for Project-A. Several issues were addressed including conflicts with an existing PG&E easement and amenity locations to accommodate the elevational differences within the project's footprint, with the goal of minimizing or eliminating retaining walls to reduce construction costs. The next Project-A meeting is scheduled for November 06, 2020.

RCU Tree Removals: Rangers are conducting site visits with tree service contractors to obtain bids for another round of tree removals at Rancho Canada. This time, over 30 trees that have been identified as either dead or dying will be removed. Once this project is complete, the total for dead trees removed by MPRPD at Rancho Canada will exceed 100.

Safe Harbor Agreement Pond Work at PCRCP: MPRPD's Safe Harbor Agreement requires the District to maintain ponds identified as habitat for threatened and endangered

species, specifically tiger salamanders and red-legged frogs. Rangers coordinated with the District's amphibian biologist to obtain a scope of work for this project, then conducted site visits with three local heavy-equipment contractors. Ventana Forestry was the lowest responsible bidder and began work at Animas Pond on October 13, 2020.



Red-legged frogs were captured prior to pond de-watering and kept alive using a water trough equipped with a solar-powered aerator



As a fire prevention measure, Rangers mowed the area identified for project spoils



Tom “Little Bear” Nason using his excavator to remove overgrown vegetation and accumulated sediment from Animas Pond

USGS Monitoring Station: Rangers coordinated access and gate codes for installation of the United States Geological Survey Seismic Monitoring Station. Rangers shared safety concerns with the USGS team prior to accessing the PCRP backcountry, which were addressed. USGS will soon return to finish hardware installation and bring the site online.



FISCAL IMPACT: Not Applicable – Informational Only

FUNDING BALANCE: Not Applicable – Informational Only

RECOMMENDATION: Review and file the report