

PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PREPARED FOR MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
AUGUST 1, 2018



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This General Development Plan (GDP) document was commissioned by the District to investigate the range of recreation opportunities appropriate for Palo Corona Regional Park through site assessment, master planning, and public outreach. It will serve as a road map for conservation, stewardship, and public access to manage the 4,585 acres of highly valuable public open space and habitat; however, everything presented in the following plan is subject to approval by the Board of Directors. In line with MPRPD's mission, Palo Corona Regional Park is to be maintained for public enjoyment and its natural resources protected in perpetuity, and must provide recreation, educational, and research opportunities while conserving the land's valuable natural resources.

OVERVIEW

Palo Corona Regional Park (PCRP, "Palo Corona," or "the Park") is a valuable site within a 70-mile long chain of open space extending from the Carmel River to the Big Sur region. The acquisition of Palo Corona Ranch was the result of a partnership between the Nature Conservancy, the Big Sur Land Trust, the State of California, and the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. These organizations came together in 2004 to purchase the approximately 10,000 acre ranch, marking Monterey County's largest land conservation effort. The planning process started in 2004 with Palo Corona's Front Ranch and Back Country Units, then added Whisler-Wilson in 2009, subsequently adding the former Rancho Cañada Golf Club property in April of 2018.

Palo Corona Regional Park is located in Carmel, California, stretching almost seven miles south through the scenic highlands of the Carmel coast. The Park sits in an established recreation destination, a region that attracts millions of visitors each year to explore the shoreline and coastal mountain ranges of the Monterey Peninsula and Big Sur. Existing concentrations of recreational day use and camping facilities are found throughout the region thus, the Park will likely attract recreation users from local communities and non-resident travelers visiting the region and recreating on public lands.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the opportunities and constraints facing Palo Corona Regional Park, a series of focus groups and public workshops were facilitated over the course of the project. These meetings provided insight into the types of improvements and uses that the community felt were appropriate for the Park. Throughout the project's public engagement, there was continued praise from the community about the integrity of the process. Residents appreciated the varied and frequent opportunities for input, from the project's early idea generation to the development of the Preferred Alternative. As stated repeatedly in public comment collected during meetings and online surveys, residents are fearful of Palo Corona becoming another overburdened public amenity and tourist destination like Point Lobos State Natural Reserve; instead, they stressed that they desired a park that offered uses and programming geared toward local residents, addressing their needs first over potential tourist-attracting amenities.

Throughout the process, there was strong public support for several uses. An organized group of residents collected over 300 letters advocating for a fenced, off-leash dog park at the Rancho Cañada Unit of Palo Corona. This amenity would not only fill a need for a fenced dog run in the community, but it would also provide inclusionary access to an aging demographic with many residents that may not be able to physically access the area's dog friendly hiking trails or Carmel Beach. Additionally, there was repeated support for continued use of the former clubhouse for community meetings and private events. Many residents are very active in the community, and participate in clubs and organizations that host regular meetings in the ballroom and banquet space, and this could be a steady source of revenue for the District.

Finally, the public expressed a strong desire to introduce inclusionary and multi-use trails at Palo Corona. The Rancho Cañada Unit level terrain and network of existing paved paths make it a perfect location for including trails that can accommodate users of all skills and abilities, particularly the community's many senior residents that wish to stay active. Regional and national recreation trends are also seeing a growing interest in activities such as road cycling and mountain biking. With its thousands of acres of rugged terrain, the Back Country Unit will be difficult for many day-hikers to explore on foot so expanding trail use to bike and equestrian will allow more visitors to enjoy the Park's stunning wilderness. There was also great interest in expanding Palo Corona's trail connections, linking the Park to surrounding neighborhoods and adjacent open space.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

POTENTIAL TRAILS AND RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS

Palo Corona's 4,500 acres offers miles of trails that allow visitors to experience the Park's diverse plant and animal habitat with rolling terrain and sweeping views. Many visitors will come to the Park to hike, whether it is for a short loop around the Rancho Cañada Unit, or a multi-day through-hike from the Back Country Unit into Big Sur and beyond.

In order to facilitate different user groups wanting to explore the Park's vast network of trails, the District has examined different trail types and typologies proposed for different locations and potential trail users. The District hopes to accommodate many different users on Palo Corona's trails, from inclusionary access at the Rancho Cañada Unit to multi-use access in the Back Country Unit. A trail hierarchy was developed with the Preferred Alternative to identify proposed trail widths and designate which trails will be appropriate for different uses. At this time, the Park's trails will be non-motorized access (except for maintenance vehicles), however, any mechanized instruments or vehicles for the purpose of universal access will be allowed to help visitors of all skills and abilities experience Palo Corona's inspiring views and open space.

Palo Corona's breath-taking landscape in the roughly 4,000 acres of unspoiled back country provides miles of trails and open space for many potential new users. The Park's massive extents make it difficult to see all in one day by foot, so opportunities for overnight camping and non-motorized transportation would allow visitors a fuller experience of the Park's long list of natural features and points of interest. In order to expand educational and interpretive opportunities, additional improvements can be made to the Back Country Unit's cultural and natural points of interest in order to create destination points for visitors exploring the Park.

With its stunning views of the ocean and easy accessibility for all users, many of Palo Corona's visitors will enjoy the Front Ranch Unit. The primary focus of programming will remain hiking and passive recreation on the existing trail network, yet with increased interest and changing demographics there may be the need for expanded day-use amenities and facilities. Points of interest and historic features at the Front Ranch Unit could be expanded upon with interpretive signage or kiosks. The historic barn and corral are important to highlight for Palo Corona's rich ranching and agricultural history, while the Oak Knoll and Inspiration Point serve as important landmarks to the Park's incredible natural history. Additionally, with continued restoration efforts, there are opportunities for visitors to enjoy wildlife viewing in the Front Ranch Unit, and interpretive brochures or field guides can help them identify the native (and non-native) flora and fauna of the Park.

Acquired by the District in April 2018, the former 36 hole Rancho Cañada Golf Club will serve as Palo Corona's primary point of public access. Access Permits will not be required. The site will be the Park's and District's headquarters. The former golf course will be restored into native habitat over the next two decades. The Rancho Cañada Unit offers a lot of opportunity for introducing new uses and programming that serve the community and compliments the Carmel River watershed restoration efforts. Proposed community amenities will be concentrated around the existing parking lot and former clubhouse to focus the highly trafficked spaces into one area and leave the remainder of the property for natural open space and future watershed restoration projects. The proposed trail network will try to utilize many of the existing paved cart paths, and the District hopes that all of the Ranch Cañada Unit's trails will provide inclusionary access at the completion of these improvements.

Palo Corona's extensive landscape is home to a richly diverse habitat that provides endless opportunities for collaboration and research of the region's valuable natural and cultural resources. There already exist a number of on-going research efforts that the District hopes to continue with it's partners, as well as the potential to introduce new studies that will help reveal further information for many current topics in science, ecology, and beyond.

NEXT STEPS

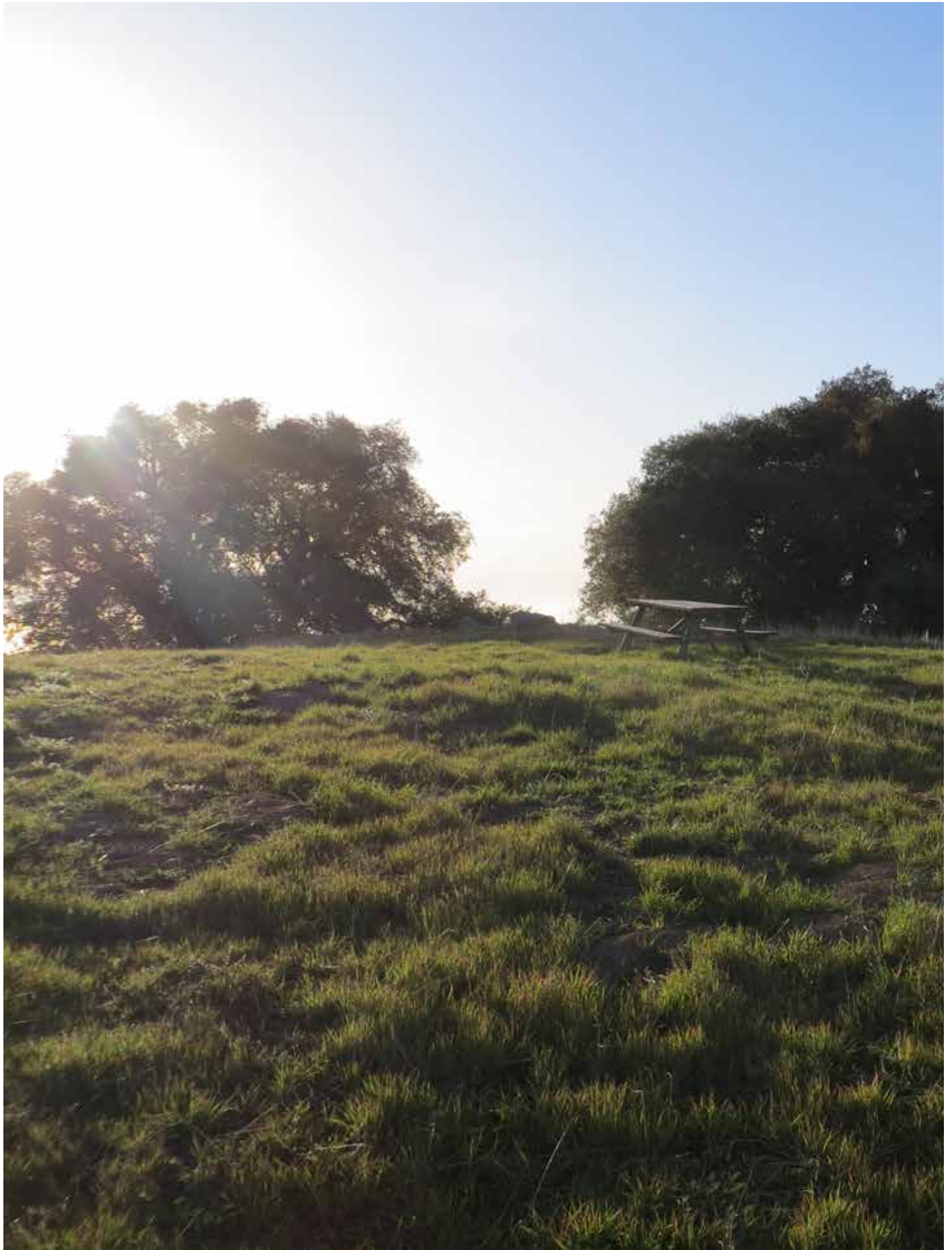
The District plans to hold a Dedication Ceremony on September 28, 2018. The event will celebrate the collaboration between The Trust for Public Land, the Santa Lucia Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, the State of California, the former property owners, and the District in making the former Rancho Cañada Golf Club a public park. This property will offer permit-free access to Palo Corona's numerous trails, and will also serve as one of this nation's most important habitat conservation project sites as the former golf course is restored into natural habitat. A soft-opening will likely take place prior to September 28.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Palo Corona's GDP will guide the Park's planning and development, as will the forthcoming Habitat Restoration Plan. An RFP for the continued use of the Banquet Rooms, commercial kitchen, and former Bar and Grill will be published. Revenues from this agreement will be used to hire staff, make improvements, and enhance programming. Future improvements and programs may include the construction of an enclosed off-leash dog park, equestrian staging area, mountain bike access, and pond expansion. Revenue generating opportunities including analysis of currently unused space at the Discovery Center to determine its programs; and, other potential options will also be pursued, subject to Board approval. The development of Back Country camping and its respective Ranger Residences, campground host sites, and Back Country administrative complexes will similarly be pursued, as will the potential acquisition of adjacent lands suitable for conservation recreation and/or providing access to the Back Country. These endeavors shall be appropriately phased.

MPRPD understands there is a need for additional planning work, including a conservation plan, educational and interpretive plan, and an operations plan, and is currently in the process of developing a approach to these plans that best fit the needs of the park. Additionally, the District is working with CalFire to establish an MOU for emergency staging use and associated operations and maintenance. Further development and implementation of the GDP will require CEQA analysis, and the District, in partnership with an environmental planning consultant, will complete this evaluation in a separate phase of the process. Materials and reports will be posted to MPRPD's website as they are developed throughout the planning and implementation process.

Finally, it is important to note that while this General Development Plan hopes to establish a framework of potential future development for Palo Corona, it is meant to be an adaptable document that provides flexibility as the park is developed and the needs of the community change. While preliminary phasing has been established, the GDP will allow the District to explore potential opportunities or pursue public-private partnerships to implement projects when a funding source arises. All current and future uses, however, must continue to honor the requirements of the State grant funding, and ensure that restoration and conservation efforts remain uncompromised by recreational use.



1 INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

- Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District
- Palo Corona Ranch Acquisition
- Palo Corona Regional Park General Development Plan
- Site Context

INTRODUCTION



View of Palo Corona's Front Ranch and Carmel Bay from Inspiration Point

INTRODUCTION

THE MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT:

In 1972, the voters of Monterey County approved Measure A, which created the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD or “the District”). The District was entrusted to acquire lands for the express purpose of preserving open space and providing passive public access. Since then, the District has successfully protected approximately 13,050 acres of open space while maintaining balanced budgets with minimal overhead. In 2004, the District acquired the former Fish Ranch, also known as Palo Corona Ranch.

That same year the voters of the District approved a ballot measure creating the Parks, Open Space and Coastal Preservation Benefit Assessment District. The ballot measure assesses each property owner within the District approximately \$26 per year to provide additional funding for the District to continue preserving and protecting parks and open space. This annual assessment, which raises approximately \$1,000,000 per year, ends in 2019.

The District’s current boundaries cover over 500 square miles and include the seven incorporated cities on the Monterey Peninsula, Carmel Valley, Pebble Beach and the Big Sur Coast. The District is governed by an elected Board of Directors, representing the citizens in each of five wards. Further information can be found on the District’s website: www.mprpd.org

PALO CORONA RANCH ACQUISITION.

Palo Corona Regional Park (PCRP, “Palo Corona,” or “the Park”) is a valuable site within a 70-mile long chain of open space extending from the Carmel River to the Big Sur region. The acquisition of Palo Corona Ranch was the result of a partnership between the Nature Conservancy, the Big Sur Land Trust, the State of California, and the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. These organizations came together in 2004 to purchase the approximately 10,000 acre ranch, marking Monterey County’s largest land conservation effort.

The former Palo Corona Ranch was then devoted to conservation and parkland and divided between the District and the California Department of Fish & Wildlife. The southern 5,500-acres of the property were added to the State Department of Fish & Game’s existing Joshua Creek Ecological Preserve. The northern 4,350-acres became the District’s newest park, Palo Corona Regional Park. The Park serves as a critical link in an important corridor of highly valuable open space on the Central Coast, connecting ten other parks and preserves, including: Carmel River State Beach, Odello East, Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, Point Lobos Ranch, Garrapata State Park, Mitteldorf Preserve, Santa Lucia Preserve conservation lands, Joshua Creek Ecological Preserve, Glen Deven Ranch, and Los Padres National Forest.

The planning process started in 2004 with Palo Corona’s Front Ranch and Back Country Units, then added Whisler-Wilson in 2009, subsequently adding, the former Rancho Cañada Golf Club property in April of 2018.



Inspiration Point in Palo Corona Regional Park



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District logo

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: Palo Corona Regional Park and context. GIS data provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting



Looking West at the Pacific Ocean from Palo Corona's Back Country Unit.

INTRODUCTION

PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This General Development Plan (GDP) document was commissioned by the District to investigate the range of recreation opportunities appropriate for Palo Corona Regional Park through site assessment, master planning, and public outreach. It will serve as a roadmap for conservation, stewardship, and public access to manage the 4,585 acres of highly valuable public open space and habitat. In line with MPRPD's mission, Palo Corona Regional Park is to be maintained for public enjoyment and its natural resources protected in perpetuity, and must provide recreation, educational, and research opportunities while conserving the land's valuable natural resources.

SITE CONTEXT:

LOCATION AND USAGE

Palo Corona Regional Park is located in Carmel, California, stretching almost seven miles south through the scenic highlands of the Carmel coast (Figure 1). The Park sits in an established recreation destination, a region that attracts millions of visitors each year to explore the shoreline and coastal mountain ranges of the Monterey Peninsula and Big Sur. Existing concentrations of recreational day use and camping facilities are found throughout the region thus, the Park will likely attract recreation users from local communities and non-resident travelers visiting the region and recreating on public lands.

ACCESS

In 2005, the northern 600-acres of the Palo Corona Regional Park, referred to as the Front Ranch, were opened for limited public access. Prior to the addition of the Rancho Cañada Unit, there were two public entry points into the park, the main entry being off of State Route 1(SR-1), just south of the Carmel River Bridge, and the other being pedestrian-only access via the South Bank Trail. Based on an agreement with Caltrans regarding traffic impact on SR-1, parking is limited to 13 vehicles adjacent to the main entrance on an unimproved shoulder of the highway. Since it opened, the District has received a steady stream of positive comments on the trail system and spectacular views had from the 600 acres currently accessible by permit only. At the same time, the District has also received an increase in demand for more access; confirming the need to establish expanded parking and accessibility to Palo Corona Regional Park.

SITE FEATURES

One of the Park's most stunning features is its rugged terrain, rising from near sea level to almost 3,000 feet in elevation at its highest point. The variance of elevation affords a diversity of experience, from incredible vistas with views of the Pacific Ocean and Carmel Valley, to dramatic canyons canopied by towering redwoods and pines. The topography forms the headwaters to thirteen minor watersheds, providing critical habitat to aquatic species such as steelhead trout and red-legged frogs. Across the Park's expansive landscape, a diverse mosaic of ecosystems support over 500 species of plants through streambeds, grasslands, and mixed forests. These varied ecological communities create valuable habitat and wildlife corridor connections for quail, raptors, deer, bobcat, mountain lion, and California Condor. The Park's rolling grasslands boast the Central Coast's highest number of different grass and forb species, and support endangered species like Smith's blue butterfly. A small hunting cabin and nearby bucolic homestead with a remnant orchard hearken back to the former ranch's agricultural past; these historical structures remain on the property as relics to the land's rich history.



2 SITE ASSESSMENT

SUMMARIES OF EXISTING REPORTS

OFF-SITE ASSESSMENT

- State Route 1 Access
- Parking and Roadway Enhancements
- South Bank Trail
- Adjacencies

ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

- Topography
- Soils
- Hydrology/Stream Zones
- Vegetation
- Trails and Infrastructure
- Cattle and Grazing Management

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

- Front Ranch
- Rehabilitation of Barn
- Back Country
- Partnerships

SITE ASSESSMENT

SUMMARIES OF EXISTING REPORTS

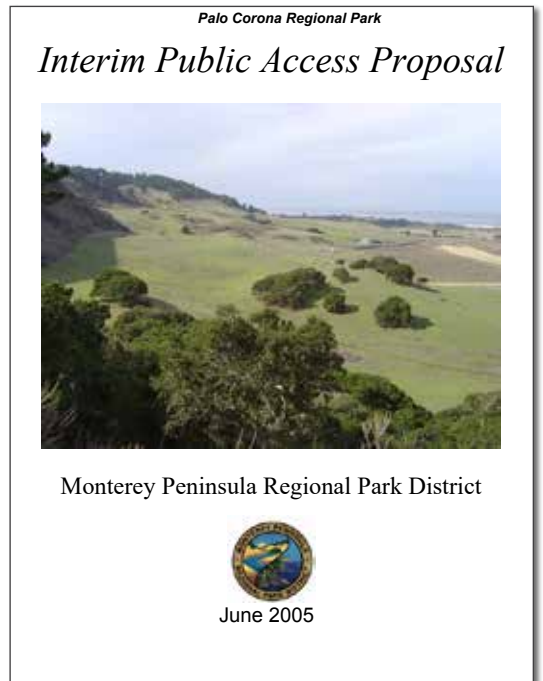
After the purchase of the Palo Corona Ranch property in 2004, the District wrote and commissioned a number of studies intended to enhance the long-term development plan of the Park. The following is a summary of the information and findings of those documents, which will be used during the General Development Plan (GDP) process to better understand the Park's existing and baseline conditions, and inform the plan's decisions on recreation and development suitability.

INTERIM PUBLIC ACCESS PROPOSAL

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District 2005

Shortly after the District acquired the Palo Corona Ranch property, it launched its initial study of the Park to determine appropriate public uses and management strategies to occur in the short-term. The intent of the Interim Public Access Plan identified short-term improvements and provide limited recreational opportunities to the public. The plan also identified locations for temporary parking and restroom facilities, signage, and site furnishings, and also outlines routes for new trails and best practices for trail construction. It also established a system to allow limited public access to the Park by permit only.

This report provided discussion of initial desires for recreation opportunities from the public as well as the constraints subsequently facing the GDP in meeting these development and restoration goals.



Improvements made to the publicly-accessible Front Ranch since the Park's opening.

SITE ASSESSMENT

PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

*Mary Doane and Gary S. Breschini, Ph.D. RPA,
Archaeological Consulting
2009*

This report summarizes project research, findings, and observations from two site visits. It details a number of archaeological points of interest found on site, including historic ranch roads and prehistoric routes, several Native American grinding rocks, a prehistoric midden site, four homestead sites, the remains of a grizzly bear trap, and a lumber cache. Recommendations detail that many of the points of interest require little attention and will not be impacted by regular park access and maintenance. The report notes that cultural resources may exist on site that have not yet been discovered, and includes language for construction permitting that directs contractors to halt for further site evaluation if any cultural resources are unexpectedly discovered during construction.

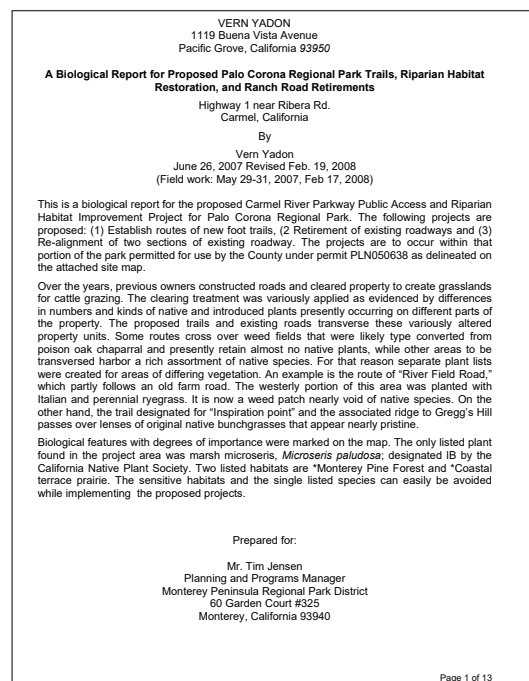
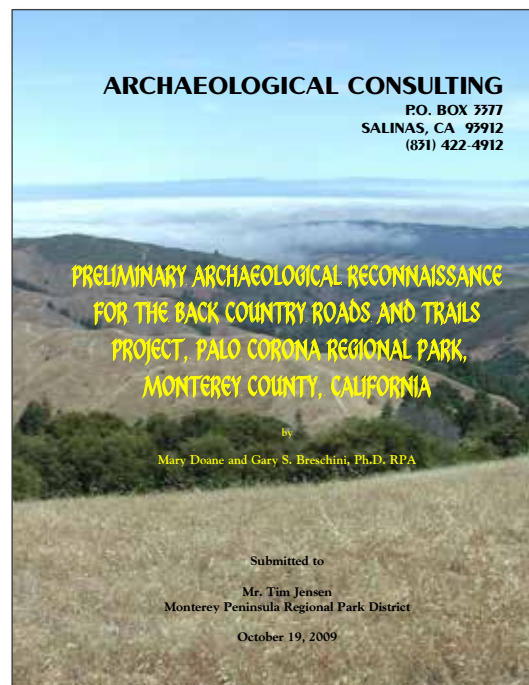
The report will inform the GDP on how to interact with these known cultural resources, and what should be avoided in order to reduce impact to these sensitive sites. Additional archaeological field work is recommended prior to specific improvements.

A BIOLOGICAL REPORT FOR PROPOSED PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK TRAILS, RIPARIAN HABITAT RESTORATION, AND RANCH ROAD RETIREMENTS

*Vern Yadon
2008*

The biological report for the proposed Carmel River Parkway Public Access and Riparian Habitat Improvement Project for Palo Corona Regional Park identifies the plants and habitats that comprise the site, discusses the impact to certain species, and provides recommendations for future development. The only listed plant found in the project area was marsh microseris, *Microseris paludosa*; designated IB Endangered by the California Native Plant Society. Two listed habitats are Monterey Pine Forest and Coastal terrace prairie. There are also several bird species sited that are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The sensitive habitats and listed species can be avoided while implementing the proposed projects. The report recommends that direct routes through grasslands, and from Inspiration Point to Gregg's Hill, should be avoided, and suggests that trails are designed and, as appropriate, be selected on winter-wet soils with California oatgrass present to avoid erosion.

The biological report provides insight for the GDP on which plant and animal species are priority for protection. The location of these species should be noted and help to dictate the suitable areas for recreation development.



SITE ASSESSMENT

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Jodi M. McGraw, Ph.D., Population and Community Ecologist

Keith Guenther, Wildland Solutions

2007

The Grassland Management Plan discusses strategies for preserving and enhancing biodiversity within the Park's grasslands, and recommends best management practices and adaptive management approaches to facilitate a productive relationship between the grassland habitats and cattle. This plan gives an overview of the goals and objectives that should be applied to the Park's grassland management, and provides grazing strategies based on season, intensity, and location within the Park that will both manage encroachment of invasive species and limit the cattle's impact on sensitive habitat and soil stability. It also discusses particular methods for management of water resources on site to prevent damage by cattle to sensitive aquatic habitats. The plan concludes with recommendations for infrastructure improvements for grazing, including fences and troughs, and discusses the benefit of prescribed burns, continued grassland monitoring, and interpretive information for park visitors about cattle's role in the Park.

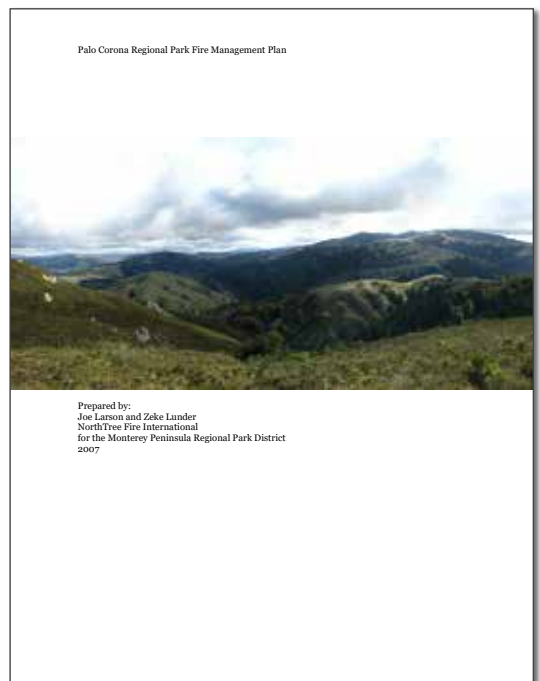
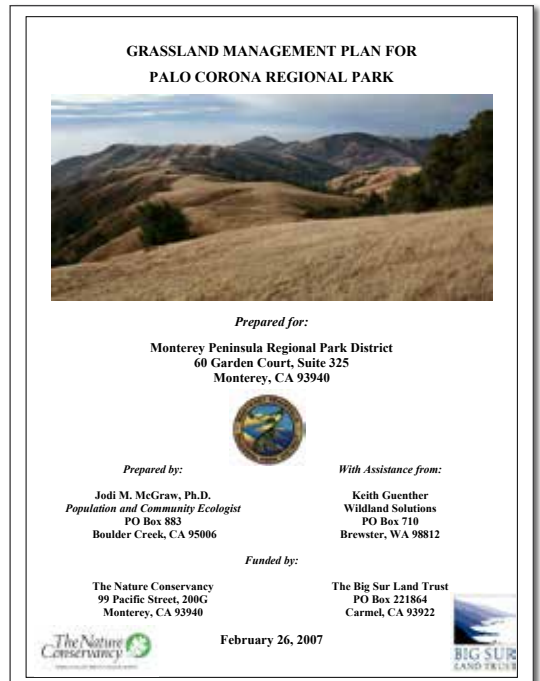
This report is valuable to the GDP process for its insight on how grazing schedules and techniques can be adapted to reduce damage to the landscape from erosion, methods to enhance biodiversity, and protect the Park's sensitive species, like Smith's blue butterfly and red-legged frog.

FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Joe Larson and Zeke Lunder, NorthTree Fire International
2007

This plan surveys the state in which Palo Corona is currently in regards to fire susceptibility, assess potential fire behavior based on models and then recommends mitigation strategies to be implemented. Palo Corona, sitting between two areas identified as high fire hazard "target areas" by CAL FIRE, is comprised of a high diversity of plant communities which result in varied intensities of wildfires and ecological effects. The plan assesses the likelihood of large fire burning on the property, the difficulty in controlling potential fires, and where fuel reduction projects should occur based on several models. Finally, the plan emphasizes fire suppression strategies and postfire restoration activities including vegetation and management.

The fire management plan provides a critical perspective to the GDP on parkland management, especially concerning the Park's stands of Monterey pine and prescribed burns.



SITE ASSESSMENT

SAN JOSE CREEK WATERSHED ASSESSMENT

Denis Ruttenberg and Berry Hecht, Balance Hydrologics, Inc.

Danny Hagans and Tara Zuroweste, Pacific Watershed Associates
2014

The report provides an assessment for the entire San Jose Creek (SJC) watershed which covers approximately 14.4 square miles in northwest Monterey County and consists of 4 major tributaries: Animas Creek, Seneca Creek, Van Winkley Canyon and Williams Canyon. In order to further pursue the studies performed in 2006, the report aims to identify current sediment sources within the watershed, summarize past stream and sediment gaging, analyze partial fish barriers and evaluate fish passage at the respective creek's mouth. Overall, sediment transport was shown to be relatively low with major sources of sediment found in upland sources such as head cuts, roads and hill slope erosion. Storm-proofing roads will provide immediate benefits to the quality of the watershed. Two fish barriers were identified in addition to a natural permanent barrier. The two temporary fish barriers were recommended to be left in place. The SJC lagoon has been identified as an important anadromous watershed. Sediment impairment is a primary restorative goal. Field observations and surveys show that sustaining this lagoon's accessibility to and from the ocean is critical for fish migration.

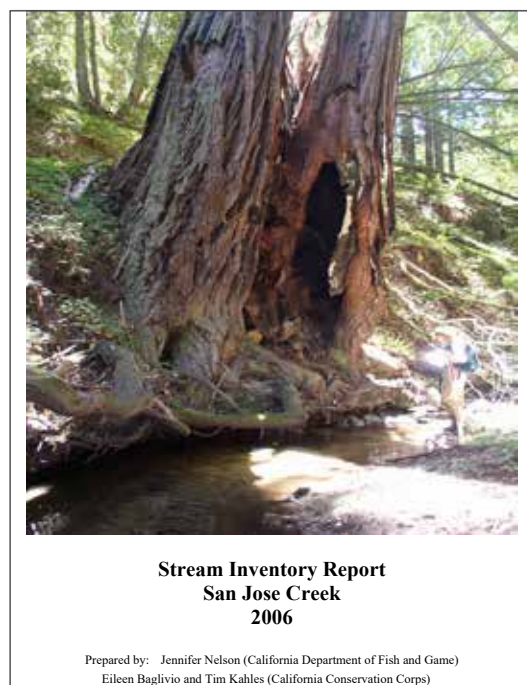
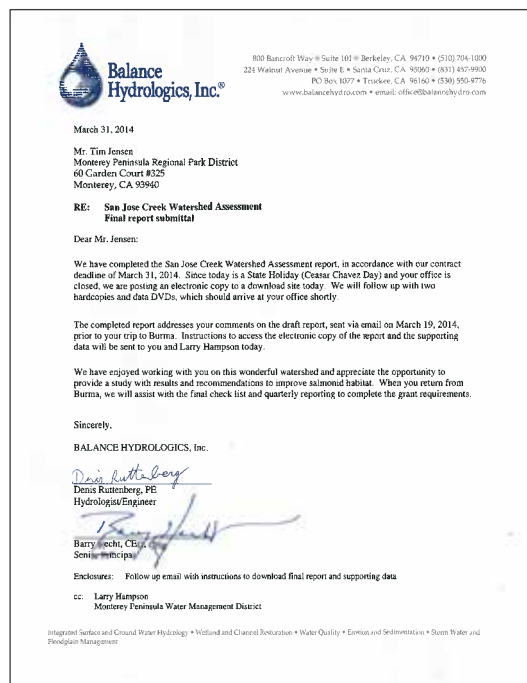
Since the San Jose Creek Watershed is a major watershed that runs through the Park, the watershed assessment will be valuable in informing the GDP of methods for improving the watershed's health within the Park to reduce sedimentation due to road erosion, thereby enhancing fish migration.

SAN JOSE CREEK STREAM INVENTORY REPORT

Jennifer Nelson, California Department of Fish & Game
Eileen Baglivio and Tim Kahles, California Conservation Corps
2006

The report surveys the San Jose Creek, including 10.5 miles of third order stream and several perennial tributaries and consisting of 60% of publicly owned land that is preserved or allows limited recreation. The survey covers habitat quantity and quality of spawning and rearing for steelhead trout, a biological assessment for steelhead densities, and a qualitative survey upstream. Survey outcomes including constraints and recommendations for habitat enhancement are included. Outcomes proved that low stream flows and excessive sedimentation were primarily responsible for degrading spawning and rearing habitat.

This report is important in the GDP process to understand the San Jose Creek condition and what is necessary to create the best conditions to support habitat for steelhead and other aquatic species.



SITE ASSESSMENT

SENECA CREEK STREAM INVENTORY REPORT

Jennifer Nelson, California Department of Fish & Game

Eileen Baglivio and Tim Kahles, California Conservation Corps
2006

The Seneca Stream Inventory Report documents the quantity and quality of spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead trout and coho salmon, determines possible factors that may limit their production, and proposes recommendations for moving forward. Pool habitat in the stream is abundant and deep with good vegetative cover in a majority of areas, spawning areas however, were limited and many reported as embedded with fine sediment. It is recommended that both major log jams be surveyed every other summer to determine if fish are impeded and that any treatments proposed for decreasing sediment runoff into the stream be implemented.

This report is important in the GDP process to understanding the conditions of Seneca Creek and what is necessary to create the best conditions to support habitat for steelhead and other aquatic species.

TRAFFIC OPERATIONS ANALYSIS

Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc.
2013

This report consists of a traffic operations analysis for the proposed addition of parking and access improvements on the Palo Corona site, located in proximity to the historic barn. The report analyzes traffic projections based on the project's 58-space parking lot and identifies operational and safety constraints on surrounding roadways. Trip estimates were developed based on existing data provided by MPRPD and estimated that an additional 266 daily trips would occur with the parking facility. With all new traffic anticipated to use the PCRP Access Road off of SR-1, analysis was performed to determine if the surrounding roads would meet an adequate Level of Service score, measured according to CalTrans criteria. It was determined in the report that the existing level of service and the proposed level of service both met Cal Trans criteria for the SR-1 and PCRP Access Road intersection with some queuing occurring on the westbound approach. The report recommended project entrance improvements, including an exclusive southbound left-turn lane, to increase intersection capacity and minimize disruption of through traffic along SR-1.

The traffic analysis is an important document to inform the GDP of constraints due to the Park's capacity based on incurred traffic on SR-1. This report should be paired with further analysis to determine the appropriate level of programming and usership allowed by traffic constraints.

STREAM INVENTORY REPORT













SENECA CREEK

DRAFT



Prepared by:
Jennifer Nelson, DFG
Assisted by:
Eileen Baglivio and Tim Kahles,
CA Conservation Corps
2006

1



HEXAGON TRANSPORTATION CONSULTANTS, INC.

Memorandum

Date: May 17, 2013
To: Tim Jensen, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District
From: Robert Del Rio, T.E.
Subject: Palo Corona Regional Park Traffic Operations Analysis

Introduction

Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc. has completed a traffic operations analysis for the proposed addition of parking and access improvements to the Palo Corona Regional Park (PCRP), located south of the City of Carmel in Monterey County, California. PCRP currently issues a maximum of 13 permits per day for park visitors to park along SR 1 at the park entrance. The project as proposed would construct a 58-space parking lot within the park and implement roadway improvements at the project site entrance along SR 1 and along the access road to the park.

The purpose of the traffic operations analysis is to evaluate the magnitude of traffic projected to be added to the adjacent roadway system by the proposed project and identify potential traffic operational and/or safety constraints on the surrounding roadways and intersections created by the project. Any impacts of the project on the transportation system will be identified based on applicable regional standards.

Project Overview

Palo Corona Regional Park is located on the east side of SR 1 in the Greater Carmel Area coastal zone. Access to PCRP is provided via the existing park access roadway (hereafter referred to as PCRP Access Road), which intersects with SR 1. In the vicinity of the PCRP site, SR 1 consists of an undivided two-lane State highway with a posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour (mph) in both directions of travel. Additionally the park also provides pedestrian access from the Big Sur Land Trust's South Bank Trail (east gate), located east of the park. PCRP is open to the public via access permit reservation. According to the PCRP website (<http://www.mcrpd.org/index.cfm?id=10>), park access permit requests are processed on a "first come, first served" basis. The District will issue up to 13 permits per day (1 per vehicle or walk-in/bike-in request) for park visitors to park along SR 1 at the park entrance and walk in. The park is currently used for hiking (everyday, pedestrians only, no pets allowed), for occasional special events (once per month maximum average, used by special groups such as elder persons and "Let's Go Outdoors" classes), occasional elementary school fieldtrips (with students transported to the site by bus), and leased for grazing activities. A trail map of the Palo Corona Regional Park is presented in Figure 1.

The project as proposed would construct a 58-space parking lot within the park and implement roadway improvements at the project site entrance along SR 1 and along the access road to the park. With the proposed project, the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) plans to lift the permit requirement and allow park visitors to access the park at will, until all available parking spaces are filled. Current activities taking place at the park would continue with implementation of the proposed project.

With the proposed project, all new project traffic would access the park via the existing park access roadway (PCRP Access Road) off of SR 1. Improvements at the intersection of SR 1 and PCRP Access Road, as well as along the PCRP Access Road, are anticipated to accommodate the projected traffic demand. No changes to the east gate access are anticipated with the proposed project.

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SITE ASSESSMENT

INVASIVE WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN

Nomad Ecology
2014

The weed management plan details the invasive species that threaten the Park's native habitat, and provide management strategies for setting restoration goals, prioritizing species and locations for control management, and post-control monitoring. The document uses a ranking tool to evaluate the 28 target invasive species populations on site and identify the priority species for control based on funding, timing, and availability for long-term management. It then discusses methods for mechanical and chemical eradication of each species, and encourages on-going monitoring to prevent populations of invasive species from returning.

Certain lessons can be extrapolated from the information presented in the Invasive Weed Management Plan and applied to the GPD. Knowing where these high-priority populations of invasive species are located and how they must be managed may impact development decisions in order to prevent weed dispersal.

INVASIVE WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK



Prepared for
Tim Jensen
Planning and Conservation Manager
Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District
60 Garden Court #325
Monterey, CA 93940



May 2014

WHISLER-WILSON RANCH BASELINE ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING PLAN

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District
2013

This report provides an inventory of existing conditions on the Whisler-Wilson Ranch portion of the PCRPP property. It details the site's physical conditions, vegetation, wildlife species, and aquatic habitat resources. The document offers recommendations for management of Whisler-Wilson's natural resources, including removal of invasive species, protection of special status communities like maritime chaparral and coastal scrub, and following best management practices for development of any potential recreation facilities to avoid impact to sensitive plant communities. Additionally, the report suggests that the property be assessed for mitigation corridors that would promote the health of red-legged frog populations. In order to prevent disturbance to steelhead habitat, it is also recommended that bridge crossings be installed over San Jose Creek, and any maintenance or installation of roads and trails in stream corridors follow best management practices for restoration.

The Baseline Assessment provides a detailed overview of the Whisler-Wilson Ranch portion of the Park, and its recommendations for that area will be considered during the GDP planning process.

Whisler Wilson Ranch Palo Corona Regional Park

Baseline Assessment and Monitoring Plan
State Coastal Conservancy Grant 12-056



May 29, 2013



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District
60 Garden Court #325
Monterey, CA 93940

SITE ASSESSMENT

MOUNTAIN BIKING ACCESS AT PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK

Darius Rike, Mountain Bike Focus Group
2013

To assess the suitability of introducing mountain biking to the Park, the District allowed special permits in early 2013 to a mountain bike focus group to access the Palo Corona's Back Country for biking. From that on-site experience, the group then analyzed the site's suitability, feasibility and sustainability for mountain biking at Palo Corona, and expressed their findings in this report. The group determined that the park would prove to be very suitable for users, with plenty of successful examples in nearby parks where mountain bikers, hikers and cattle can coexist. The report recommends that some trails be re-routed to mitigate erosion issues and help to avoid steep and difficult terrain. Additionally, it suggests seeking partnerships with local mountain bike organizations for assistance with trail maintenance and trail safety education.

The GDP will benefit greatly from this report's in-depth analysis of the Park's trail network and how it relates to user experience for mountain biking. Its findings will be considered in the development of the Park's recreational use recommendations.



Mountain Biking Access at Palo Corona Regional Park



Prepared by Darius Rike, in collaboration with the PCR
Mountain Bike Focus Group
For Tim Jensen, Planning and Conservation Mgr.,
Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District

Input to the Palo Corona Regional Park Public Use and Access Planning Process

SITE ASSESSMENT

Mountain Bike Focus Group



6/9 Photo 3
More lovely Seneca big trees—love this trail.



6/9 Photo 4
Left turn marker (big stump) to start heading out of Seneca Canyon (T13.4)—after this point Seneca Trail becomes densely vegetated (off to right).



7/21 Photo 5
Looking east towards The Preserve at top of Cypress. Snively fire lookout in the distance.



7/21 Photo 6
Now into the next drainage on Cabin Ridge Trail (T10.3) looking SW toward Palo Corona area.

SITE ASSESSMENT

OFF-SITE ASSESSMENT

STATE ROUTE 1 ACCESS

SR-1 is an undivided two-lane State highway with a posted speed of 55-miles per hour in both directions of travel. The southbound lane has a wide shoulder where beach users park during the day, and where parking is often haphazard and crowded. The northbound lane also has a wide shoulder that is used for opportunistic parking with the exception of a portion of the shoulder south of the current access road to the front ranch that is posted “no parking.” The road into the Park is an existing dirt road connecting the Palo Corona property with SR-1. Prior to the acquisition of the Rancho Cañada Unit, this road was the only vehicular access point to the Park. Private vehicles however, are not permitted access beyond the gate at the SR-1 entrance.

A full traffic analysis and design plan is recommended to accompany this report once a preferred alternative for the Palo Corona Regional Park property has been identified.

PARKING AND ROADWAY ENHANCEMENTS

Access is limited to 13 permits a day, and visitors must park on the gravel shoulder outside the Park and enter through the gate on foot, as shown in Figure 2. A 58-space parking lot has been constructed within the Park, approximately 400 feet east of the barn. However, with existing traffic conditions along SR-1, Caltrans is requiring a southbound left-turn lane and roadway widening at the intersection before public access to this parking lot is allowed. These improvements are to occur as part of the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project (Carmel River FREE) causeway bridge and floodplain improvements, a two-year \$25 million project that is slated to begin construction as early as 2018. Private vehicular access to the Park will be restricted from using the parking lot until these roadway improvements are completed.

SOUTH BANK TRAIL

Pedestrians can access the Park through the northeastern-most corner of the property via the South Bank Trail. This trail begins in the Quail Meadows neighborhood at the intersection of Rancho San Carlos Road and Valley Greens Drive. Visitors can park in a small parking lot off of Rancho San Carlos Road and connect to the South Bank Trail, which is ADA-accessible and open to hikers, bikers, and dogs on leash. The one-and-a-half mile trail is fenced on either side and runs through the Quail Meadows and Hacienda Carmel neighborhoods then along the south boundary of the District’s recently acquired Rancho Cañada Golf Club, providing views of the Carmel River and its surrounding riparian habitat. The trail ends at the edge of Palo Corona, providing an alternative access point into the Park (Figure 3). Visitors with Palo Corona day-use permits are provided a code and enter the park through a locked gate, connecting to the Park’s network of hiking trails. Presently, dogs and bikes are not allowed beyond the gate into the Park, and bikes must be left at the bike rack provided outside the gate at the end of the South Bank Trail.

SITE ASSESSMENT



Figure 2: Parking at the main entry to the Park on the southbound shoulder of State Route 1



Figure 3: The South Bank Trail and entry to the south gate of PCRP. GIS data provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

SITE ASSESSMENT

ADJACENCIES

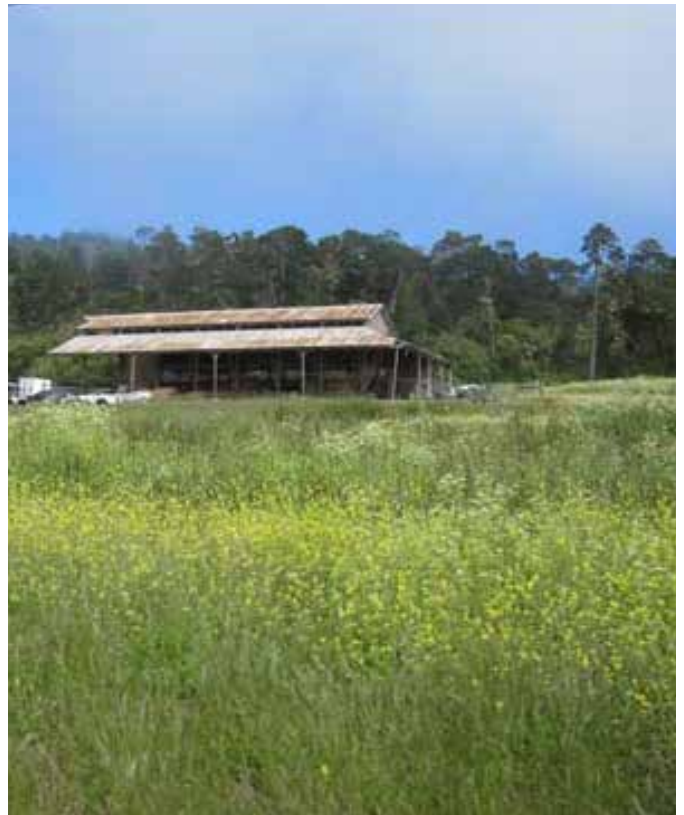
The Park is surrounded by a number of both private and public properties that require sensitivity in introducing potential new uses, and provide opportunities for new partnerships with other organizations managing adjacent open space.

The private properties bordering the Park include a monastery and private residences. The Fish Ranch is the 93-acre out-parcel in the middle of the Front Ranch. The owner of this property was the former owner of Palo Corona Ranch (also known as the Fish Ranch). This ranch became Palo Corona Regional Park. This parcel has its own entry off of SR-1, a road that is not to be used for public access into the Park. Because of its location in the middle of the Park, it is of utmost importance that this property is protected from public access by park visitors, and screened from view. The Carmelite Monastery sits adjacent to the south corner of the Front Ranch along SR-1, and also requests that management efforts work to ensure their privacy, quiet, and solitude. Several homes within the Carmel Highlands neighborhood abut the Park on the west property line. These residents have voiced concerns about privacy as well as safety regarding wildfire, and potential unsupervised Back Country camping.

Palo Corona also shares boundaries with a number of existing open space parks in the region (Figure 4), and it provides a significant link for connectivity between these public lands for people and wildlife. The Park unites a chain of ten parks and preserves, including Carmel River State Beach (California State Parks - "CSP"), Odello East (Big Sur Land Trust - "BSLT"), Point Lobos State Reserve (CSP), Point Lobos Ranch (CSP), Garrapata State Park (CSP), Santa Lucia Preserve (Santa Lucia Conservancy), Middeldorf Preserve (BSLT), Joshua Creek Ecological Reserve (California Department of Fish and Game), Glen Deven Ranch (BSLT), and the Ventana Wilderness (United States Forest Service). The adjacent lands are managed by six different agencies, which could be integral in collaborative efforts as partners or joint management agreements to connect trail systems and parklands that can provide seamless access for hikers and backpackers traveling both north-south along the coastal mountains, and east-west from the valley to the sea.



View into Carmel Valley from Santa Lucia Preserve.
Source: Santa Lucia Preserve



Historic structure at Point Lobos Ranch.
Source: CA State Parks.

SITE ASSESSMENT



Figure 4: Palo Corona Regional Park and adjacent open space properties. GIS data provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

SITE ASSESSMENT

ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of Palo Corona is a significant landscape feature. Visually, the undulating hills and steep terrain contribute to the scenic nature of the site. The Park sits at the northern end of the Santa Lucia Mountains, a coastal mountain range that spans over 100 miles from Monterey to San Luis Obispo. Starting at nearly sea-level in the Front Ranch, the Park rises to almost 3,000 feet at Palo Corona Peak close to the Park's southern boundary, as shown in Figure 5. The topography of the Front Ranch in the northern portion of the Park terraces down into lower elevation from Gregg's Hill and Inspiration Point, opening up into the Carmel River Floodplain adjacent to the property. The Park's "Back Country," the southern extent of the Park beyond Animas Pond, is marked by rough, mountainous terrain rolling from rounded ridges down steep slopes of greater than 30% into deep river canyons (McGraw 2007).

IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The slope of the land will influence access and the suitability of the overall site for certain uses and plays a critical role in identifying locations best suited to construct buildings and associated site improvements. Generally slopes of 0-10% are preferred for larger structures, entry roads, and parking areas. These flatter areas will best accommodate infrastructural improvements and intensive park uses should be focused in these areas. Slopes from 10-30% are less suitable but can accommodate smaller structures and limited site improvements. Slopes above 30% are subject to unstable conditions and development on them is discouraged. In summary, there are appropriate areas on the property suitable for locating structures and potential day-use amenities, and campsites and their respective Back Country administrative facilities, that are within the 0- 10% slopes.

SOIL

GEOLOGIC FORMATIONS

There are a number of geologic formations and landslide deposits within the landscape of the Park. The Front Ranch of the Park is characterized by Holocene deposits and formations, with large occurrences of the Monterey Formation that appear on the upper slopes and ridgelines north of San Jose Creek. This formation consists of mudstone interbedded with siltstone (McGraw 2007). The mid-elevation slopes are Marine sandstone, which are typically dark-yellowish, coarse-to-fine grained sand deposits that can contain shellbeds. West of the private parcel, Marine sandstone gives way to Pleistocene coastal terraces, an unconsolidated mix of marine sand and layers of gravel (Whistler Wilson, 2013).

The composition of the creek and river channels change due to depositions from flowing water. Land adjacent to SR-1 at the park's entrance, as well as near the Carmel River, is made up of Colluvium that contains varying grains of silt, sand, and gravel. The San Jose and Animas Creek channels are mapped as alluvial deposits. These deposits are of variable thickness and composition and are comprised of silt and sand with gravels. Large areas of landslide deposits appear down slope of steep ridges amid Monterey granodiorite, Monterey Formation and Marine sandstone (Whistler Wilson, 2013).

Moving south through the park into the Back Country, the formations shift to predominantly Porphyritic granodiorite of Monterey and granodiorite of Cachagua with small pockets of Marine sandstone. The Monterey granodiorite formation is an igneous rock formed during the Cretaceous period that is found west of the San Andreas fault and is typically light gray and medium grained. This rock formation is subject to landslides as a result of weathering and landslide deposits on this formation can be observed throughout the Park, as seen in Figure 5 (Whistler Wilson, 2013). Alternatively, granodiorite of Cachagua is a granite that results from weathering and is reddish-brown in color. The southern-most point of the Park is defined by regions of Hornblende-biotite quartz diorite of Soberanes Point, a medium to coarse grained quartz diorite with hornblende and biotite present that is medium grey in color. This formation is also subject to landslides (McGraw 2007).

SITE ASSESSMENT

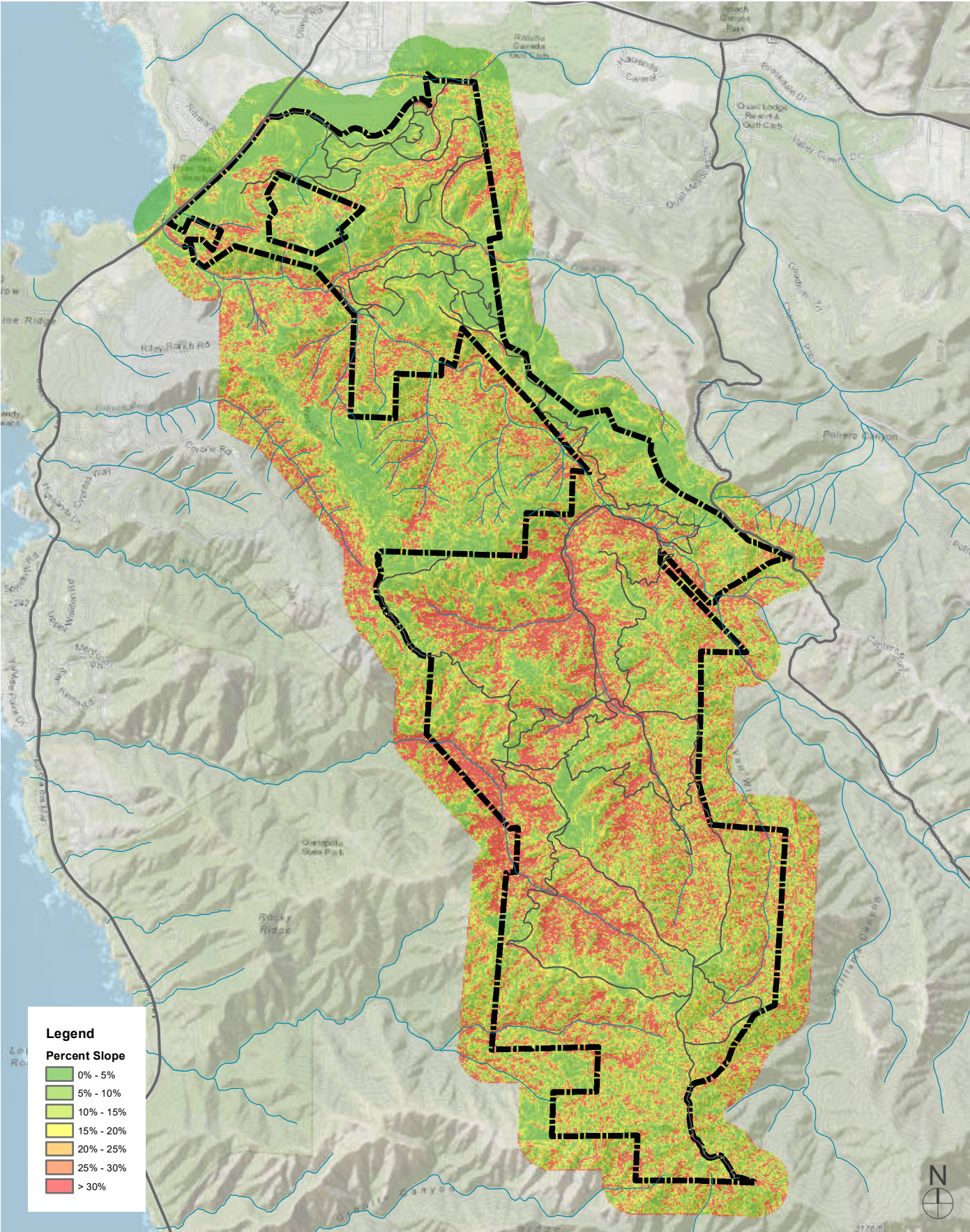


Figure 5: Topography and slope analysis of PCRP. GIS data provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

SITE ASSESSMENT

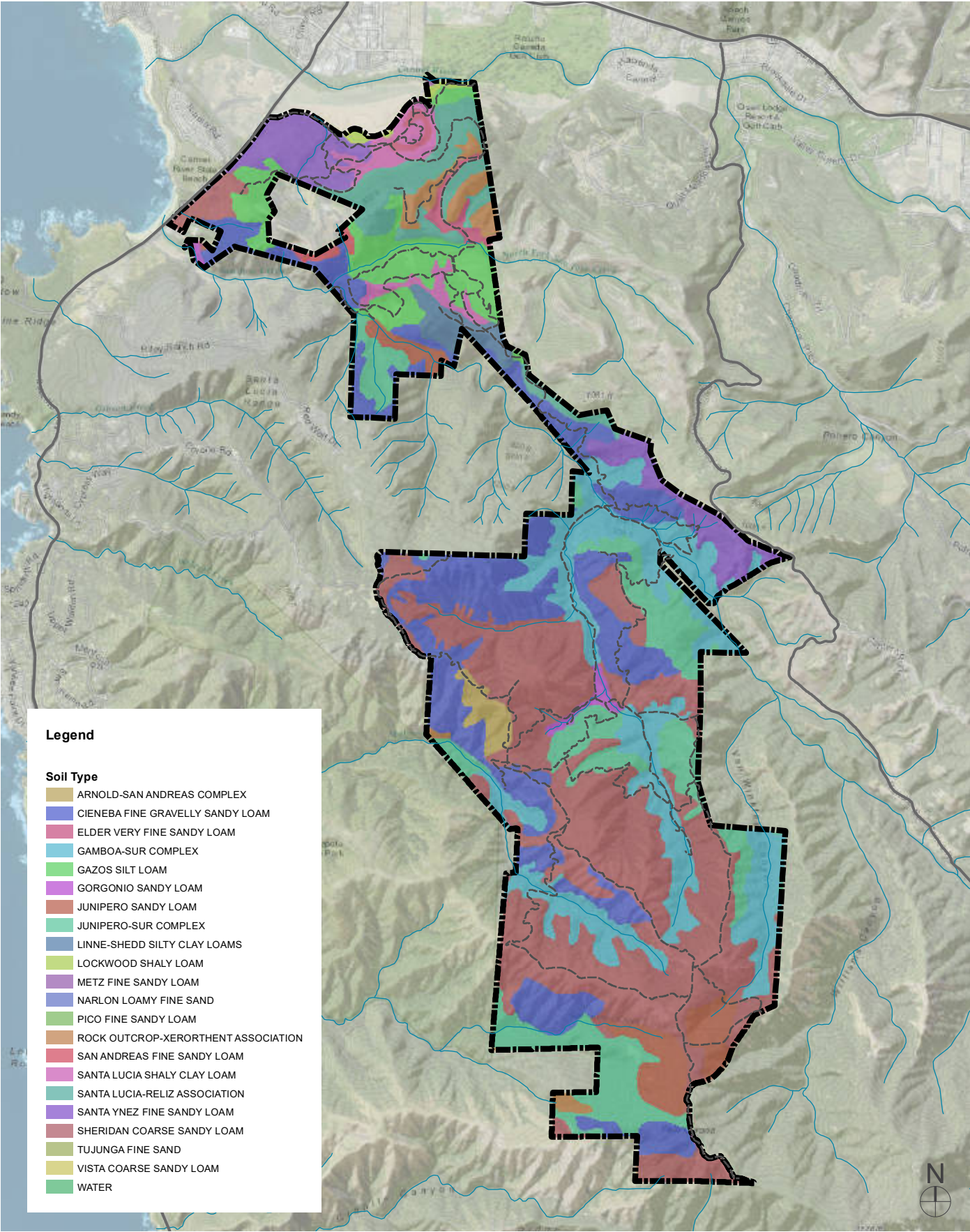


Figure 6: Soil Types of PCRP. GIS data provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

SITE ASSESSMENT

SOIL TYPES

The soils found in the coastal hills and mountains of Monterey County can be categorized by the following general characteristics: deep to shallow, rolling to very steep soils on hills; moderately deep to deep, calcareous clays and silty clay loams on rounded hills; deep to shallow, steep loams to sands on uplands; shallow and rocky soils on uplands; and very deep recent alluvial soils in scattered, narrow valleys. The capability of these soils vary and may be limited by a number of factors. Sandy soils or shallow soils over bedrock may have low available water capacity. Rocky outcroppings or fragments present will decrease water storage and increase runoff, creating a greater risk for erosion of existing roadways. Winter storms can induce erosion, especially on the exposed hillsides with sparse vegetation coverage (USDA 1978).

There are 15-major soil types present within the Park, with 19-named soils and complexes total (Figure 6). With soil types, we again see differences between the Front Ranch to the north and the Back Country to the south in the geological make up of the Park. While the majority of the Park's soil types are classified as loams, the Front Ranch area is defined by mostly silt loam (Gazos) and shay clay loams (Santa Lucia and Reliz) and are characterized by a finer texture from the higher proportions of silt and clay present in these soils.

The Back Country is predominantly made up of sandy loam (Sheridan), gravelly loam (Gamboa, Sur, and Junipero), and gravelly sandy loam (Cienega) and these soil types are characterized by higher proportions of sand and gravel (McGraw 2007).

IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Palo Corona site consists of a variety of soil types that will impact both potential development sites as well as habitat restoration programs. Soil types have implications on where potential permanent site improvements, septic leach fields, and structures may be located. This is primarily limited to the Front Ranch and areas of particular interest in the Back Country.

Increased slope, presence of small rocks, and depth to bedrock are general characteristics associated with the soil types found in both the Front Ranch and Back Country that may present challenges to recreational development, such as the addition of camping and picnicking areas, as well as installation of septic waste systems. Additional soil testing at potential development sites is recommended to provide a more in-depth assessment of the site's suitability for supporting recreation activities.

The presence of shallow groundwater is another issue that cannot be assessed with the information available at this time. Any subsurface disposal system will need to be installed with adequate separation between the bottom of the disposal system and the highest anticipated groundwater. Additional soil testing will be required to fully assess soil and shallow groundwater conditions in potential development areas to determine the suitability of site for a subsurface disposal system.

SITE ASSESSMENT

HYDROLOGY/ STREAM ZONES

Land that is part of ten watersheds and subwatersheds lays within the Park's boundaries, making the park an important site for sensitive riparian and aquatic habitat (Figure 7). Almost the entirety of the Seneca and Van Winkley Watersheds are within the Park, and both drain into San Jose Creek, which runs 10-miles into the Pacific Ocean (McGraw 2007).

San Jose Creek, and two of its tributaries, Seneca Creek and Williams Creek, are an important stream habitat for the threatened South-Central California coast steelhead trout. Additionally, the Carmel River and Malpaso Creek are also known to provide habitat for steelhead. Steelheads spend most of their lives in the ocean, but will leave the marine environment to spawn in the freshwater tributaries of their birth. According to NOAA, the South-Central Coast steelhead populations have decreased from 25,000 spawning adults to less than 500 - a dramatic shift that has made them a high priority for conservation. An assessment of the watershed revealed that the highest quality habitats for spawning were noted in the gravelly bends of the lower and middle portions of the creek. However, in general the system was found to be overburdened with tremendous amounts of sand and sediment which decreases depth in the shallow pools necessary for spawning and rearing and generally degrades habitat quality (Nelson 2006).

IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Any improvements implemented on the Park property will need to follow strict protocol to preserve the quality of these critical riparian habitats. A study by the Watershed Institute at California State University Monterey Bay recommends methods to improve steelhead habitat. This includes groundwater conservation, reduced sedimentation through road improvements or decommissioning and removal. Treatments proposed to decrease sediment runoff from roads should be implemented. Any proposed bridges, infrastructure, or camp sites near these waterways should be designed to minimize impacts to the creeks and practice best management practices during construction and post construction to minimize sediment into the creek. The use of groundwater for potable water in responsible quantity will not impact steelhead habitat by reducing stream flow volume.

VEGETATION

A unique characteristic of Palo Corona is the diversity of plant communities found across its vast landscape, which can be categorized into ten primary vegetation types. These types are native and annual grasslands, coastal terrace prairie, coast redwood forest, coastal chaparral/scrub, maritime chaparral, hardwood forest, oak woodland, Monterey pine forest, riparian woodland, and wetland (Figure 8). Due to the steep terrain and remote nature of Palo Corona, some areas of the Park have remained relatively undisturbed by human activity and spared from high levels of invasive species. The highest quality habitat can be found in the southern portion of the property, deep in the Back Country. Maintaining high quality habitats will promote biodiversity and other conservation goals of the Park (Nomad 2014). The Park's primary ecological communities are described below (images on page 28):

- Native and Annual Grasslands - Sweeping grasslands across the southern and central ridges of the Park, with moderate cover of herbs, grasses, and forbs, and sparse cover of suffrutescents. Dominant species of these grasslands include Deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), Silver Lupin and Field Lupin (*Lupinus albifrons*, *Lupinus nanus*), Bristly Dogtail Grass (*Cynosurus echinatus*), and Longbeak Stork's Bill (*Erodium botrys*);
- Coastal Terrace Prairie - Found in the Front Ranch on the slopes descending toward the ocean, these grasslands feature dense grasses and forbs with patchy rushes and include species like California Oatgrass (*Danthonia californica*) and Italian Ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum*);
- Coast Redwood Forest - The site supports redwood forests along the San Jose Creek, its tributaries and part of Animas Creek, and occupies the north-facing slopes south of the creek. The forested areas are dominated by second growth Coast Redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*), but include other tree species and shade-tolerant understory vegetation;
- Coastal Chaparral/Scrub - The northern portion of the site supports a large area of scrub vegetation. Occupying the relatively thin Gazos silty loam and Santa Lucia shaly clay loam soils, and responding to previous land use activities (i.e., grazing or land clearing) and possibly old landslides, a mosaic of scrub types have been mapped.

SITE ASSESSMENT

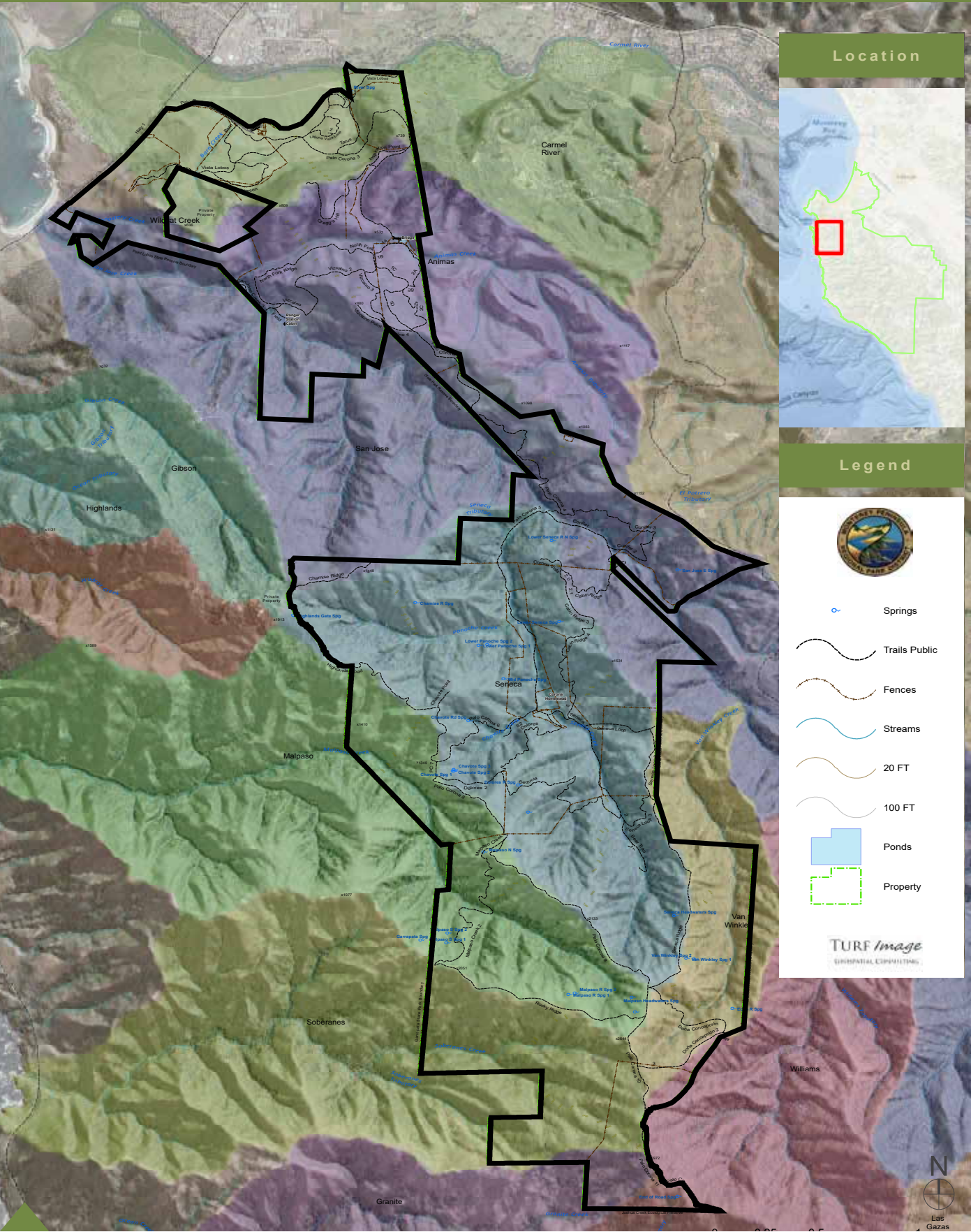


Figure 7: Watersheds and hydrology of PCRP. GIS data and mapping provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

SITE ASSESSMENT

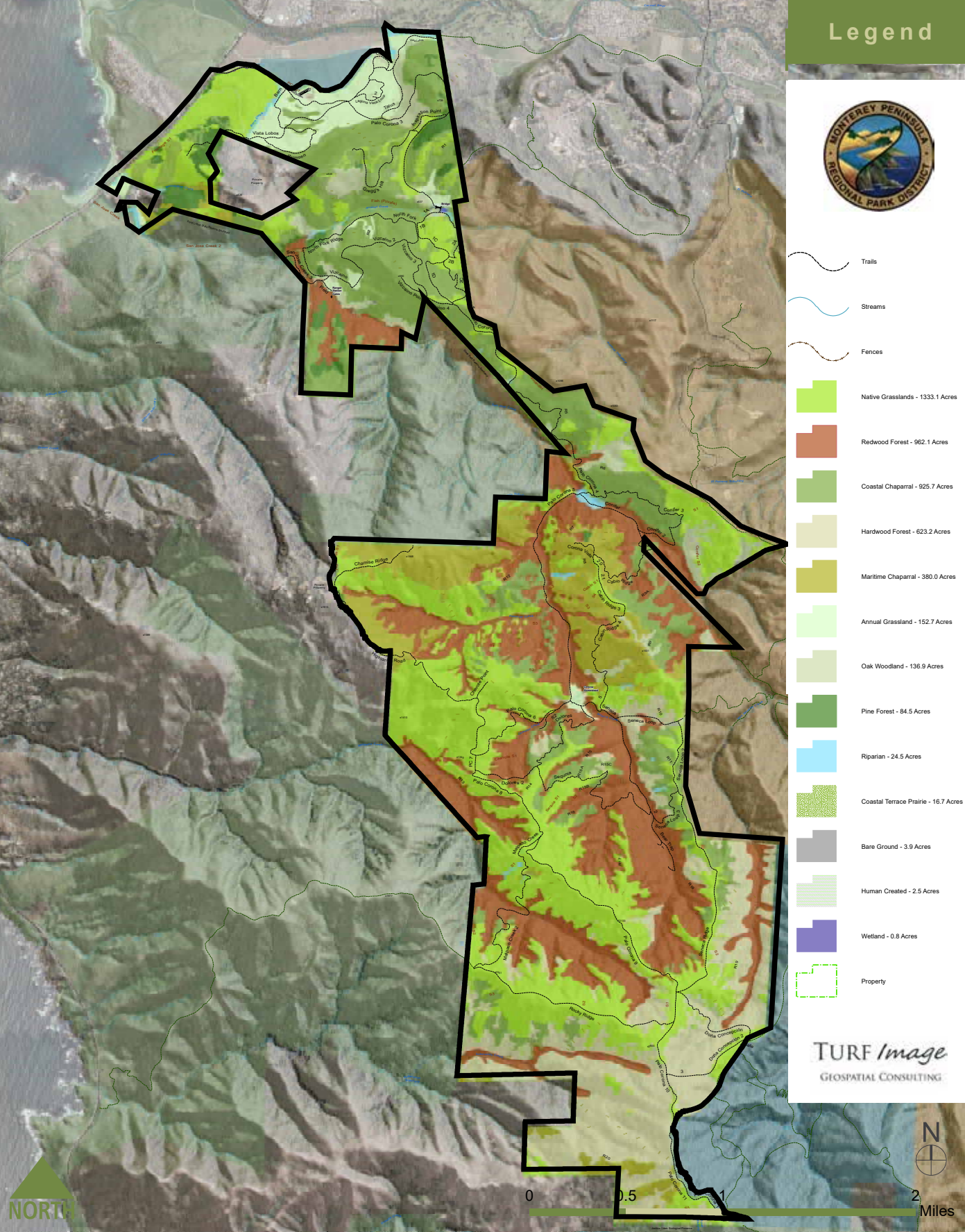


Figure 8: Vegetation Communities in PCRP. GIS data and mapping provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

SITE ASSESSMENT

Scrub types include several species of coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis* spp) as well as invasive french broom (*Genesta monspessulana*), monkey flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*) and pacific poison aak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*);

- Maritime Chaparral - Thrives on the hillsides in the southern portion of the property and south-facing slopes north of San Jose Creek also support maritime chaparral. The dominant species in this area are Golden Chinquapin (*Chrysolepis chysophylla*), Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), and Brittleleaf Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos crustacea*, *A. tomentosa*) although there are other species present;
- Hardwood Forest - This community can be found on southern slopes and in canyons with medium canopy cover and sparse understory. It is made up of California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), Tanoak (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*), and various species of Oak (*Quercus* spp.);
- Oak Woodland - There are pockets of oak woodland in the Front Ranch and on lower slopes of riparian canyons, and a large community dominating the southern end of the Park. The dominant species are Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and California bay (*Umbellularia californica*) in some areas;
- Monterey Pine Forest - This consists of groves located on the steep slope south of San Jose Creek and on slopes above Animas Creek. The forest is characterized by the native Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*);
- Riparian Woodland - This occurs as thickets of willow and dogwood along Animas Creek and as Alder–Dogwood understory within the Coast Redwood forest along San Jose Creek. The dominant species is Arroyo Willow (*Salix lasiolepis*); and,
- Wetland - This habitat can be found in around Animas Pond and in the vernal pools that form seasonally near the pond. Rushes (*Juncus* spp) and Arroyo Willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) can be found here. (McGraw 2007), (Whistler-Wilson, 2013).

IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Careful consideration should be paid to the location of sensitive plant communities when siting areas for potential recreation development. Trails, day-use areas, and campsites should avoid areas of coastal terrace prairie and Monterey pines. Trails going through sensitive areas, like the trail from Inspiration Point to Gregg's Hill, may need to be re-routed through less sensitive areas of coyote brush cover with minor trails leading out to vistas and overlooks. Similarly, roads passing through sensitive areas may be candidates for re-routing or retirement, and roads through riparian areas should be maintained to control drainage and erosion. Installing viewing platforms and gathering areas on piers over valuable habitats like coastal terrace prairie will mitigate damage from erosion and trampling (Yadon 2008).

Restoration and mitigation efforts can be integrated with site and facility improvements. Whenever possible, restoration efforts should be completed with locally sourced plant material. Native seed, sod, and plants can be collected or salvaged during construction and saved for on-site native plant re-vegetation.

SITE ASSESSMENT

Vegetation Communities at Palo Corona Regional Park



Coast Redwood Forest



Riparian Woodland



Oak Woodland



Maritime Chaparral



Monterey Pine Forest



Coastal Scrub

SITE ASSESSMENT

TRAILS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

ROADS

A gravel road accessible from SR-1 brings visitors into the park and to the barn. Prior to the District's acquisition of the Rancho Cañada Unit, this was the Park's only public point of vehicular access. Daily visitors enjoyed the rest of the Park on foot from this point. Since Palo Corona still operates as a working ranch, many ranch roads wind through the property and are wide enough for trucks and maintenance vehicles. Park vehicles running special programs, for instance, currently travel up the steep incline of Palo Corona Trail to provide transportation to Inspiration Point for seniors and disabled visitors wanting to experience the incredible view. The steep nature of the site, however, create difficult conditions for these surfaces, and will be a constant maintenance issue. Conversely, the roads running through the deep canyons of San Jose Creek and Seneca Creek are susceptible to flooding and at times may not be passable. Several roads in the Back Country are in need of repair due to rutting or felled trees.

TRAILS

There are miles of existing trails throughout the park in varying conditions, traversing varying degrees of terrain. The nine publicly accessible, gravel trails of the Front Ranch are relatively mild, meandering across rolling grasslands with views of the ocean and winding through groves of oak trees. The District's intent was, and remains, to implement new trails in this part of the park with slopes averaging 5% or less to address universal access and allow easy use by all visitors (*Interim Public Access* 2005). The Palo Corona Trail climbs up the Park's iconic round hillside, ascending for nearly a mile at 20% grade, and ends with a spectacular view of Carmel Bay from Inspiration Point.

Many of the trails of the Back Country are existing ranch roads, some of which are still used regularly by ranching vehicles that manage the grazing operation on site. These trails negotiate much more steep terrain, and many more legs of particular trails are in moderate to poor condition. The trails that climb the steep slopes of the Back Country's rolling topography are subject to rutting and wash out, while the low lying trails that creep through the canyons and creek beds can become impassible due to flooding and felled trees. Many trails connect to existing trails that extend beyond the bounds of the Park, providing ample opportunity for open land connectivity to long-distance hikers and backpackers.

MPRPD previously completed an assessment of Palo Corona's trails. One of the purposes of this General Development Plan is to provide a more in-depth analysis of the site in order to allow for implementation of the District's prior assessments. Please refer to the trails assessment for a more in-depth description of the Park's trail conditions, recommended improvements, and re-routes.

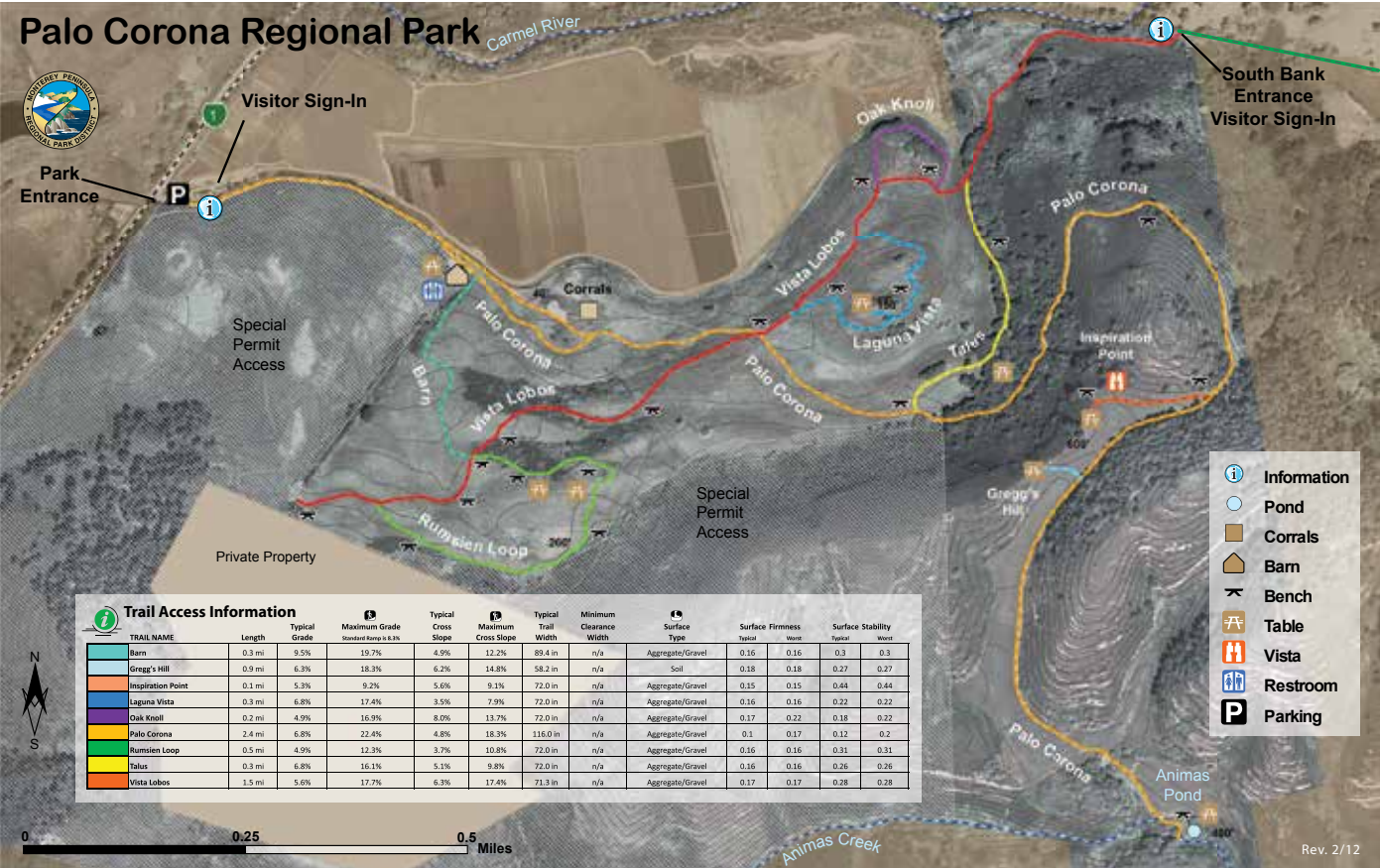
STRUCTURES AND POINTS OF INTEREST

There are a number of historic points of interest on the site that will be important elements for interpretation and user experience. There is a historic barn on the property that has become an icon for the Front Ranch. The barn is a wooden structure with a corrugated metal roof and a few small windows on the south and east sides. It has a mostly open floorplan with a wooden floor and horse stalls on the west side. The east side of the structure has a covered exterior space, a storage room, and a small office. Portable toilets have been added on the south side of the structure. This space holds a lot of potential for day use activities, and is already serviced with electricity. It is recommended that a thorough evaluation of structure be completed by an architect to ensure its integrity and suitability for adaptive reuse.

There are a number of historic homestead sites within the Park, which could be unique destinations for hikers to find on their journeys. The most intact and impressive is the Corona Homestead, a small standing cabin and blacksmith shop with corrals that open up to a field with a historic stand of fruit trees. The Chavote Homestead has the ruins of a small structure with a rose bush and fruit trees nearby. There are two Escobar Homesteads just south of San Jose Creek, the Escobar Seneca Homestead has a collapsed structure surrounded by non-native trees, and the Escobar Cypress Homestead has a collapsed structure resting under a few cypress trees (Doane and Breschini 2009).

The remains of a historic grizzly bear trap can be found under a grove of redwood trees adjacent to Seneca Creek Road. A few decaying timbers mark the place where this trap once stood, believed to have been constructed to

SITE ASSESSMENT



Map of the Front Ranch’s hiking trails. Source: mprpd.org



Erosion and rutting in the ridgeline roadways



A fallen tree blocking the path on Seneca Road

SITE ASSESSMENT

capture grizzly bears. The entrapped bears were transported in horse-drawn cage enclosures through the parkland's steep canyons to Monterey for bear and bull fights, which were a popular source of entertainment at the time (Doane and Breschini 2009).

IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In order to make the remote extents of the Back Country easily accessible by users and reduce maintenance by Park staff, the District plans to re-route fall line and other steep trails to better align with the grade. This is reflected in the proposed trail assessment plan. The cultural resources on the site will provide unique amenities for visitors to enjoy but may require extensive funding in order to stabilize, restore or repair them for visitor use. Strategies for extending utilities and dealing with waste will need to be identified in order to make development and operation feasible. With revenue generated from private events and other sources, the District may be able to fund further Park improvements.



A trail marker in the Front Ranch



The north-facing doors of the historic barn

SITE ASSESSMENT

CATTLE AND GRAZING MANAGEMENT

Cattle have been grazing the hills of Palo Corona since the Spanish colonial era of the mid-1700s. This practice will continue through a 30-year lease agreement recently signed between the District and a local ranching operation. Cattle grazing has been found to be an effective tool in grassland management, as it helps reduce shrub and woodland encroachment, controls invasive species, and helps reduce fuel loads that increase the intensity of wildfire (McGraw 2007). There are currently fenced control plots in different areas of the Park to compare the impact of grazing and non-grazing on the ecological health of the Park's grasslands.

While cattle can be a positive force in managing native grasslands, they also impact the landscape as well as wildlife that resides in that habitat. Cattle alter the plant structure and species composition through their grazing, which can have an impact on habitat and food availability for competing native wildlife. Many plants and animals are also at risk from being trampled by the cattle, which may be an issue with some of the Park's rare and threatened species. Ground-nesting birds and their eggs may be disturbed or crushed during cattle movement, and the eggs and larva of Smith's blue butterfly attached to seacliff buckwheat may be inadvertently eaten during grazing. Juvenile amphibians like the eggs and tadpoles of red legged frogs, or the eggs of steelhead could also be disturbed as the cattle visit ponds and creeks as a source of drinking water (McGraw 2007).

A series of fences and paddocks throughout the Park's grasslands help keep cattle contained and manage grazing rotations. Gates allow hikers to pass through the paddocks and continue on the trail. The cattle are relatively unbothered by human presence, and existing interpretive signs near the barn and trailheads inform visitors of the Park's ranching history, the benefits of grazing on grassland management, and how to maintain a respectful relationship with the livestock.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

With the long-term agreement allowing cattle grazing on the Park's land, visitors and cattle will need to continue to co-exist as park visitorship increases and includes potential new user groups. The working ranch aspect of the Park will be a unique learning experience for visitors. When the cattle are calving in the spring, large birds of prey flock to consume the afterbirth; an impressive spectacle that presents an opportunity to attract visitors and birders hoping to catch a glimpse.

Although they are mostly mild and unthreatening, cattle are easily spooked. Fast moving objects, like mountain bikers coming around a bend could startle the cattle. Cattle also may be startled by dogs, who could be mistaken as predators threatening their young, particularly during calving season thus, dogs will not be allowed in the Front Ranch or Back Country units. A strategy should be developed with consideration of the cattle at this park.

SITE ASSESSMENT



Visitors have the unique experience of hiking through a working ranch



Signage to inform visitors to keep gates shut



Double-ring gate closure allows gate to open in both directions



3 PUBLIC OUTREACH

KICK-OFF FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

- February Focus Group Work Session
- Emerging Themes
- Focus Group Summaries

OPEN HOUSE & PUBLIC FORUM

- October Open House
- Public Comments

ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

- Universal Design Accessibility Focus Group
- Environmental Educators Focus Group

PUBLIC OUTREACH

INITIAL FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the opportunities and constraints facing Palo Corona Regional Park, a series of focus groups and a public open house were facilitated over the course of the project. These meetings provided insight into the types of improvements and uses appropriate for the Park. This chapter summarizes the input from these meetings.

FEBRUARY 2016 WORK SESSION

A series of focus group meetings occurred over one week during February 2016, interviewing people with a vested interest in the Park invited by the District. The groups were first asked to participate in a visioning exercise, writing what they hoped would be hypothetical news headlines about the success of Palo Corona Regional Park in ten years. Then the groups were asked to brainstorm a list of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) pertaining to the Park. Additional comments and concerns were also collected throughout the meetings.

EMERGING THEMES:

The following topics and opinions were shared amongst all of the focus groups:

- » Leveraging interpretation and educational opportunities on topics such as ecology, history, Native American culture and ranching;
 - » The close connection to the surrounding park network as well as the issues that arise due to different jurisdictional boundaries;
 - » Discussion about available funding sources and opportunities for partnerships;
 - » Concerns about access to various parts of the site due to steep terrain and high traffic;
 - » Emphasizing the importance of limiting the environmental impact and preserving the natural habitats; and,
 - » Potential threats including fires, conflicts between users, degradation of the site due to over-use, illegal use of the site.
- Conservation Focus Group: The conservation focus group consisted of 10 people from various organizations including the Big Sur Land Trust, Point Lobos Foundation, CA State Fish & Wildlife, Audubon Society, CA State Parks, Monterey County Parks Department, Monterey County SPCA, Ventana Wildlife Society and the Santa Lucia Conservancy. The local environmental community has stressed sustainable recreation use at the Palo Corona site with low impact recreation development emphasized by reusing existing trails and roads when possible. This may include trail use, education and interpretation, as well as any environmental restoration work need. While the group was interested in camping at appropriate sites to provide access to the park's back country, concerns were raised about illegal campfires, permitting systems, regulation, and possible degradation of sensitive habitats by erosion and invasive plants. The group also acknowledged that allowing dogs or equestrian users on-site create potential conflicts between other users, cattle and wildlife. Overall management poses a major challenge due to the large size of the site and the difficulty accessing parts of the site, funding needed to properly manage and regulate, the sensitive nature of the site and the various jurisdictional boundaries. Emphasis was made on habitat restoration for species of concern, Native American interpretation opportunities, and leveraging the pristine natural habitat.
 - Educators Focus Group: Various groups with outdoor education components such as the Carmel Middle School, Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, Big Sur Land Trust, Camp Sea Lab, NOAA Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, State Parks were represented at the Educators Focus Group meeting. The education community sees Palo Corona as a site for environmental education, place-based learning, and stewardship in addition to the recreational programming. Education opportunities that were discussed include environmental research, overnight programs administered through local camps, corporate retreats for revenue generation, interpretive nature/culture/historical walks, youth leadership workshops, at-risk youth programs, recovery programs, and wilderness etiquette outreach programs. Limitations that were identified include the distance from site to schools and camps which would require full day or multi-day field trips, the lack of facilities (restrooms, potable water, group areas) and providing equitable access to all visitors on steep terrain.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

- Park User/Access Advocates Focus Group: User groups including but not limited to mountain biking groups, equestrian advocates and day-use hikers are interested in obtaining access to Palo Corona. Most prominent among public forum attendees were hikers. These diverse interests may impact management decisions and conversely those decisions will determine the extent to which community members within these groups can access the site. These diverse interests indicate the need for continued collaboration and cooperation as well as solutions to avoid future potential conflicts. Solutions would include improved wayfinding and signage, collaborating with professional trail designers such as IMBA Trail Solution, or implementing alternating trail-use days. Permitting systems, trail management strategies to avoid erosion, phasing and land stewardship programs were discussed in effort to avoid the expressed concern of over-use. Recognizing that funding for programs and management would be a limitation, the group offered suggestions for implementing their visions including recruiting volunteer organization, holding fund-raising events and building a social media campaign for specific projects to be potentially built. An improvement that park users would like to see is catering a portion of the park to family-friendly activities. The group also expressed interest in the adaptive re-use of existing site elements for function and to create an identity for the park, such as converting the barn into an iconic hub for the park or featuring cattle grazing in interpretive elements while integrating the grazing into a fire management program.
- Business Focus Group: Representatives from multiple Chambers of Commerce in the surrounding areas were invited to participate in the Business Focus Group meeting. Members of the group agreed that the development of Palo Corona could serve as an ideal example of how to balance hospitality and/or business with conservation, emphasizing that retaining the untouched natural quality of the park is key to its future success. Transportation, a concern due to already crowded roads and limited accessibility, is a major challenge that would need to be addressed by exploring potential shuttle services or other methods to reduce traffic. Some opportunities discussed include camping/lodging and excursion packages in order to extend visitations, hut-to-hut back country camping experiences and nature/wellness retreats. The group envisions clustering development and activities in the Front Ranch in order to preserve the primitive experience of the Back Country and capitalize on infrastructure such as the existing barn or potential picnic areas by implementing rental fees. Although there were concerns for



Focus group attendees participating in the Headline brainstorming activity

PUBLIC OUTREACH

sufficient funding to run and manage the site, the group believed that with proper management and programming, Palo Corona could be a huge economic driver for the local economy.

- Neighbors Focus Group: These community members were largely concerned about possible impacts to their private property and lifestyles. Chief among these concerns was the threat of wildland fire – an issue throughout the western United States. With regards to wildfire threat, MPRPD anticipates very strict fire restrictions for any approved camping use. While the presence of recreation users may increase the fire threat (more people = higher threat) the presence of users can also provide more eyes-on-the-ground for signs of fire. Suggestions were made to allow buffers between the site and adjacent properties to alleviate any potential conflicts. Overall, with focused interest on preserving the pristine quality of the Palo Corona, the community members felt comfortable opening the site up to various users under the condition that strict regulations are in place and enforced.
- Public Agencies Focus Group: Members from Caltrans, Monterey County Regional Fire District, Monterey County Office of Emergency Services, Cal Fire, City of Carmel, Monterey County Resource Management/Planning, Monterey County Sheriff's Department, Transportation Agency of Monterey County and Carmel Area Wastewater District, provided input from the public service sector's perspective. The group discussed the importance of establishing the correct carrying capacity of the park to ensure the safety and the envisioned experience of users without compromising the natural habitat. The group also acknowledged the need for facilities such as restrooms and trash receptacles to match the capacity of the park in order to avoid future waste and contamination issues. The main topic of concern among the public service group was the feasibility of providing public safety corridors for emergency access in the event of fires, lost or injured backpackers or other unforeseen emergencies. The public service group was also the group most open to permitting dogs on site, recognizing that there are few areas in the District to legally allow dogs and that it is a need among dog owners and a segment of our population that cannot frequent places like Garland Ranch and Carmel Beach. An enclosed facility for dogs to exercise off-leash will also provide an inclusionary recreational facility for community members with service-dogs, and protect wildlife by identifying a specific location for off-leash dog activities.

PUBLIC OUTREACH



Discussing the mountain biking feasibility report at the User Groups/Access Advocates focus group meeting



Capturing input from focus group participants during discussion



Group having conversation about the Park

PUBLIC OUTREACH

STRENGTHS

LOCATION - KIMKART, JALPAIGURI
 DISTRICT - JALPAIGURI
 PIN - 721101
 STATE - WEST BENGAL
 COUNTRY - INDIA
 PHONE - 03562-234567
 FAX - 03562-234567
 E-MAIL - KIMKART@JALPAIGURI.NIC.IN

Strengths

- location
- habitat
- trails that allow public access
- Conservation options

- Palo Verde Ranch
- Strengths
 - Large landscape
 - Part of Corridor from
 - Lead to the other
 - Headwaters in foothills
 - Special historic qualities
 - Recreation opportunity

Close to coast, 73 lakes - central
long across from 2000 (lake 1000)
Diverse habitat/wildlife
Views/trails
Historic structure
Possible camping opportunities
Remote areas as well as easy access

Top 5 strengths @ RRP

- 1) Part of a large grouping of open space proper to making it one of the largest park areas in the Central Coast
- 2) Close to other destinations in the vicinity
- 3) ^{can} provides multiple benefits for people + nature
- 4) Well studied, lots of information about the park
- 5) Interested stakeholders + partners to support opening

John Wilson
Dariusz
Natural Beauty
- 100% natural
Reminders
Prayer, Natural Beauty

Plants & Inspiration
 Breathing with
 WILD LANDS reach
 locate (not far
 DISTANCE from where
 (unusually)

Downloaded from <http://ajph.org/>

Boyle piece - very part of
history of public lands
management, 1840s

Pushing to celebrate
richer American culture

open to connecting trails
outdoor classroom

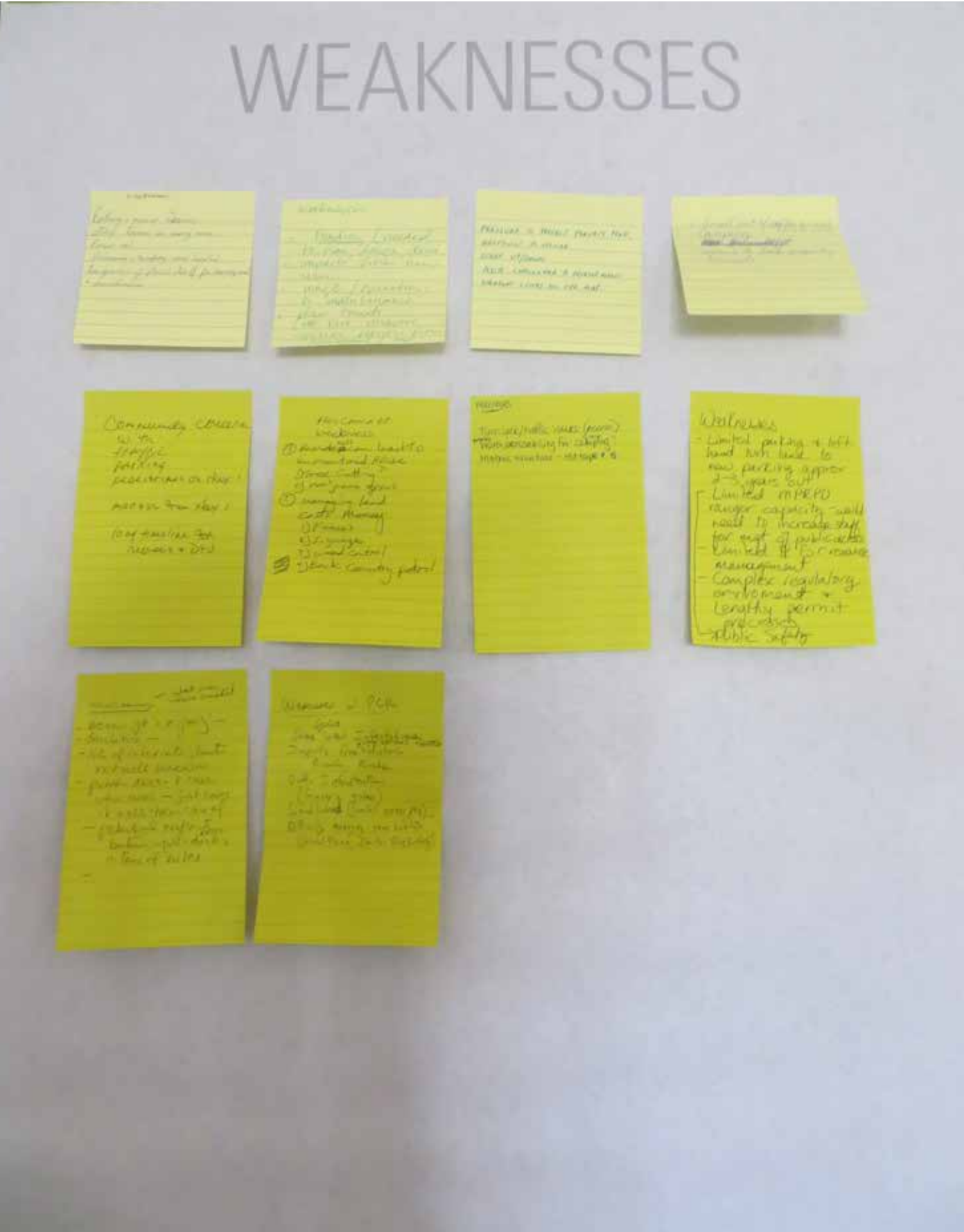
VAST / untapped
interconnected with
other areas
unknown/unexplored
as a blank page
community interest
potential partner who
offer funds etc

Strength of S.T.

Beautiful trails + vistas
Variety of habitats + scenery
Clear air
Super - not very crowded
Relatively easy to access (get
from our camp)

Strengths board from the SWOT activity with the Conservation focus group

PUBLIC OUTREACH



Weaknesses board from the SWOT activity with the Conservation focus group

PUBLIC OUTREACH

OPEN HOUSE & PUBLIC FORUM

OCTOBER OPEN HOUSE

In October 2016, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District and Design Workshop hosted a public open house for community members to attend for further information about the planning process for Palo Corona. The evening began with a brief presentation of the park, as well as a special announcement that MPRPD would be acquiring the former Rancho Cañada Golf Course property as an addition to Palo Corona Regional Park. This new property would provide an additional much needed 200-parking spaces for Palo Corona Regional Park's patrons, as well as a club house structure to be adapted into a Discovery Center. General comments were collected following the presentation and announcement, along with a word-association brainstorming activity. The evening concluded with an open house session, allowing community members to view maps and imagery boards of the Park as well as voice additional recommendations, support, questions and concerns to the District and design team.

Open house participants represented interested and vested community voices. Attendees voiced excitement for the project, as well as concerns about potential impacts to the Palo Corona ecosystem and nearby residents' homes and lifestyles. This to be expected for projects of this nature as it represents a preservation opportunity and is located near an existing community. It must be noted that the open house input did not typically represent input from the entire community nor from a profile of regional visitors. The recorded input was collected from approximately 180 community participants who attended the open house. The conclusions from the input show that the interests and concerns of the community members aligned closely with the input shared from the focus group meetings.



MPRPD General Manager gives a presentation



Public viewing and discussing displayed maps and images of the Park

PUBLIC OUTREACH

OPPORTUNITIES

- I love this project, so many opportunities to interconnect open space for Habitat, wildlife, and human activity.

OPPORTUNITIES

As a open multi-use area, it has the opportunity to serve all of the local constituents & users, groups, not just

OPPORTUNITIES

Would Love To See:

- Volunteer participation for restoration work
 - short + long term projects
 - riparian / River restoration
 - Education at Visitor Center + Property on river wildlife; specifically federally endangered Steelhead.
 - love trail connection system!
♥ Bike Trails ♥

CONCERNS

- parking
- ~~use~~ / daily use
- visitor use = Educate Visitors!
So it doesn't become Big Sur Trail with Trash + T.p. / human Waste.
- Carmel River = winter flows.
 - consider high water / flood zones to allow habitat expansion, during these times.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE NOTICES ABOUT FUTURE PUBLIC MEETINGS, PLEASE LEAVE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION BELOW:

NAME: Hallie Heath
EMAIL: hcheath487@gmail.com

DESIGNWORKSHOP

PUBLIC OUTREACH

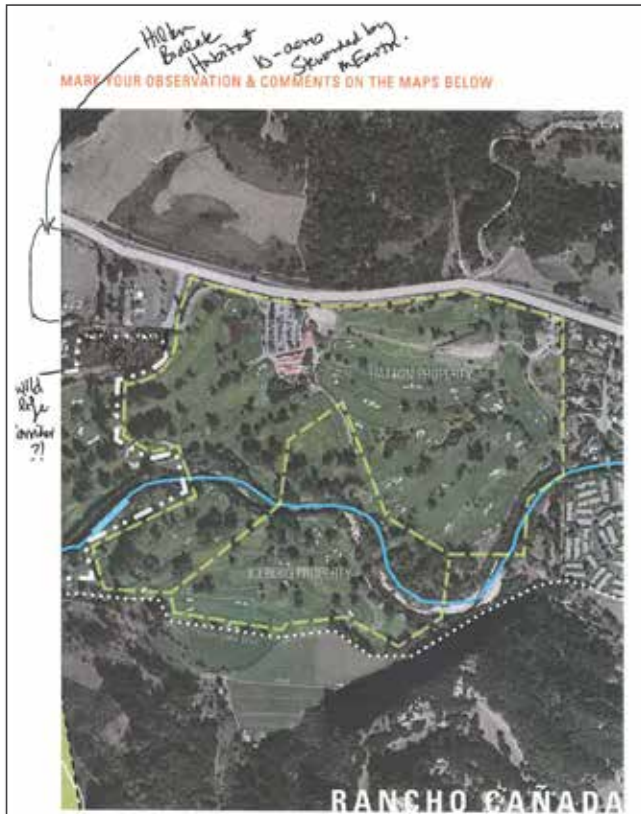
PUBLIC FORUM COMMENTS

The following are some discussions captured from the public forum:

- Vehicular access to the site addressing traffic, safety, over-flow parking, and attractive entry ways;
- Determining the capacity of users in the park, where the primary uses will take place and how that will impact the experience of locals;
- Funding and management and how MPRPD will address it. Concerns about future stalls in the project that would further prevent users from accessing the site, ways in which MPRPD intends on generating revenue for proper staffing and maintenance whether it will be entry fees, concession operations, tenants, program fees, or taxes;
- Working with other organizations and partnerships in order to develop a cohesive system of parks including the overall image of the area, management and integrating planning for projects such as flood control; and,
- Ensuring that all potential user groups have a voice for advocating during the planning process.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Comment cards were filled out by several members discussing the opportunities and challenges of the site. The gathered written comments represent many of the topics from discussions at the Open House and Focus Group Meetings. Among forum participants, overuse of the park was the number one driving concern followed by limiting uses, and excluding certain user groups. Other concerns included traffic issues, concerns about becoming another Point Lobos, NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard), focusing more on tourists' needs rather than placing the needs of locals first, and waste management. Top comments regarding opportunities for Palo Corona included encouraging trail and habitat connections to other open spaces, allowing for multi-use trails and holding environmental education programs. A few comments also suggested limiting uses overall and maintaining the site as a true natural preserve.



Site maps with comments collected during the Open House.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

WORD ASSOCIATION

Attendees were asked to describe Palo Corona in one word. The following are the range or responses that were received:

LANDSCAPE	» Undeveloped » Untouched » View » Beauty » Peace » Tranquility » Solitude » Quiet » Seclusion » Backyard	COMMUNITY	» Everyone » No one » Community » Neighbors » Sharing » Family » Kids	USERS	» Multi-use » Trails » Bikes » Horses » Access » Accessibility » Golf » Utility	PROGRAMMING	» Education » Restoration » Ecology » Learning » Volunteers	ENVIRONMENT	» Trees » Habitat » Water » Wildlife » Carmel River » Fires
						LONG-TERM	» Finality » Health » Legacy	ANIMALS	» Dogs » Owls » Cows » Service Animals

Attendees were asked to describe potential limitations/challenges to Palo Corona in one word. The following are the range or responses that were received:

VISITORS	» Slow	» Noise	ENVIRONMENT	» Fire	MANAGEMENT	» Donations	COMMUNITY	» NIMBY-ism
	» Delays	» Graffiti/ vandalism		» Exhaustion		» Staffing		» Privilege
	» Traffic	» Over-loved		» Impact		» Bureaucracy		
	» Tourists			» Flooding		» Rules		
	» Capacity			» Endangered		» Expense		
	» Over-use			» Degradation		» Timeliness		
	» Trash			» Air pollution				
							» Discrimination	

Attendees were asked to describe a use they would like to see at Palo Corona in one word. The following are the range or responses that were received:

HIKING & CAMPING	» Hiking » Thru-hiking » Connectivity » Long trails » Backcountry camp » Accessible trails	USES	» Biking » Horse trails » Dog walking » Birding » Kayaking » Golf » Hunting and junior hunting » Full accessibility	ENVIRONMENT	» Protection of wildlife » Restoration » Hands-on restoration » Native plants » Fire protection » Restrooms/facilities » Café » Venue for events » Source of revenue	EDUCATION	» Education » Educational walks/ programming » Outdoor classroom » Historic interpretation » Educational/ environmental interpretation	PARTNERSHIPS	» Volunteers » Non-profit organizations » Research » Trail watch/park docents/guides » Ranching
								FACILITIES	» Access from Rio Road » Carmel River Walk project

PUBLIC OUTREACH

ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

This section reviews additional focus group meetings that were arranged during the spring of 2017 to supplement the original round of focus group meetings discussed earlier in the chapter. These meetings were added in order to address the new acquisition of the former Rancho Cañada Golf Club (RCGC) property which, with the existing infrastructure and paved paths that comprise the new property, opens up the possibility to address Universal Access and inclusionary programs and facilities like an enclosed dog park, as well as more opportunities to host programmed events, and provide an enhanced revenue stream through concessions and tenants that can be reinvested in the Park's operation. Similar to the format of the first round of focus group meetings, groups were first asked to brainstorm a list of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) pertaining to the Park in addition to a word-association brainstorming activity.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY FOCUS GROUP

The Universal Design Accessibility Focus Group meeting discussion concentrated efforts on ideas of how Palo Corona can provide a full experience to the greatest extent possible for everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or status in life. The goals of this group were to help the design team provide a seamless experience for people with disabilities by enabling everyone to be truly immersed in nature and outdoor activity rather than accommodating the disabled just to the degree that a building code mandates. While there are several hurdles to address when designing for universal access, a few concepts were developed during the meeting to provide potential steps towards achieving this goal. Capitalizing on all aspects of Palo Corona's nature to provide a multi-sensory experience would be one solution worth exploring. Addressing methods to aid the visually impaired in navigating trails, whether its with braille or other strategies, was a significant topic of discussion and proved worthy of further exploration. Requests were voiced for an enclosed dog park that could provide outdoor recreation for those members of our District that rely on service dogs or have very limited opportunities for outdoor recreation and socialization.

WORD ASSOCIATION

Meeting attendees were asked to describe a feeling about Palo Corona in one word. The following are the range or responses that were received:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| » Interesting (throughout) | » Tours/classes- sign language interpreter | chair) - Freedom (Water experience...) |
| » Functional | » Staff –qualified in sign language. (Qualified Staff) | » Wild |
| » Educational environmentally – importance of parks and natural resources | » Recorded presentation visually in sign language (website) | » Exploration |
| » Solar park | » APP for park (technology) | » Inspiration |
| » Curiosity inducing | » Cellular access | » Creativity |
| » Interactive | » Multiple languages | » Create your own environmental make it, build it |
| » Stewardship | » Historical (History) | |
| » Advocacy | » Fun | |
| » Safety | » Therapeutic, including service animals | |
| » Place to rest | » Sanctuary | |
| » Different types of paths for different users | » Freedom (Water experience...) | |
| » Barrier free that is holistic inclusive not separating able and differently able people | » A place where you can dream | |
| » Enforcement | » Sensory- interactive | |
| » Communication access (esp. deaf and hard of hearing) | » Outside yourself (get to forget that you are not in a wheel | |

PUBLIC OUTREACH

WORD ASSOCIATION

Meeting attendees were asked to describe what programs they would like to see in the park. The following are the range of responses that were received:

- » High contrast interactive bumps
- » Kitchen
- » Banquet space
- » Pro-shop... rent chairs, water bottle, day packs, compass, etc...
- » Motor packs for wheel chairs
- » Classrooms, schools
- » Rest areas, rooms to rest
- » Visitor center
- » Back country amenities
- » Meeting rooms – community rooms
- » Staff retreat
- » MST- designated stop Measure Q (elderly, handicapped, veterans)
- » Multi-generational access and usage
- » “Parisol” facility (multiple agencies in one facility) – incubator space
- » Keep large green open space for group activities (yoga, dog park, group gatherings)
- » Fun facts about the park
- » Local art (shows, art on the walls, murals)
- » Programs – hiking, climbing, equestrian, can be focus groups (Terry Bare)
- » Events – marathon, renaissance fair, graduations, weddings
- » Vans/shuttle to Inspiration Point and remote, wilderness Back Country parts of the park
- » Sleep over camp with both disabilities and non-disabled sleep over together
- » Long term parking (backcountry parking pass)
- » Charging stations
- » Climbing wall
- » Ropes course
- » Volks Sports (Rank trails on different abilities)
- » Para athletic facility
- » kiosks (talking/phone tours)- visual
- » auditory signals for people that can’t see (example wind chimes)
- » have a tactile representation need sites



Trail summary to inform visitors of difficulty



Existing paved cart paths at RCGC can make the Park more accessible

PUBLIC OUTREACH

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS FOCUS GROUP

The education focus group held an additional meeting to refine the goals and objectives discussed in the first meeting. Representatives were present from Big Sur Land Trust, California State Parks, Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, Camp Sea Lab, CSUMB, Ventana Wildlife Society, Carmel River Watershed Conservancy, Santa Lucia Conservancy, MEarth, Carmel Middle School, Carmel Unified School District, and Return of the Natives. The purpose of the meeting was to learn how each organization would engage with Palo Corona and help to achieve park-wide goals. More specifically, prioritization of programs, logistics of how to implement programs, best uses of the park and current facilities and limiting factors were topics covered throughout the meeting. The following is a list of specific objectives developed during the meeting:

- » To collaborate with other agencies and identify model programs;
- » Create a website that consolidates educational program information into one informative place;
- » Act as a gateway to Big Sur, therefore educating visitors and tying both areas together;
- » Address cultural diversity by identifying barriers to involvement ;
- » Not many places left where you can take youth to learn how to fish. Could access Carmel River from Palo Corona to create new youth fishing program;
- » Could provide picnic areas to offer a needed facility and attract new demographics;
- » Bolster social media presences for marketing and education;
- » Restoration as education and a way for volunteers and community members to engage and become invested in the park;
- » Park could feature different types of experiences throughout different parts of the park depending on the state of the habitat; and,
- » Coordinate with existing community events to reach a broader spectrum throughout the planning process.

PUBLIC OUTREACH



Discussion of existing educational programming and opportunities for partnerships at the Rancho Cañada site

[illegible]

Matrix showing existing educational programs in region

[illegible]

Matrix showing programming needs of potential users

PUBLIC OUTREACH

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #1

This section reviews the public comment and input from Public Workshop #1, held in Carmel Valley on October 5, 2017, Marina on November 1, and Seaside on November 2. This meeting asked the public for input on desired uses and activities at Palo Corona Regional Park (with a focus on the proposed acquisition of the Rancho Cañada property).

For this workshop, keypad polling was used to survey meeting attendants about perceived park opportunities, concerns, and priorities. These same survey questions were later posted online for public participation from October 16 through November 10. There were 151 attendees that signed in at the public workshop and 129 participants in the keypad polling, with some choosing not to complete the exercise or partake in every question. 990 respondents started the online survey, with 889 respondents completing the survey. Most participants were from Carmel/Carmel Valley and were 60 years old or older.

OPPORTUNITIES

Public comment from both in-person meetings and the online survey showed the greatest perceived opportunities to be related to trail connectivity, hiking and walking paths. Together, these categories made up nearly 50% of public meeting responses.

CONCERNS

Participants' biggest concerns were related to parking and traffic with a 23% response, followed by worry about over-use and the potential human impact on conservation goals with 21% and 20% respectively.

PRIORITIES

Attendees were presented with the opportunity to pick first, second, and third priorities from a list of park emphases. The highest priority of both meeting attendees and survey participants was related to environmental restoration, land preservation and trail connectivity. A second priority was public and user-group accessibility. Tertiary priorities were related to health and safety as well as educational programming.

Participants were also asked about their confidence in the MPRPD and if they felt the process was headed in the appropriate direction. Nearly half of respondents agreed and felt that MPRPD was doing a good job, while an average of less than 10% disagreed. Remaining responses stated "neutral". With a better grasp of opportunities, concerns, and priorities, the Design Workshop team gathered to develop three design alternatives in accordance with the public input. These alternatives were then presented back to the community as part of Public Workshop #2.

PUBLIC OUTREACH



Some of the 150 community members in attendance at Workshop #1



Palo Corona Public Meeting #1 Survey

Survey Introduction and Project Overview

The purpose of this survey is to ask the public's thoughts on what uses and activities are most appropriate and least appropriate for Palo Corona Regional Park, with a primary focus on the soon-to-be acquired Rancho Cañada property. A brief introduction will give you an overview of the park, then will be followed by the survey questions. Thank you for your time and we appreciate your input!

The image below shows Palo Corona Regional Park and its surrounding context. The park is approximately 4,500 acres of open space that is a valuable link within a 70 mile long chain of open space extending from the Carmel River down to San Luis Obispo County. Throughout this survey, we will be referencing three different regions of the park: the Front Ranch, and the Back Country, and the Rancho Cañada property (as seen in the following image).



Online survey introduction page

PUBLIC OUTREACH

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2

The following section reviews the public comment and input from Public Workshop #2, held in Seaside on November 15, 2017 and Carmel on November 16. This meeting sought public opinion and thoughts on the three design alternatives developed in response to Public Workshop #1.

As part of this second workshop, preference dot boards and a handout questionnaire were utilized to solicit public input. Meeting attendants were able to identify their preferred elements from each of the design alternatives, and survey questions were later posted online for public participation from November 23 through December 15. There were 83 attendees that signed in at the public workshop and 56 participants completed their questionnaires, with some choosing not to participate in the dot board exercise or hand in their questionnaire. 510 respondents started the online survey, with 414 respondents completing the survey.

DOT BOARD EXERCISE RESPONSES

Dot boards were posted next to presentation boards to gather input on the preferred elements from each of the three alternatives. Pens were provided at the dot board stations for the public to write additional preferred elements during the exercise.

HANDOUT AND ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

Through the survey questions, participants were able to provide further input on desired elements. Questions were adapted and provided via an online survey to allow for greater community participation. Alternative 1 was found to be the most favored with native open space, dog park, educational trails, and native plant nursery cited as preferred elements. Alternative 2 was second most popular with native open space, dog park, and community space as top priorities. Alternative 3 was less popular among community members with native open space, dog park, and sensory gardens as its most preferred elements. Overall, similar to comments in Workshop #1, the community expressed high interest levels in trail connectivity and preservation of native open space in all three alternatives.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

COMMENT CARD

Please circle and/or fill in your answers to the following questions:

1. Where do you live?
Palo Alto

2. How did you hear about this meeting?
MRS. MRS.

3. What elements of Alternative 1 do you like the best?
a. educational youth camping site
b. native play area
c. wetland + river learning areas

4. What elements of Alternative 2 do you like the best?
a. event/staging area
b. picnic area
c. group picnic (table to be built)

PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK
CARMEL, CA • MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Workshop #1

5. What elements of Alternative 3 do you like the best?
a. event lawn
b. art installations

COMMENT CARD

Please circle and/or fill in your answers to the following questions:

1. Where do you live?
Carmel Valley

2. How did you hear about this meeting?
mrrpd website

3. What elements of Alternative 1 do you like the best?
a. old fire staging area
b. wetland interpretation
c. (need fitness area)

4. What elements of Alternative 2 do you like the best?
a. Fitness/dix golf
b. Picnic
c. old fire staging / fenced dog park

PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK
CARMEL, CA • MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Workshop #2

5. What elements of Alternative 3 do you like the best?
a. Fitness meditation
b. Art in the Park
c. old fire staging

COMMENT CARD

Please circle and/or fill in your answers to the following questions:

1. Where do you live?
Palo Alto

2. How did you hear about this meeting?
MRS. MRS.

3. What elements of Alternative 1 do you like the best?
a. educational youth camping site
b. native play area
c. wetland + river learning areas

4. What elements of Alternative 2 do you like the best?
a. event/staging area
b. picnic area
c. group picnic (table to be built)

PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK
CARMEL, CA • MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Workshop #2

5. What elements of Alternative 3 do you like the best?
a. event lawn
b. art installations
c. meditation area

6. What additional comments do you have?
a. I think some of these things are too far from the main development area - maybe keep development closer to the visitor center
b. Picnic areas should have fire pits
c. You might want to think about camping + youth play - these are hard to find in our area for local schools
d. Connecting to bike ranch is essential
e. groups

7. Which of the design alternatives do you like the best?
Alternative 4 (one)

8. Do you feel this process for Palo Corona Regional Park GDP is heading in the right direction?
a. Agree b. Neutral c. Disagree

9. Do you feel that MPRPD is doing a good job managing the planning process for Palo Corona Regional Park?
a. Agree b. Neutral c. Disagree

PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK
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Examples of the comment cards that were completed and handed in during Workshop #2



Community members participating in the dot-board voting exercise

PUBLIC OUTREACH

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #3

The following is a summary of public comment and input from Public Workshop #3, held in Seaside on February 7, 2018, and Carmel on February 8. These meetings asked the public to share their thoughts on the Preferred Alternative for Palo Corona Regional Park developed from the feedback gathered from Workshops #1 and #2.

Preference dot boards and a handout questionnaire were again used during Workshop #3 to survey meeting attendants about their thoughts on each unit of the preferred alternative. Survey questions were later posted online for public participation from February 22 through March 16. There were 120 attendees that signed in at the public workshop and 77 participants completed their questionnaires, with some choosing not to participate in the dot board exercise or hand in their questionnaire. 395 respondents started the online survey, with 339 respondents completing the survey.

DOT BOARD EXERCISE RESPONSES

Dot boards were posted next to presentation boards to gather input on the preferred elements from the Back Country Unit, Front Ranch Unit, and Rancho Cañada Unit Preferred Alternative Plans during the public meetings. Each attendant was given a total of nine dots to vote on their top three preferred elements for each plan. However, some attendants obtained additional dots which were used to vote more than once for particular items, which skewed the results of the dot board voting exercise. Pens were also provided at the dot board stations for the public to write any additional preferred elements during the exercise. The questions were adapted and provided via an online survey to allow for greater community participation.

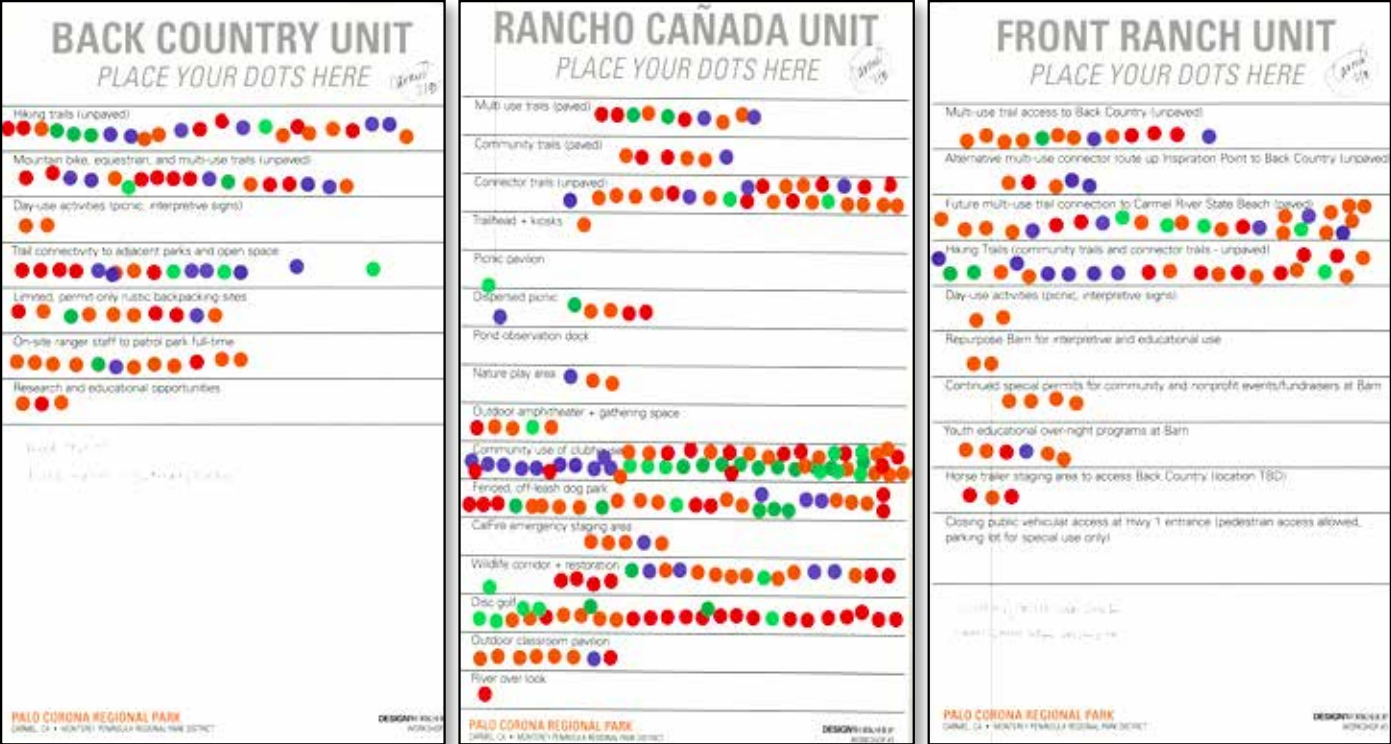
HANDOUT AND ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

Through the survey questions, participants were able to provide further input on preferred program elements in each of the park focus areas.

Top responses for the Back Country unit included multi-use unpaved trails (mountain biking, equestrian, hiking) as well as trail connections to neighboring parks. Front Ranch most desired elements included a paved multi-use trail connection to Carmel River State Beach, as well as other trail access and connections to Back Country. Rancho Cañada preferred elements included community use of the clubhouse, an off-leash dog park, and multi-use trails.

As a conclusion to the three public workshops, responses were again gathered relating to positive feelings towards MPRPD and the General Plan development. Well over 70% of responses were now positive and showed an overall increase of trust and confidence in the design and planning process. It could be seen that the public clearly valued having their input taken into consideration and in having a voice in the outcome of Palo Corona Regional Park.

PUBLIC OUTREACH



Some of the dot board exercise responses



Community members gathering around the preferred alternative boards

PUBLIC OUTREACH

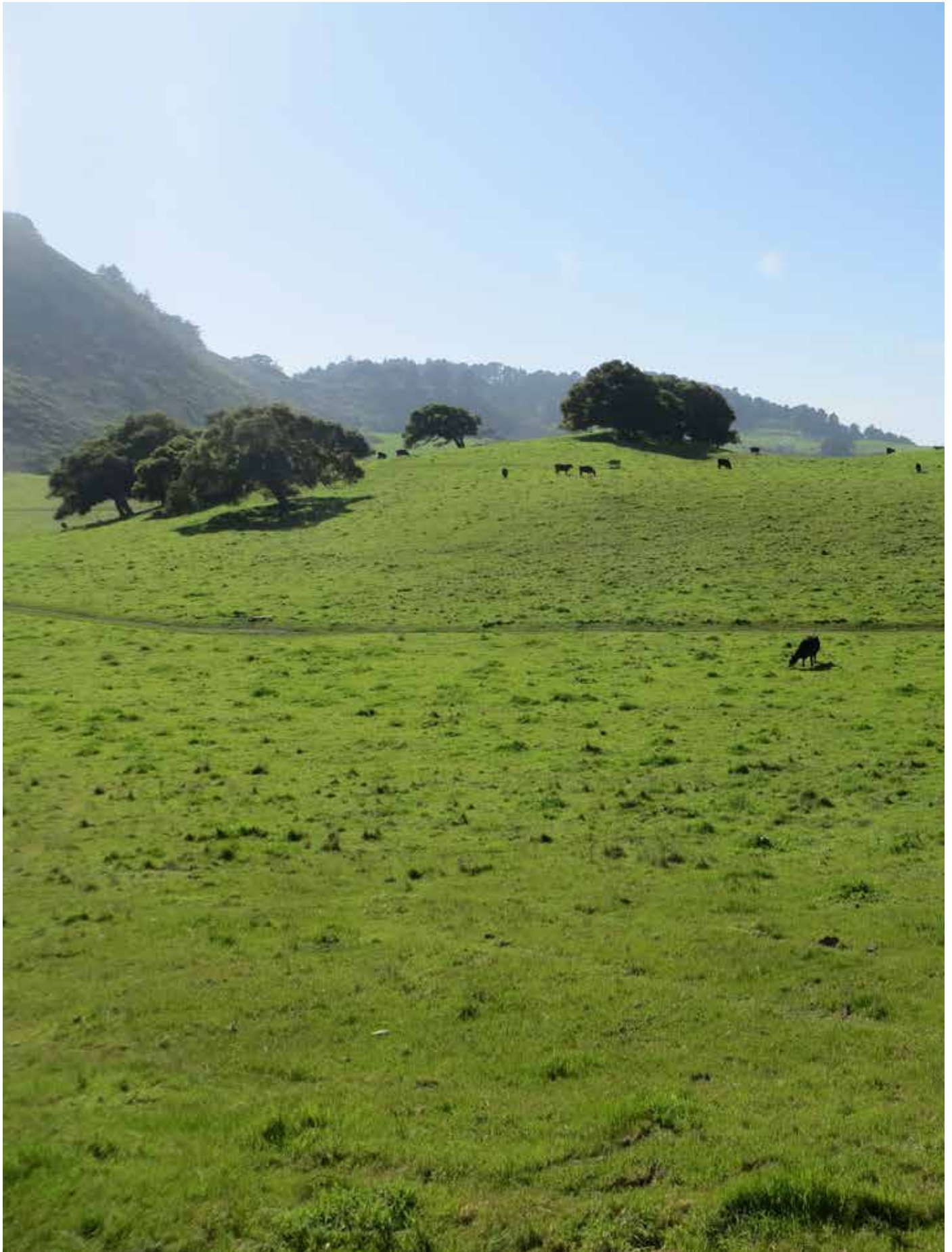
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE PRESENTATION TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

On April 11, 2018, the Preferred Alternative for Palo Corona Regional Park that had been developed and refined throughout the public process was presented to the MPRPD Board of Directors and the public. A brief presentation was followed by a question and answer period. The Preferred Alternative was approved and allowed to move forward as the basis for this General Development Plan.

DRAFT GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PRESENTATION TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

On August 8, 2018, the General Development Plan will be presented to MPRPD's Board of Directors during a regularly scheduled Board meeting. The result of this meeting will provide direction to the MPRPD staff on completing the GDP.

PUBLIC OUTREACH



4 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

ACQUISITION AND LAND TRANSFER

- Grant Funding and Restrictions

TRAILS AND PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN

- Multi-Use Trails
- Community Trails
- Trail Connectivity

RECREATIONAL USES

- Back Country Unit
- Front Ranch Unit
- Rancho Cañada Unit

SUPPORT FACILITIES AND SPECIAL USES

- Back Country Unit
- Front Ranch Unit
- Rancho Cañada Unit

NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION PLAN

- Restoration Approach To Rancho Cañada Unit
- Additional Study

INTERPRETIVE AND EDUCATIONAL PLAN

- Interpretation Delivery Methods

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

ACQUISITION AND LAND TRANSFER

GRANT FUNDING AND USE RESTRICTIONS

MPRPD received, signed, and submitted the financial grant-related agreements to the State agencies that generously awarded the funding for the acquisition of the Rancho Cañada property.

Each grant's purpose and intent includes: acquiring the Rancho Cañada property; substantially reclaiming, restoring and sustaining the site as native habitat; and providing compatible environmental education and passive recreation opportunities that minimize or eliminate potential negative impacts to the site's soils, plants, animals, and water features. Water restrictions on the site limit total water use to 15 acre-feet per year, with ten acre-feet allotted for restoration efforts and five acre-feet allotted for landscaping and maintenance. A key goal with respect to this property's acquisition is to reintroduce common, threatened, and endangered native flora and fauna.

MPRPD's goal with the acquisition and rehabilitation of the Rancho Cañada property is to introduce restoration-minded park programming that will serve its visitors as well as the natural environment. Several uses, such as auto shows, golf, and disc golf, that have been explored, but were unfortunately identified as incompatible with the property's and grants' intended habitat restoration, preservation and conservation purposes. Activities that may inevitably or unavoidably result in the repeated trampling of restored habitat, and/or disturbance of extant and reintroduced native flora and fauna will not be allowed. Additionally, any activity or program serving a particular user group or organization that precludes or limits public access will not be allowed other than the District on-site concession operations that provide a revenue stream to the District. MPRPD endeavors to maintain that all park programming must be for non-exclusive public use.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE



Looking West at the Carmel River. Restoration of the former golf course will improve water quality and fish habitat

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

TRAILS AND ACCESS PLAN

Palo Corona's 4,585 acres offer miles of trails that allow visitors to experience the Park's diverse plant and animal habitat with rolling terrain and sweeping views. Many visitors will come to the Park to hike, whether it is for a short loop around the Rancho Cañada Unit, or a multi-day through-hike from the Back Country Unit onto Big Sur and beyond.

In order to facilitate different user groups wanting to explore the Park's vast network of trails, the District has examined different trail types and typologies proposed for different locations and potential trail users. The District hopes to accommodate many different users on Palo Corona's trails, from universal access at the Rancho Cañada Unit to multi-use access in the Back Country Unit. At this time, the Park's trails will be non-motorized access (except for maintenance vehicles) however, any mechanized instruments or vehicles for the purpose of universal access will be allowed to help visitors of all skills and abilities experience Palo Corona's inspiring views and open space.

MULTI-USE TRAILS

While there may be some multi-use connections through the Rancho Cañada and Front Ranch Units, the majority of the multi-use trails will be in the Back Country Unit of Palo Corona. Due to the park's vast expanse and steep terrain, few visitors may likely desire to make the long and strenuous round-trip hike to the Back Country Unit to experience the breath-taking views and incredible wilderness. Introducing multi-use users to the wide former ranch-road trail network in the Back Country Unit will allow more visitors quicker access to the remote areas of the park when few would be able to experience it on-foot. Additionally, with considerably less foot-traffic in this portion of the park compared to the other more easily-accessible Units, there is reduced chance for user-conflict between hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Allowing multi-use access to the Back Country Unit however, may present some challenges; the sections below discuss potential issues and offer possible solutions to allowing multi-use routes through the Park to access the southern 3,800 acres of open space for its enjoyment and appreciation.

Multi-use trail connections through Palo Corona will also help connect the community and region on a broader scale. There is great need and desire to provide an integrated trail system that connects Carmel Valley to Carmel (to destinations like Carmel Middle School via a vehicle-free route along the Carmel River or into downtown via Rio Road) and the recreation amenities along the coast (like Carmel River State Beach or along SR-1 or a trail paralleling the beach to Point Lobos State Reserve). Providing bike lanes and bike paths will encourage non-motorized alternative transportation and may help alleviate local traffic on major roadways by removing some vehicles off the road.

While MPRPD sees the value in multi-use access and is working to identify appropriate access points for equestrian and bike users to connect to the vast network of trails within the Back Country Unit, there are still several challenges to access to solve as well as collaborative partnerships with adjacent open space agencies to establish connectivity. For these reasons, multi-use access is under consideration by MPRPD, and will require approval from the Board of Directors. MPRPD does not want to preclude these potential uses from the GDP.

MULTI-USE ACCESS POINTS

The primary access point to the trail network will be at trailheads located near the parking lot at the Rancho Cañada Unit. These trailheads will include informational kiosks with interpretive/wildlife information, posted administrative and seasonal notices, and trail maps showing designated multi-use trails, hiking-only trail, and trails that allow on-leash dogs (through Rancho Cañada Unit only). These trailheads will provide access to the proposed multi-use trail loop through the Rancho Cañada Unit, and access into the Front Ranch Unit via the South Bank Trail at the East entry gate.

Multi-use visitors may also access the Park from a connection to a potential multi-use trail through the Carmel River FREE project area near the West entry gate at SR-1. The trail will continue into Palo Corona's Front Ranch Unit and connect with multi-use portion of the Vista Lobos Trail near the East entry gate. This wide gravel path and maintenance road connection through the BSLT's Carmel River FREE project area will allow multi-use visitors access to the multi-use portions of the Vista Lobos, Tallus, and Palo Corona trails without having to dismount and walk through the Front Ranch Unit.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

In addition to the potential multi-use access routes through the Rancho Cañada and Front Ranch Units within Palo Corona, MPRPD is exploring other points of access to allow visitors connection to the multi-use trails in the Back Country Unit through adjacent open space. As part of the Lobos-Corona Parklands Partnership, MPRPD is working with California State Parks, the Point Lobos Foundation, and the Big Sur Land Trust to improve trail-based connectivity through these open space lands. MPRPD is examining potential multi-use staging areas that would allow for direct access into the Back Country Unit. These additional access points will require collaboration to determine best available locations for the staging areas and trail connectivity into the Back Country Unit.

MPRPD is also exploring possibilities for a potential horse trailer staging area. With left-turn and traffic impact issues from SR-1 and lack of space for trailer parking in the Rancho Cañada Unit parking lot, MPRPD is searching for an appropriate off-site location that can be used for a horse trailer staging area to allow for equestrian access to Palo Corona's multi-use trails.

MULTI-USE TRAIL TYPOLOGIES

Back Country Unit

All of the publicly accessible trails in the Back Country Unit have the potential to accommodate multi-use. As former ranch roads, these trails are compacted earth surfaces, approximately 8 to 12-feet wide, that were wide enough to accommodate ranch maintenance vehicles and are wide enough for shared use. These multi-use trails will allow more visitors to experience the Back Country's amazing scenic open space. In an effort to educate trail users and reduce user-conflicts, trail etiquette signs will be posted at trailheads, kiosks, and trail markers throughout the Park as a reminder about proper right-of-way rules for multi-use trails.



The Back Country Unit's wide ranch roads can accommodate different user groups on potential multi-use trails

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Front Ranch Unit

The two multi-use trails through the Front Ranch Unit and the Carmel River FREE project are also former ranch/farm roads with an approximate width of 10 to 12-feet. The potential multi-use gravel trail through the Carmel River FREE project follows the property line between the two parks, then enters the Front Ranch Unit to connect with the Vista Lobos Trail, approximately 700-feet west of the east entry gate.

The multi-use trail loop from the Rancho Cañada Unit, enters the Front Ranch Unit at the east entry gate. From there, a route that includes portions of the existing soft-surface Vista Lobos, Talus, and Palo Corona Trails will allow multi-use users through the Front Ranch Unit. Both of these multi-use trail routes lead users to the Back Country Unit gate at Animas Pond. This multi-use portion of Palo Corona Trail however, winds up a slope with steep drop-offs and low-visibility, and provides challenges to accessing the Back Country Unit. Measures should be implemented to reduce user-conflict. Signage can be installed to instruct multi-use users to dismount their bike and/or horse, or bollard check-points that allow hikers and horses to pass through can be installed in the trails at regular intervals for speed control for bike users.

Additionally, the District may wish to consider installing a soft-surface single track that parallels the Palo Corona Trail up the steep slope to Animas Pond. The narrow 4 to 6-foot trail should have minimal scenic impact on the hill's iconic appearance, and would allow the flexibility to separate trail users; the alternative multi-use route could serve either mountain bikers or pedestrian and equestrian users, and preserve the Palo Corona Trail for other designated use. This could be a possible solution for providing fast access to the Back Country Unit's miles of potential multi-use trails while reducing user-conflict on Palo Corona Trail's winding route to Animas Pond.

Rancho Cañada Unit

Future multi-use trails in the Rancho Cañada Unit could include a 10 to 12-foot paved surface with a 4 to 6-foot gravel shoulder. This would allow for ease of use by multiple user groups including walkers/runners, cyclists, and families with strollers who may prefer the wide paved pathways, and equestrian users and mountain bikers may prefer the gravel shoulder to the pavement. These trails primarily follow the existing former golf cart paths alignments, with

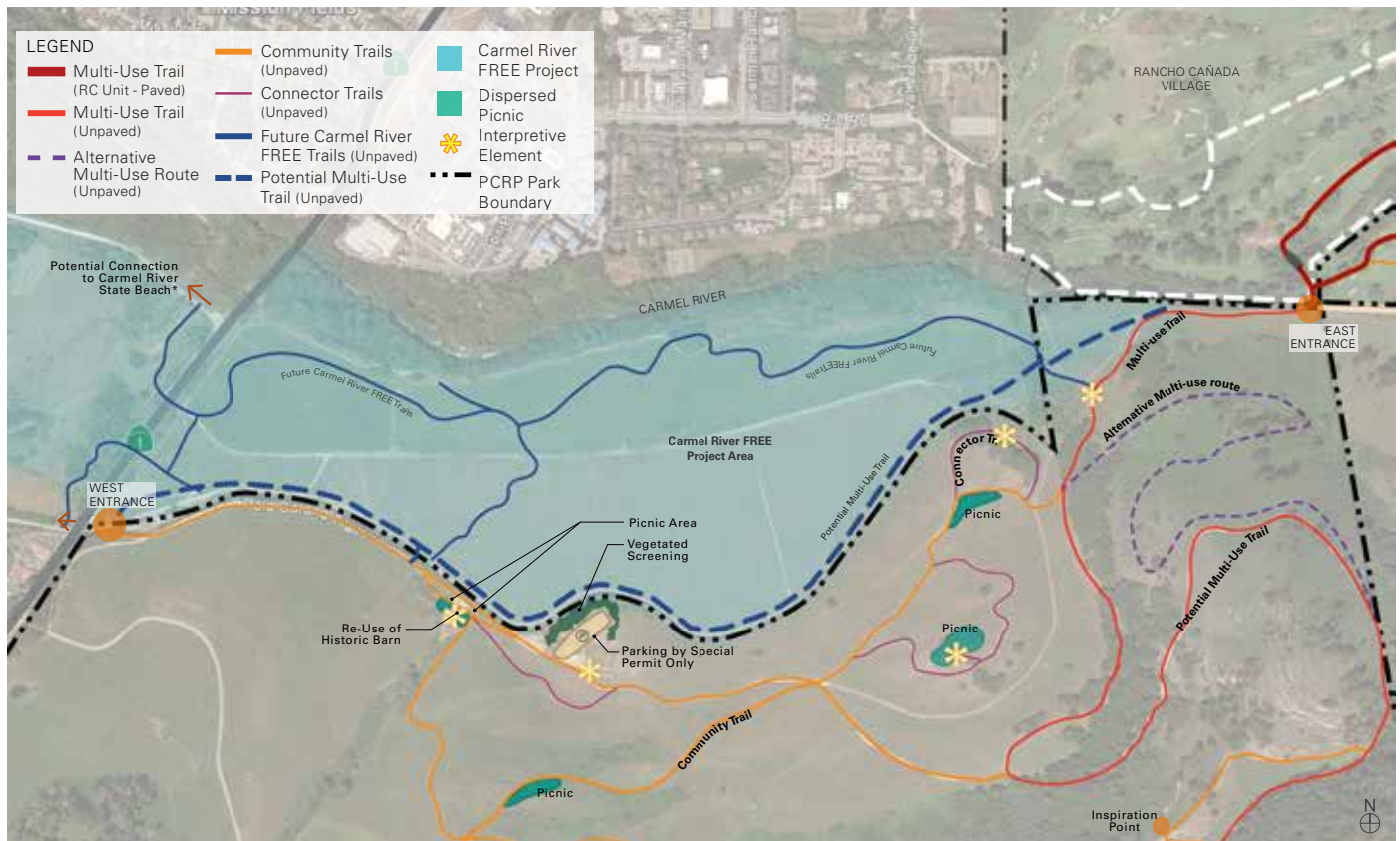


Figure 9: Front Ranch Unit Preferred Alternative Trail Diagram

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

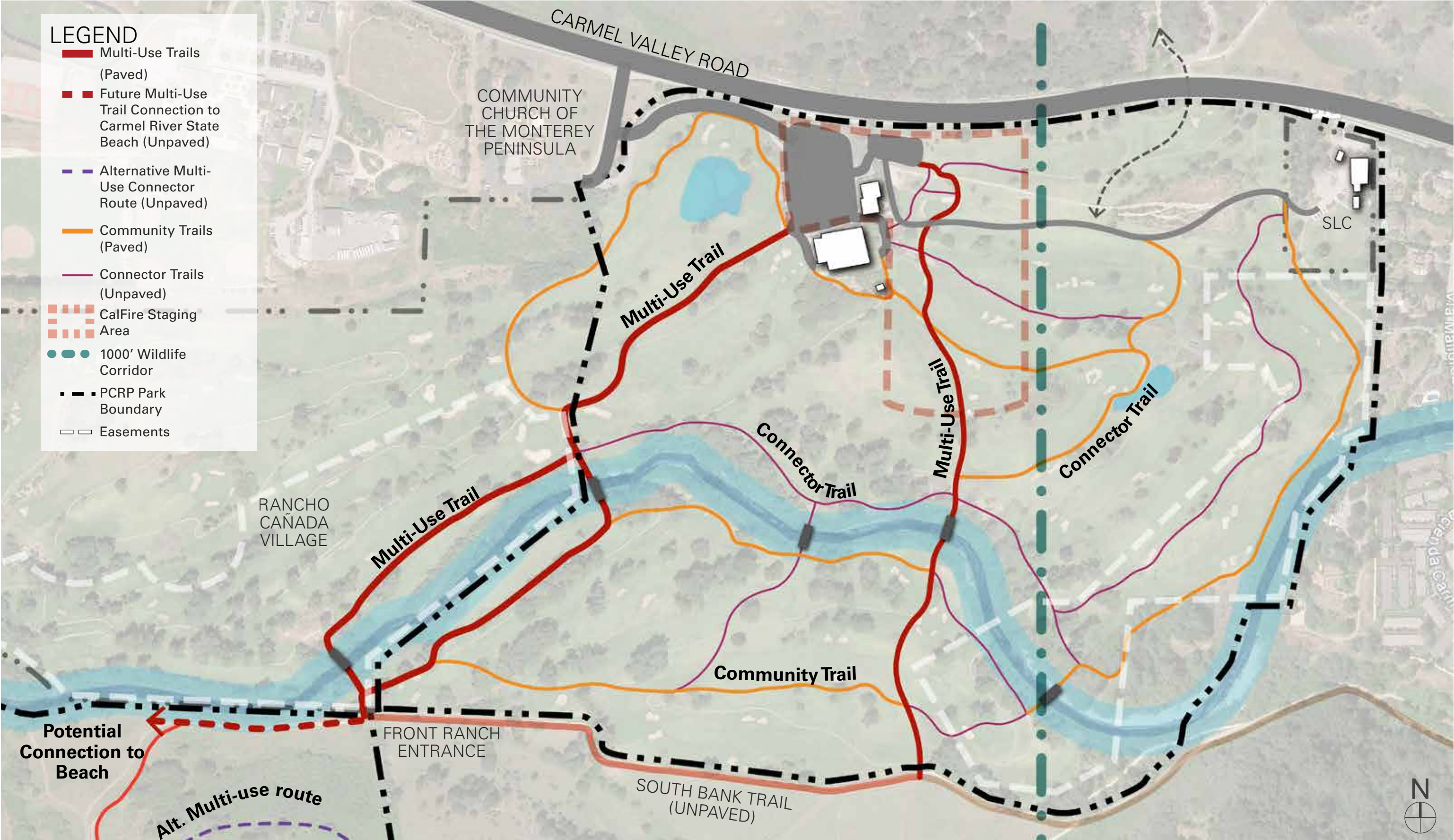


Figure 10: Rancho Cañada Unit Preferred Alternative Trail Diagram

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PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

some segments of realignment or connection. The existing cart paths are paved however, these trails will likely require resurfacing in some sections to widen the paths and to additionally provide the gravel shoulder. At the completion of these trail improvements, MPRPD aims to make the vast majority, if not all, of the multi-use trails within the Rancho Cañada Unit ADA-accessible.

The east side of the multi-use loop would start at the main trailhead, directly west of the Discovery Center, and the trail would continue southwest toward the Carmel River. The trail could potentially continue across “Bridge 4” or “Bridge 5”, or both. The west side of the multi-use loop would start at the secondary trailhead at the east end of the dog park parking lot, and would continue south through to park and cross the river at either Bridge 1,2, or 3. MPRPD is considering this leg of the multi-use trail to allow on-leash dogs, so that visitors from adjacent neighborhoods can walk, rather than drive, into the Park from the South Bank Trail, then through the Rancho Cañada Unit to access the proposed enclosed off-leash dog park.

The trail would then connect with the South Bank Trail (an existing, unpaved multi-use trail), and follow the South Bank Trail to the east entry gate, completing the multi-use loop within the Rancho Cañada Unit. The shared portion of the South Bank Trail may remain unpaved, or may be paved to provide a complete hard-surface loop through the Rancho Cañada Unit that would be accessible to a variety of users. Paving this portion of the South Bank Trail, however, would require partnership and collaboration with the Big Sur Land Trust, who holds the South Bank Trail easement.

COMMUNITY TRAILS

The community trails throughout Palo Corona will utilize some existing and some proposed paths, and will serve as primary circulation routes through the Rancho Cañada and Front Ranch Units. These trails will allow pedestrians and hikers only.

The community trails through the Front Ranch Unit follow the existing trail network, and include the Barn Trail, Rumsien Loop, and portions of the Palo Corona and Vista Lobos trails. Visitors may also walk-in from the West entry gate at SR-1. These trails are gravel or compacted-earth surface and range from 4 to 8-feet wide.

The community trails through the Rancho Cañada Unit primarily follow the existing cart paths, with some segments of realignment or connection. These trails range from 6 to 8-feet wide and are paved however, some of the existing concrete and asphalt cart paths are in poor condition with cracks or steep grades. Further assessment is needed to determine which portions will require re-surfacing or widening for greater accessibility. MPRPD may phase out some sections of these trail improvements over time, primarily due to trail redundancy.

CONNECTOR TRAILS

The connector trails throughout Palo Corona will utilize both existing and proposed paths, and will serve as secondary circulation routes through the Rancho Cañada and Front Ranch units. These trails will allow pedestrians and hikers only.

The connector trails through the Front Ranch Unit follow the existing trail network, and include the Laguna Vista and Oak Knoll trails. These trails are gravel or compacted-earth surface and range from 2 to 4-feet wide.

The connector trails through the Rancho Cañada Unit primarily follow the existing cart path alignments, with some segments of realignment or connection. The existing concrete and asphalt could be removed and replaced with a compacted-earth surface to reduce impervious surface in the flood plain. These trails will be 4 to 6-feet wide. At the completion of these trail improvements, MPRPD aims to make the majority, if not all, the connector trails within the Rancho Cañada Unit ADA-accessible.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE



Alternative Multi-Use Single Track Trail



Paved Multi-Use Trail with soft-surface shoulder through the Rancho Cañada Unit



PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE



Paved Community Trail



Multi-Use Single Track Trail



PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

As discussed above, a goal of MPRPD is to use Palo Corona's strategic location to improve connectivity between the region's vast network of open space. The District hopes to provide or strengthen connections to neighboring communities as well as adjacent parklands.

In collaboration with the Big Sur Land Trust and California State Parks, MPRPD is working to connect Carmel Valley to the ocean. This connection starts with the South Bank Trail, an existing multi-use and dog-friendly gravel trail, at a trailhead on Rancho San Carlos Road and currently ends at Palo Corona's East Entry Gate. This trail will then continue through the Front Ranch Unit and onto the Carmel River FREE project at Odello East, where it will split into a series of unpaved pedestrian-only trails through the floodplain restoration area and a potential gravel multi-use trail and maintenance road along the park's southern property line. With the SR-1 causeway improvements, two potential pedestrian underpasses under the roadway will connect the parklands to Carmel River State Beach and the Pacific Ocean. Although this project will require further discussion on management approaches, the District hopes that this trail will provide an uninterrupted multi-use route to the ocean, and someday can extend further east into Carmel Valley, creating a recreation corridor along the Carmel River.

There are several opportunities for enhancing pedestrian connections from Palo Corona into adjacent parks and neighborhoods. The existing South Bank Trail, managed by MPRPD by agreement with the Big Sur Land Trust, holder of the trail easement, provides a great connection from Hacienda Carmel and other surrounding neighborhoods into Palo Corona. This connection will allow nearby residents to walk or bike into the Park rather than drive, reducing local traffic on Carmel Valley Road and in the Park's parking lot. To compliment the connection from the east via the South Bank Trail, MPRPD is exploring the possibility of connecting the Rancho Cañada Unit from the west at Rio Road through the future Rancho Cañada Village development. This will not only connect neighbors along Rio Road into the Park, but also help to provide a broader connection from Carmel Valley into Carmel-by-the-Sea. Additionally, MPRPD would like to collaborate with its partners to connect trails between open space to allow for through-hiking. Hikers could potentially connect into Palo Corona from Garrapata State Park, or up into Jack's Peak County Park through Martin Canyon. The District is coordinating with the Lobos-Corona Parklands Partnership to integrate their respective planning efforts, as well as working with other partners and agencies to review potential connection and access points for hikers and pedestrians.

In addition to pedestrian connections, MPRPD is exploring other points of access and staging areas for multi-use users to provide more direct routes into the Back Country Unit. The District is continuing to work with its partners to identify the best access points for trail connections and staging areas for multi-use users, especially as activities like mountain biking and road cycling continue to grow in popularity. As mentioned above, the District is also looking into possibilities for a potential horse trailer staging area, most likely off-site. MPRPD continues to explore opportunities for acquiring properties to improve access into Palo Corona.

Road cyclists have also requested access to the Rancho Cañada Unit by looking towards identifying paths for road bikes, thereby connecting Rancho San Carlos Road to Rio Road via a designated, paved bike path. Utilizing existing golf cart paths would remove bikes off of a portion of Carmel Valley Road.

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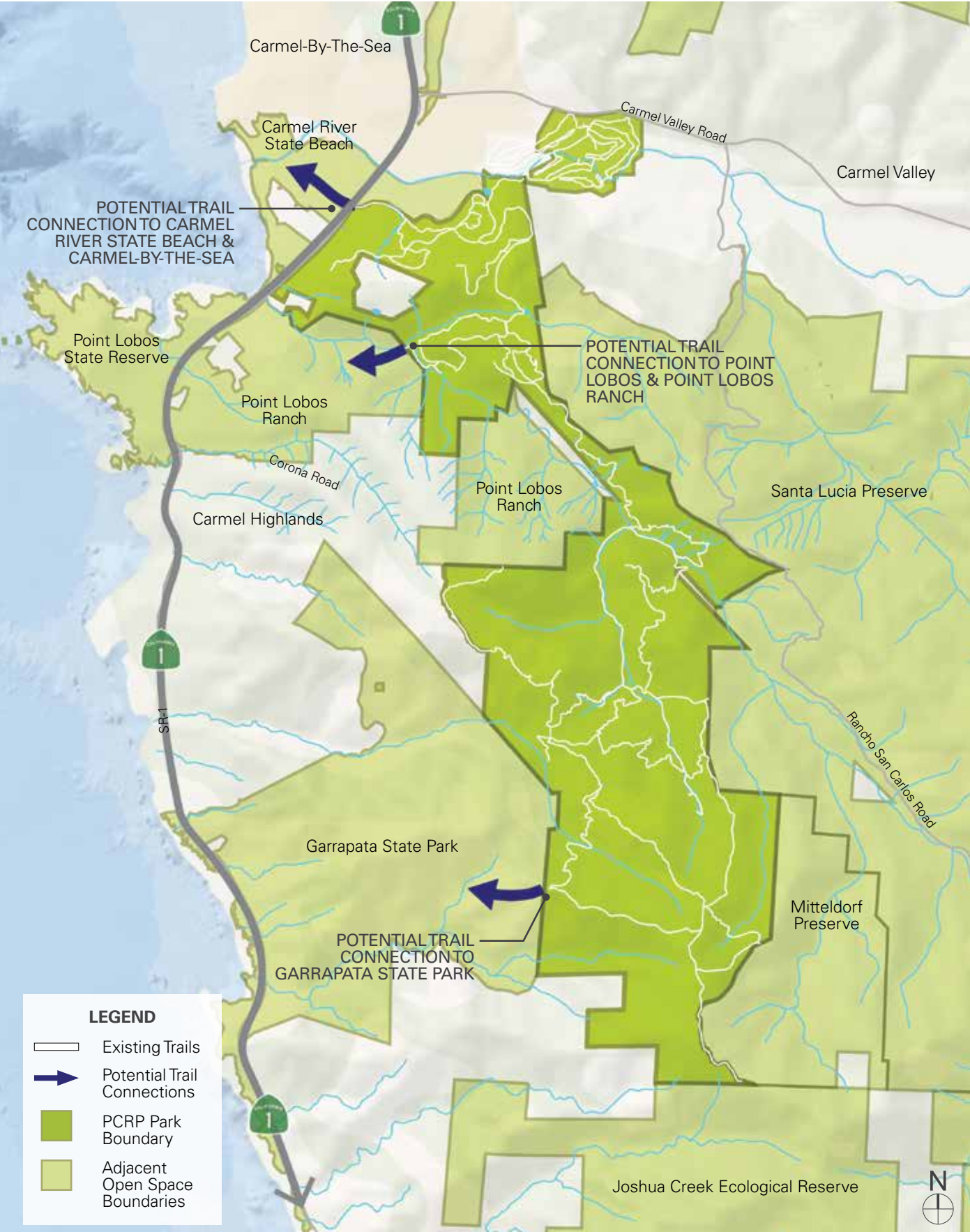


Figure 11: Potential future trail connections to surrounding parkland. GIS data provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

RECREATIONAL USES

The following describes the variety of recreation uses that will potentially be available to the public in the future. The uses are broken down by the Back Country Unit, Front Country Unit, and the Rancho Cañada Unit, and each use reinforces the distinct character of their respective units.

BACK COUNTRY UNIT

Palo Corona's breath-taking landscape in the roughly 4,000 acres of unspoiled Back Country, provides miles of trails and open space for many potential new users. The Park's massive extent makes it difficult to see the entire park all in one day by foot. Thus, opportunities for overnight camping and non-motorized transportation would allow visitors a fuller experience of the Park's long list of natural features and points of interest.

TRAILS AND DAY-USE

MPRPD has been evaluating the conditions of the existing trails and ranch roads to determine the trail network for the Back Country Unit. The Public Access Trails Map shows the trails that will be open for public use, trails that will be used as service routes, trail segments needing realignment, and trails that will be retired.

During this planning process, special access was granted to the Back Country Unit to both local equestrian and mountain biking groups to gather input on feasibility and preferred routes through the vast trail network. Members of the mountain bike focus group produced a report detailing their findings and recommendations for mountain bikers and other trail users in the Back Country Unit. Although many trails and ranch roads already exist through the Back Country, the report cautioned that some of these routes are excessively steep (with grades greater than 20%), making them difficult and unenjoyable for any type of user, as well as susceptible to rutting thus, needing frequent maintenance. The report recommended that these trails be realigned to better work with the grades and decrease slopes.

Similar to the Front Ranch Unit, day-use activities in the Back Country Unit would primarily include dispersed picnicking and interpretation, in addition to trail use and passive recreation. The Corona Homestead is a scenic treasure nestled between the hills in the heart of the Back Country Unit. The historic cabin, corrals, and orchard sit in a flat area adjacent to Seneca Creek and provide an opportune location for picnicking and historic and cultural interpretation of these relics of the Park's past. Palo Corona's watersheds and valuable aquatic habitat are an important element of the conservation efforts, and also provide a great opportunity for educational signage and interpretation. High on the ridgelines above the canyons, visitors can get a glimpse of the endangered California Condor at the Condor Feeding Station, or enjoy the peaceful solitude of nature from Vizcaino Point or Vista Point. Trail-side seating and dispersed picnic tables along the ridges would provide visitors with a perch to take in the views or watch for wildlife. MPRPD could potentially capture donations through a back country focused memorial bench program.

PRIMITIVE CAMPING

To accommodate hikers who venture out to the far reaches of the park, options should be considered to allow them to stay overnight and break up the trek into reasonable legs of travel or enjoy the remote wilderness. Primitive camping sites could be introduced in targeted areas in the Back Country Unit to highlight certain points of interest and provide reprieve to long-distance hikers. Camping sites would be marked with a post and would provide few amenities; little else other than a bear box to secure food and a flat place to pitch a tent. There would be no amenities or facilities requiring utilities or additional infrastructure.

Several areas have been identified in the Back Country Unit that may be suitable for potential primitive camping however, further site analysis would be needed before any specific projects move forward. The flat field near the corrals and historic orchard at the Corona Homestead would make a picturesque spot for primitive campsites in addition to potential day-use activities, or a flat terrace just uphill from the cabin could serve as a camping location that would be more removed from any day-use activities happening below. A previous study by MPRPD reviewed camping feasibility at Whisler-Wilson. This site has several flat areas ideal for primitive campsites and the historic

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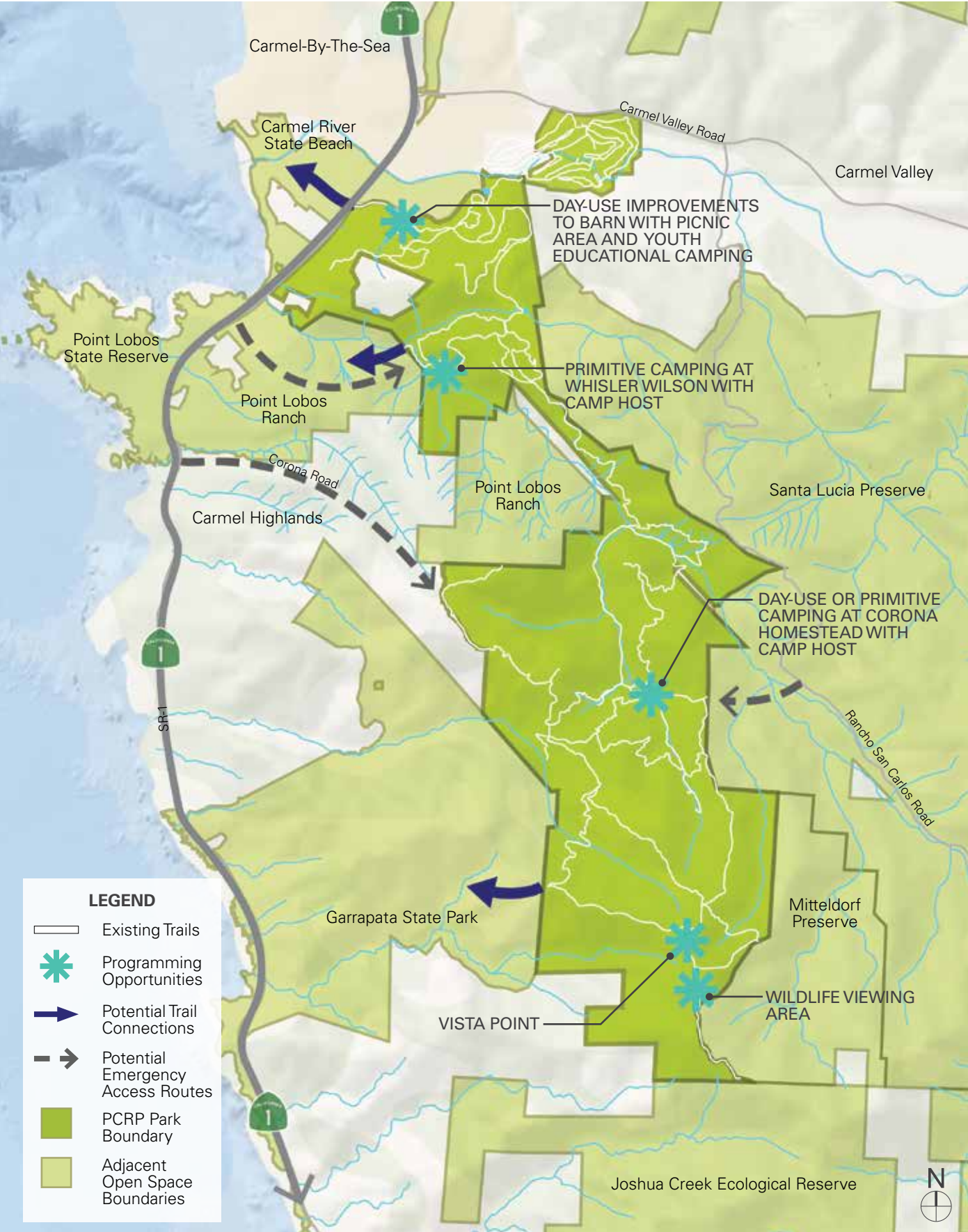


Figure 12: Preferred Alternative plan for the Back Country Unit. GIS data provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE



Potential for new users to explore extensive terrain



Scenic picnic and day-use activities in the Back Country



Cabin on Whisler-Wilson Ranch site



Historic orchard and corrals at the Corona Homestead



Historic cabin at the Corona Homestead



Interpretation of aquatic habitat at creek crossings

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

cabin could serve as a potential residence for park rangers and camp hosts. Both the Corona Homestead and Whilser-Wilson sites would provide limited use, each accommodating only five to ten primitive campsites.

Camping in the Back Country will provide visitors with an incredible wilderness experience, but this activity will require management and enforcement by MPRPD to ensure contact with, and provide service to, campers and surrounding neighbors. Like most primitive camping in the region, camping will be allowed on a permit-only basis to keep track of who is staying in the Park and where. A strict no fire policy will be paramount. Ranger or camp host residences adjacent to primitive campsites will enforce this and other District policies, as well as provide assistance during emergencies. Information distributed to visitors about proper human waste disposal would keep water sources free of contamination. Also, instruction on proper food storage, wildlife encounters, and standard conservation practices, like staying on trail and Leave No Trace, would be imperative to upholding the Park's conservation goals. An introductory course to backpacking and wilderness camping could be considered by MPRPD's educational offerings under the "Let's Go Outdoors!" program.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Additional improvements can be made to the Back Country Unit's cultural and natural points of interest in order to create destination points for visitors exploring the Park.

Before feeding into San Jose Creek, Animas Creek slows and pools into a wetland habitat, creating Animas Pond and a series of vernal ponds. Animas Pond provides high habitat value for wetland plants and wildflowers, birds, and for the federally listed red-legged frog, and serves as a unique opportunity for interpretation and hands-on educational opportunities.

Resting in a clearing near Seneca Creek, the Corona Homestead is evidence of the Park's and region's rich agricultural history. Although the ranch house is no longer standing, the homestead property is still clearly delineated by a classic ranch gateway, and fencing ringing the historic corrals. A bucolic field with views of the surrounding hills sits where an orchard once stood, and although mostly gone, several of the historic fruit trees still remain, dotting the clearing. A short distance from the corrals, the Corona Cabin sits under a stand of redwoods. Although the structure has been partially damaged by weather events and fallen trees, the cabin remains standing and could serve as an interesting interpretive opportunity for visitors to learn about the families that once owned the land and the ranching activities they managed.

At over 2,500 feet, Vista Point serves as a stunning destination after a rigorous hike or ride. With breath-taking views of the Pacific Ocean and coastline, and inland to the Santa Lucia Preserve and Carmel Valley, visitors can truly admire the unique value of the Park and surrounding preserved lands. At just under 1,000 feet, Vizcaino Point in the Whilser-Wilson property offers similar vistas at a shorter distance, allowing for visitors to get a glimpse of the coast after an easier hike or ride.

Palo Corona's ridges and valleys make up thirteen different sub-watersheds within the park. These creeks and tributaries eventually spilling into the Pacific Ocean, offering great habitat value as well as an opportunity for water quality sensitivity and improvement. As valuable habitat or potential habitat for steelhead and coho salmon, both Seneca and San Jose Creeks could be locations to learn about the importance of restoring and preserving steelhead habitat and even witness spawning. Several points along the creeks require trail crossing, which would be an opportune place to intervene with interpretive signs about the fish and their sensitive habitats.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Palo Corona's extensive Back-Country Unit is home to a richly diverse habitat that provides endless opportunities for collaboration and research of the region's valuable natural and cultural resources. There already exist a number of on-going research efforts that the District hopes to continue with its partners, as well as the potential to introduce new studies that will help obtain additional data for topics ranging from science to ecology, and beyond.

The vast amount of open space and natural habitat in the Back County Unit is critical for many common, native, and sensitive species. A continued focus of research and educational programs will be the reintroduction and

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rehabilitation of endangered species to the region. In partnership with the Ventana Wildlife Society, the Back Country Unit has been home to a successful California condor recovery program and feeding station that aims to help reestablish and support a population of these magnificent birds along the Central Coast. Additionally, the thriving wetland habitat of Animas Pond has attracted and supports a population of reg-legged frogs. Red-legged frogs are a federally listed threatened and protected species that many state agencies and organizations have also been working to protect. MPRPD will continue to foster partnerships and encourage programs to support the research and reestablishment of these sensitive species that depend Palo Corona's open space habitat.

Wildlife does not stay within the District's boundaries, however. Many species, especially larger mammals like mountain lions, require a very large range for habitat. Palo Corona serves as a missing link that connects thousands of acres of open space in the region, helping to provide connections for wildlife corridors and reverse habitat fragmentation. In particular, the Park offers a connection between the Santa Lucia Preserve and Jack's Peak County Park, an important corridor that allows passage by wildlife from Monterey County into Big Sur, Los Padres National Forest, and south into San Luis Obispo County. Research of these important wildlife corridors will help researches to understand migration patterns, determine critical locations for potential under or overpasses needed to improve wildlife crossings between open space, and identify strategic open space acquisitions that will link and strengthen this extensive network of parkland on the Central Coast.

The valuable habitat in this connected network of open space is increasingly threatened by wildfires, like the Soberanes Fire, that have devastated the region at an unprecedented scale. In the aftermath of these massive burns, there is also opportunity to study post-fire recovery. Likewise, native plant communities become vulnerable to invasive species in a post-burn scenario. Monitoring the impact of invasive and non-native species, as well as researching post-fire succession patterns of native plant and animal communities will help the District and other organizations establish best land management practices for fire recovery that will create more resilient parkland.

With the varied and uncertain onset of climate change, coastal regions in particular are becoming more vulnerable to climate modification and sea-level rise. In addition to studying these topics, the District has great interest in monitoring how bird, animal, and plant migration patterns to and through Palo Corona will change as the impacts of climate change become more evident. As home to a wide variety of habitats and plant communities, the Park's thousands of acres of open space are likely to experience a shift in the native species that will be able to continue living there. In order to understand how to mitigate or adapt to the impact of climate change, MPRPD hopes that Palo Corona will become a setting for investigative scientific studies that will become a tool for management and education.

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Examples of primitive camping



Typical fauna found at the Park



California Condors feeding station at the Park

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FRONT RANCH UNIT

With its stunning views of the Pacific Ocean and accessibility to most of this unit's trails, many of Palo Corona's visitors will enjoy the Front Ranch Unit. The primary focus of programming will remain hiking and passive recreation on the existing trail network, yet with increased interest and changing demographics there may be the need for expanded day-use amenities and facilities.

DAY-USE AND PICNIC AREAS

Scattered picnic tables and benches currently exist along the Rumsien Loop, Laguna Vista, and other trails. Introducing clusters of picnic tables, like a central picnic area near the barn, could create a gathering place for visitors, school groups, or could be reserved for large groups. These areas could also serve as an informal outdoor classroom for LGO! or school programs to gather. Additional picnic tables could be added to the existing tables on the Laguna Vista Loop or near the Oak Knoll Loop on the Palo Corona Trail, creating more formalized picnic areas in the Front Ranch Unit.

MPRPD will explore creating an ADA-accessible picnic area adjacent to the barn. This area will require access via the SR-1 entrance to facilitate accessibility. This space would be larger and denser cluster of tables to accommodate groups and gatherings. The other picnic may be able to accommodate one or two accessible-surface pads, but primarily would include dispersed tables on natural surfacing for a lower-impact picnic area.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Points of interest and historic features at the Front Ranch Unit could be expounded upon with interpretive signage or kiosks. The historic barn and corral are important to highlight for Palo Corona's rich ranching and agricultural history. The Adobe House foundation provides a unique archeological look into the region's cultural history, while the Oak Knoll and Inspiration Point serve as important landmarks to the Park's incredible natural history. Additionally, with continued restoration efforts, there are opportunities for visitors to enjoy wildlife viewing in the Front Ranch Unit, and interpretive brochures or field guides can help them identify the Park's native and non-native flora and fauna.

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

For years, the Front Ranch Unit has been the gateway to Palo Corona Regional Park, and will continue to serve many of Park visitors with its hiking trails, scenic views, and wildlife. The intersection of recreation, ecology, restoration, and agriculture come together at the Front Ranch Unit, providing unique opportunities for research and education.

The former ranch has an abundance of native plant species that make up a variety of plant communities and habitat throughout the park. The continued study of these plant communities and wildlife habitat will provide understanding on how to maintain plant and animal diversity, especially in the transition zones between highly trafficked and less trafficked areas of the Park. Additionally, Animas Pond's valuable wetland habitat offers continual opportunities for researching sensitive species like the red-legged frog and tricolored blackbird, as well as the ecology of their surroundings.

As a method of maintaining plant diversity, the District has employed cattle grazing as a tool for managing Palo Corona's grassland habitat. Grazing can be effective at managing grassland habitat, suppressing invasive species, and wildfire. The District has studied the impact of grazing on Palo Corona's grassland habitat for years. Continued research and monitoring of this practice will help inform decisions about seasonal grazing approaches and strategies, and document the ecological benefits and potential shortcomings of the grazing of this parkland.

In partnership with the Big Sur Land Trust and Monterey County, MPRPD has collaborated on those organizations' extensive effort to restore the Carmel River floodplain through the Carmel River FREE project. Within the project area at the Odello East property, Carmel River FREE seeks to remove a portion of the levee to widen the floodplain and promote native riparian vegetation to a more resilient the floodplain habitat. This project will play a pivotal role in demonstrating the success of green infrastructure techniques in mitigating the impact of flood events. The District hopes to use the Big Sur Land Trust's and County's Carmel River FREE project as a tool for further documentation and research.

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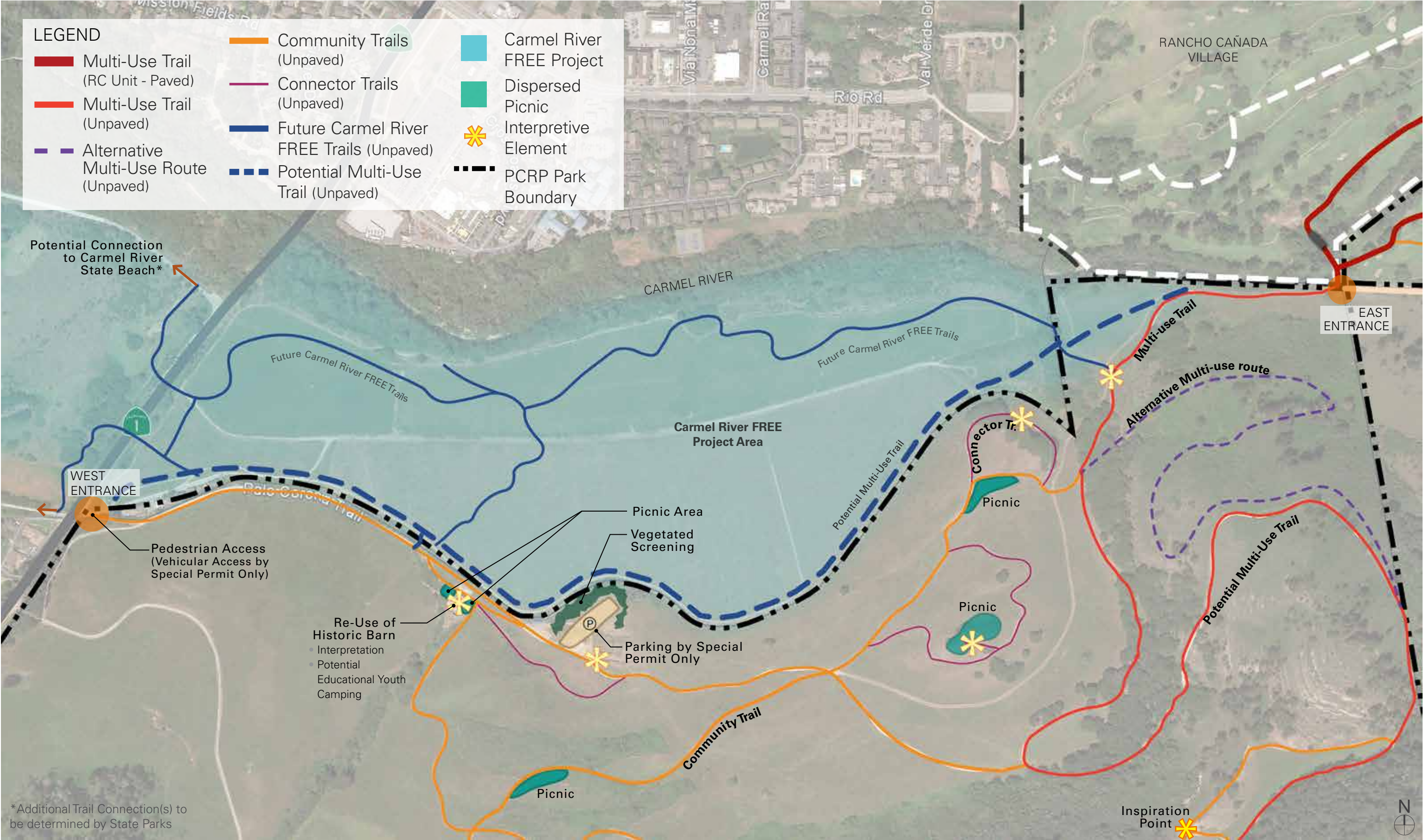


Figure 13: Front Ranch Unit Preferred Alternative Opportunities Diagram

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The Historic Barn could be a location for interpretation and day-use activities



Hiking will continue to be a popular activity



Seating and tables at Inspiration Point to take advantage of views

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RANCHO CAÑADA UNIT

Acquired by the District in April 2018, the former 36 hole Rancho Cañada Golf Club will serve as Palo Corona's primary point of public access. Access Permits will not be required. The site will be the Park's and District's headquarters. The former golf course will be restored into native habitat over the next two decades.

COMMUNITY GATHERING AREA

The community gathering area will be located on the Northwest corner of the Rancho Cañada Unit. Adjacent to the clubhouse and parking lot, this area will serve as the focal point for community activities in the Rancho Cañada Unit, and will provide a mix of active and passive recreational uses. Three proposed pavilions will provide areas of shelter where groups can meet for picnics or educational or other events. Located near other park amenities such as the inclusive playground and amphitheater, they will capitalize on views and park activities.

Amphitheater

The proposed amphitheater will be a flexible, multi-use area capable of hosting larger community events as well as more intimate gathering and learning experiences. The amphitheater can also be used in conjunction with the on-site concessionaire and could be available to rent for weddings and private events, while taking advantage of the spectacular views of Palo Corona's iconic hillside. It could also be used for LGO! events and workshops, or as outdoor classroom space for school groups, ranger and guest lecture series, and community events.

Picnic Pavilions and Dispersed Picnic

In addition to the amphitheater, visitors can gather at several proposed picnic pavilions or dispersed picnicking surrounding the pond. Two smaller and one large picnic pavilion will provide group gathering space for public use, rented private events, or educational programs. Clusters of individual picnic tables along the proposed pond loop trail will provide a more informal setting for family picnicking. These spaces will offer a valuable place for park visitors, providing a place to gather before or after a hike, serve as an informal outdoor classroom for educational programs, or socialize during community events. MPRPD does not anticipate allowing grills in this picnic area, or in the rest of the Park.

Exploratory Play

An inclusive exploratory playground adjacent to the amphitheater will be an area where children of all physical capabilities can play and learn in a natural environment. They can interact with non-traditional play equipment made from natural materials — or equipment made to look natural — that encourages learning and imagination, teamwork and autonomy. Interpretive information integrated into the play equipment will foster a learn-by-doing approach, transforming a simple playground into an educational experience that inspires discovery through play.

Pond Observation Dock

The existing retention pond can be used as a tool for experiential learning. Expanding the existing pond and restoring it as a more natural wetland will not only create new habitat and research opportunities but also a learning experiences for visitors. The observation dock will allow visitors to surround themselves in a natural wetland while keeping them elevated out of the water and sensitive areas. There could also be informational or interactive signs to explain the pond's evolution from managed landscape to a more natural state. A partnership with the State and various organizations could create opportunities for a youth-based "urban fisheries" program.

OFF-LEASH DOG PARK

In response to strong and large public support for dog parks, the Rancho Cañada Unit could potentially site an inclusive, ADA compliant fenced, off-leash dog park. Including a fenced area for dogs will provide a space for dogs to be off-leash in the park and a much needed amenity in a very dog-friendly community. It will also allow for a designated, controlled dog area within the Park, while letting MPRPD prioritize restoration and conservation goals with dog restrictions in the rest of Palo Corona.

The dog park could be located adjacent to the existing overflow parking lot on the stretch of flat turf along Carmel Valley Road. This location would be ideal for an activity like a dog park, as the land next to the busy road is highly disturbed and the noise pollution makes it less desirable for other restoration or recreation programs. The dog park could be divided into two separate fenced spaces, as recommended by many dog park design best practices. The larger fenced area along the road will be intended for larger dogs (30+ pounds) and provides approximately two acres of flat space for dogs to run. The smaller fenced area adjacent to the existing cart barn is approximately one acre in size and will be designated for small dogs (30 pounds and under). The dog park was overwhelmingly received by

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Figure 14: Rancho Cañada Unit Preferred Alternative Illustrative Plan

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Figure 15: Rancho Cañada Unit Preferred Alternative Club House Enlargement

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Example of amphitheater



Natural play elements



Observation deck

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attendees at the various GDP meetings - especially because the site will also serve as a staging area for Cal Fire and the County during fire and flood emergencies, and provide outdoor recreation for a segment of our population that may have limited ambulatory abilities, often dependent on service animals for assistance.

While open to all park visitors, the existing overflow parking lot could primarily serve as a parking area for visitors coming with their dogs to provide separation from the main parking area. Pocket gates at the dog park entries would increase safety for dogs entering the park as well as reduce the risk of dogs escaping the fenced area. Soft-surface trails through the dog parks will provide a level and accessible route into the dog park areas to accommodate visitors of all ages and abilities. Simple furnishings such as benches, planting, and shade structures would provide amenities to make the space more comfortable for the dog parks' human users. Using a combination of turf and mulch and/or natural vegetation would help to decrease maintenance costs and as well as reduce pressure on the Park's restricted water use.

In order to reduce auto traffic and parking for visitors that live near Palo Corona, MPRPD has considered allowing dogs on-leash on a select number of trail(s) through the Rancho Cañada Unit. This would help connect visitors walking in from adjacent neighborhoods with their dogs from the South Bank Trail through the Rancho Cañada Unit to the dog park area at the north end of the Park. MPRPD will allow dogs at Palo Corona in these designated areas at-will, and these rules will be strictly enforced. Constant violation of these rules could result in MPRPD having to restrict completely dogs from Palo Corona Regional Park

FISHING

The District could introduce fishing as an allowed use on the Carmel River as a way to reconnect its visitors back to the river as well as showcase the restoration efforts that are aimed at improving water quality in the Carmel River watershed.

Fishing is already allowed on the Carmel River from Carmel Valley Village to the ocean, and is regulated by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW). Fishing is open during the winter steelhead season on Wednesdays and weekends from December to March and is regulated by low-flow closure and other restrictions to ensure that the activity remains environmentally responsible. CDFW manages and distributes the freshwater and steelhead fishing permits, which visitors could use to fish on the Carmel River if MPRPD allowed the activity and provided public access to the river.

The District is considering a few access points in the Rancho Cañada Unit to allow access to the banks of the Carmel River. An existing user path leads to a sandbar on the river just East of Bridge 2. This path could be formalized and reinforced with bank stabilization and erosion-control methods to provide a stable, unpaved access point from the south bank. If formalized, this route could provide access to the river for fishing, educational uses, or other low-impact recreation and interpretation.

Additionally, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD) has plans to install a road to the West of Bridge 5 to allow maintenance access to the river in order to remove debris from an old bridge collapse. There is opportunity for MPRPD to partner with the MPWMD to open this access point for recreational use after the maintenance project is complete. With further improvements, this route could provide a paved pathway for universal access for visitors of all ages and abilities to get close to the river and experience the amazing environmental and recreational amenity that runs through the Park.

There is opportunity to create a small dock or gathering space intended for teaching youth and novices how to fish. However, as the river naturally meanders and cuts the banks, fishing spots may change from year to year and may not necessarily line up with designated access points. This would require fishermen to find new fishing spots as the river and fish population changes. Partnering with organizations like Trout Unlimited could help in the creation of signage or programming to educate visitors on proper fishing etiquette and stewardship to ensure the riparian environment is cared for and respected.

There is also opportunity for fishing activities elsewhere in the Rancho Cañada Unit. Existing stormwater retention ponds could be enhanced for recreational use. Expanding these ponds would not only allow them to collect more rainwater for irrigation and wetland habitat, but could also allow for activities like wildlife viewing, learn-to-fish and casting programs, or urban fishery programs. Rainwater captured from other stormwater improvements on site could be used to feed the retention ponds to enhance their habitat value.

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Best practices for dog park design encourage a combination of surface materials, including turf, mulch, and native planting



Fishing is a low-impact recreation activity that will connect visitors with the Carmel River
Source: Trout Unlimited

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INTERPRETIVE AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

INTERPRETIVE AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Rancho Cañada Unit's transformation from former golf course to restored native landscape provides a wealth of opportunities for education and research. With ADA river access, information kiosks, and a variety of learning nodes, a wide range of children and community members will have the opportunity to learn about the Park's natural systems and historical context.

Outdoor Classroom Areas and River Overlook

Outdoor classrooms located throughout the Rancho Cañada Unit will provide additional settings where learning and community gatherings can occur, both in a formal and informal manner. These outdoor learning spaces can take the form of pavilions with seating and interpretive information, observation docks or look-outs over the pond and river habitat improvements, or simple wayside pull-outs along trails with interpretive kiosks to allow space for small groups to gather. A combination of techniques and approaches to structured and unstructured learning will ensure that the visitors encounter many opportunities for education throughout their experience at the Park. The District will soon embark upon an Interpretive and Educational Plan, detailing the District's educational goals, as well as potential programming, topics, and interpretive methods that can be employed throughout Palo Corona. Please contact the District's website to obtain information on this future plan

River Access

It is an important goal of MPRPD to improve access to the Carmel River through the restoration and improvements of the Park. Educating visitors on the watershed, aquatic habitat, natural and cultural history, and restoration efforts will be an important step in fostering future stewardship of the region's valuable natural resources. The District is exploring multiple access points along the river corridor to connect visitors to the river, and is partnering with agencies like the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District to develop opportunities for access. Allowing visitors access to the river, both visually from overlooks and bridges, and physically from access points to its banks, will let them to experience the changing riparian environment as the restoration process shapes the land and river.

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

As outlined in the grant funding, a substantial portion of the Rancho Cañada Unit will be returned to a natural landscape. Restoration of former golf courses into parkland and open space is a growing national trend, and presents many opportunities for research that will inform the District and the community about the Park, and also serve as a precedent for future similar projects locally and throughout the nation.

With this restoration effort, the Park hopes to attract more native wildlife back to the area, both within Palo Corona and adjacent open space lands. MPRPD may partner with CSUMB and MPC, and various wildlife organizations, to study the reintroduction of wildlife to this Park and region, studies will assess the need for a possible under or overpass on Carmel Valley Road to serve as a wildlife corridor between Palo Corona and the Santa Lucia Preserve northward to Jack's Peak County Park.

Restoration of the riparian corridor and upland areas will improve habitat for native flora and fauna. Partnerships with organizations like MEarth or Return of the Natives could help source the restoration projects with locally grown plants and volunteer restoration crews. These projects will also compliment watershed education programs that can provide hands-on learning about how restoration will improve water quality in the Carmel River and beyond. Additionally, these efforts will improve habitat for regionally significant sensitive species like steelhead trout and or red-legged frog; improvements that will be of extreme interest to many local and regional environmental and educational organizations.

Research, careful habitat monitoring, and other educational programs will help track and highlight many aspects of the environmental transformation occurring throughout the lengthy and multifaceted restoration process. Partnerships with local schools, CSUMB and MPC, and other research and education-focused organizations will help MPRPD track the success of the restoration efforts along the Carmel River corridor within the former golf course property.

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Outdoor classroom



Interpretive trails with signage panels

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SUPPORT FACILITIES AND SPECIAL USES

While much of Palo Corona's appeal and value lay in its natural features, existing and proposed structures will help compliment the Park's recreational and educational activities. These support facilities will provide space for learning and education, community gathering, as well as potential revenue generating endeavors. Some of these existing structures or points of interest will require further maintenance, restoration, or repairs prior to public use. Other structures will offer greater recreational value and service support with renovations or adaptive re-use. Although the primary focus of Palo Corona will remain its stunning natural features, these support structures will enhance the visitor experience through additional activities, services, and special uses.

BACK COUNTRY UNIT

HISTORIC CABIN AT WHISLER-WILSON

A clearing on a ridge in the former Whisler-Wilson property is the site of a small historic homestead. With cedar shake siding and log timber frame around a large porch, the cabin is in excellent condition and has been used by MPRPD and other partner agencies as a location for special fundraising and donor events. These small-scale events could potentially continue to help raise awareness and funding for future projects and thank donors for their generous gifts.

The homestead is located directly adjacent to a meadow area that has been previously identified in the Whisler-Wilson Camping Feasibility Report as a potential location for primitive camping. The cabin would serve as an ideal location for a camp-host residence that would monitor potential primitive camping activities.

CORONA HOMESTEAD

The approach to the historic Corona homestead is marked by a rustic fence flanking an old ranch road that leads to an iconic timber gateway at the homestead entry. The ranch house is no longer standing, but remnants of a fruit orchard and extensive corral fencing remain as relics of the homestead's agricultural activities. Although some repairs may be necessary, the historic orchard and corrals could serve as a popular day hike destination with interpretive signage that explains the homestead's history and past ranching activities.

Across Seneca Creek and past a few other agricultural relics, is a small hunting cabin. Although the back wall of the cabin was torn off in a storm, the rest of the cabin and all of its windows and glass-paned doors are still intact. The storm also took down a number of large trees adjacent to the structure, requiring this damage to be cleared in order to improve access to the cabin. The back wall of the structure has been open to the elements for several years, so in addition to repairing the storm damage there may be other repairs necessary due to exposure to the elements. Additionally, the roof may also need some repair. A full assessment of the structure should be completed prior to any improvements or public access. Once restored, the cabin could serve as an interpretive exhibit and/or classroom, as a possible location for a camp host residence, or as an emergency shelter for hikers and backpackers.

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Opportunity for rustic camping and ranger station near cabin at Whisler-Wilson property



Opportunity to introduce day-use activities or rustic campsites at the Corona Homestead

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Interior of historic barn with horse stables on the west side of the building - an opportunity for adaptive reuse



Covered exterior space for new picnic area



Construction of a permit-only parking lot to the east of the barn

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FRONT RANCH UNIT

HISTORIC BARN

The historic barn, an attractively rustic building with great visibility from SR-1, has great potential to provide an authentic setting for visitors at Palo Corona. MPRPD is exploring several options for restoration and adaptive re-use of this structure.

As an important artifact of Palo Corona's history, the barn should be preserved to serve as a reminder of the region's significant agricultural past. One option being explored by MPRPD is to stabilize and restore the barn for structural integrity but limit its re-use by park visitors. Rather, the barn will provide visual interpretation of Palo Corona's history through its architecture and former use for ranch operations. The structure could be complimented by interpretive panels, and an adjacent picnic area for gathering or outdoor learning opportunities.

The structure also presents potential for educational programming. With rehabilitation, the barn could accommodate interpretive displays and classroom space, with potential to add a second level for additional learning space. The barn could be a great supporting structure to the Discovery Center to provide interpretation and visitor information about the Park and recreation in the surrounding region. Interpretive displays and lectures can educate visitors about the Park's natural and cultural history, the working ranch component, and ecological value to native plant and animal communities. Picnic tables beneath the covered east-wing of the structure and in the surrounding area could provide further opportunities for visitors to congregate, learn, and re-group.

Another re-use option for the barn could be continued use for special events, as its rustic charm, open floor plan, and picturesque views also make it a desirable location. Currently, MPRPD and its partners like the BSLT, use the barn to host fund-raising events, important press releases, and tours. These events have included activities like catered meals and even small musical performances. Special events programming could be expanded to include events for LGO! programming or community gatherings like the Steinbeck Grapes of Wrath anniversary festival. The barn could be a source of revenue for MPRPD if a rental operation was instated. Private property owners adjacent to the park may have concerns about event operations so an agreement with surrounding neighbors would be critical in establishing the regulations that would maintain a respectful relationship between event guests and private property owners.

While the barn will play a key role in the visitor experience at Palo Corona, it will require retrofitting to make the structure accessible and able to accommodate additional uses. The barn currently has electricity, however, additional utilities will need to be extended to the barn in order to provide restrooms and potable water. A thorough evaluation of the structure by an architect is recommended to get an understanding of the extent of work required to rehabilitate the barn and a baseline cost for improvements.

RANCHO CAÑADA UNIT?

RE-USE OF THE CLUBHOUSE

The existing clubhouse structure will be a valuable space to serve the new park. While some of the existing programming, like the former pro-shop, will be discontinued, some will be on-going and will augment the additional programming space introduced to the building. Reprogramming the former clubhouse building will ensure that there is space for successful community engagement, revenue possibilities to help MPRPD underwrite operating costs, and educational opportunities for the Park's visitors.

Discovery Center

This Discovery Center will be unique in that it invites and displays other Central Coast organizations' research, projects and conservation goals, thereby showcasing the region's efforts related to preservation, restoration, and science. Many of the interpretive exhibits will be designed and fabricated by local artists, simultaneously making this Discovery Center a science and art museum.

To help orient visitors to Palo Corona and provide basic information about the Park, a new visitor center will fill the space where the former pro-shop was located. Palo Corona's Discovery Center will greet visitors with park and trail

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maps, a background on the Park and its unique history, and interpretive information on features found within the park. Informational signage, imagery, artifacts, hands-on exhibits, and rotating or seasonal exhibits will work in combination to welcome visitors to Palo Corona and give context to what they will be experiencing before they set off into the Park. A small gift shop is being considered. The gift shop will allow visitors the chance to take home a memento from their trip and provide amenities such as water bottles, hiking sticks, and snacks. This shop will provide a small source of revenue generation to support the Park. There is a lot of opportunity for education at the Discovery Center, and the District may seek to work with their partners to establish a collaborative management approach to its staffing and interpretive elements.

Concessionaire and Private and Community Events

An use that will continue as the clubhouse transitions into park operations is the use of the banquet space for weddings and private events in partnership with a concessionaire. There is a large ballroom and a smaller banquet room with a deck, as well as a kitchen to support events with on-site catering. These spaces are capable of hosting a range of events, from community organization meetings, to civic and public meetings, to larger private events and weddings. The District recently began hosting public meetings as well as their Board of Directors meetings in the ballroom, which has been a convenient location for the community to gather.

The clubhouse has functioned very successfully as a location for private events and community meetings. The convenient location, ample parking, beautiful views, as well as its affordable rental price-point, has made it an event and meeting location that is highly used and valued by the community. Many groups and organizations host regular meetings at the clubhouse, and had a strong response throughout the public process in support of continued use of the clubhouse for community events, saying that they would have nowhere else to convene if this space was no longer available to them.

Private event rentals will be a significant, consistent, and reliable source of revenue for the District, as well as a prime opportunity to showcase the improvements to the Park perhaps resulting in potential fund-raising prospects and demonstrating community pride. The on-site concessionaire currently hosts events in the ballroom and banquet room, but there is also opportunity to expand into additional outdoor spaces within the Park. The proposed amphitheater adjacent to the clubhouse will provide desirable outdoor space to enjoy the weather and stunning views, and is conveniently located close to the clubhouse for catering and service activities. The proposed pavilion structures and improvements to this area around the retention pond will provide ample space to host community events and gatherings in addition to private events, and the District anticipates that this area will be well-used by the community.

MPRPD Administrative Offices and Rentable Office Space

In addition to high quality habitat, community gathering space, and regional parkland, Palo Corona will also become the headquarters for the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. In May 2018, MPRPD relocated their Administrative Offices to the former clubhouse building at the Rancho Cañada Unit. This allows District staff and volunteers to serve its community and manage its parks from a more central location, while also providing close proximity for oversight during restoration and improvement projects within Palo Corona. Additionally, remaining space unused by District staff could potentially be rented MPRPD's partners or other like-minded organizations and agencies, like the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy, that are in need of permanent office space. This will not only be a revenue generating opportunity, but will allow the District to work more closely with their partners on potential or on-going projects and collaborations.

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Entrance to the Rancho Cañada facilities



Large banquet space



Small banquet space

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION APPROACH

Ensuring that current and future recreation activities at the Park are compatible with the success of a thriving natural environment is a critical aspect of the planning for Palo Corona, as well as a core part of MPRPD's mission statement. The following is a brief strategy that has been developed to help guide the planning and future improvements at Palo Corona's newest addition, the Rancho Cañada Unit. Further detailed study will be required for the development of a full Natural Resources and Conservation Plan.

RESTORATION APPROACH TO RANCHO CAÑADA UNIT

In planning the future recreation uses and programming for the former golf course, thought was given to creating a cohesive approach to restoration and programming improvements so that these uses will compliment one another. The restoration strategy was divided into four zones to guide the priorities and potential locations of future projects.

RESTORATION ZONES

Since a major focus of the Rancho Cañada Unit's state grant funding is to restore natural habitat on the former golf course in order to improve the water quality of the Carmel River, the priority zone for restoration was developed along the river corridor. In the initial years of the Park's opening, the Priority Restoration Zone will see most of the restoration projects, working to restore riparian vegetation, stabilize the riverbank, and reduce run-off carrying sediment and pollutants. A large portion of the Rancho Cañada Unit's restoration funding will be directed to this area. The District anticipates beginning the planning, development and implementation processes for the site's Habitat Restoration Plan as early as late fall of 2018, or winter of 2019. The plan's full implementation may take place in phases over the next two to three decades.

ADDITIONAL STUDY

A full Habitat Restoration Plan will require thorough input and evaluation from an environmental consultant in a separate study. The 2008 Biological Report by Vern Yadon can help provide guidance on the sensitive species and habitat that exist within the Park however, additional study may be needed to determine appropriate development opportunities within the context of the goals and priorities outlined in this GDP's Preferred Alternative for Palo Corona. Any future Conservation or Restoration Plans will also require a coordinated effort with MPRPD's partners, and State and Federal agencies.

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Figure 16: Rancho Cañada Unit - Restoration and Re-Use Diagram

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INTERPRETIVE AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

MPPRD is in the process of developing an interpretive and educational plan. More information will be posted to MPPRD's website as the plan is developed, please visit the website for the most current information.

INTERPRETATION DELIVERY METHODS

VERBAL

MPPRD can host Guest Lecture events on a monthly or quarterly basis. Events can feature rotating guest lecturers or staff covering a variety of timely and seasonally-relevant topics ranging from park restoration efforts, wildlife activity or endangered species of Palo Corona, natural history, to wilderness etiquette and safety. Events could be free or require a small donation to contribute to providing refreshments or providing compensation to guest lecturers. These could be great events to raise awareness about important park and wilderness related topics and bring the community together at the park.

Docent-led hikes and nature walks are valuable programs that many visitors enjoy, from young to old. These, along with the Let's Go Outdoors! educational programs, should continue as an interpretive method that provides hands-on learning and discovery. To meet the current demographic demands of the community, a number of these guided classes focus on youth education and senior programs. Additional classes could be offered in the catalog that reach expanded user and interest groups based on evolving community needs, such as Spanish language or young adult programs. These programs should be continued to be offered on a frequent and regular basis, as they serve as a highly-engaging way for visitors to learn.

EXHIBIT

The Discovery Center will serve as the starting point for many guests arriving at Palo Corona Regional Park and can help orient them to park features, programs, and important history, and information about the park and the region. The exhibits will showcase mixed-media elements to provide a range of learning experiences. Park maps will educate visitors on the layout of the park, its adjacent open space connections, and future vision for the General Development Plan. Artifacts, historic photos, and field notes can provide a tangible embodiment of the past. Images and text will enrich and add depth to exhibit topics. 3-Dimensional props and digital media will liven up the museum experience and communicate information to visitors.

There is great opportunity for the District to collaborate with its partners and the region's many environmental and educational organizations. Partners with a specific focus could create content for Discovery Center exhibits to highlight a particular topic within Palo Corona; Trout Unlimited or the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy could create exhibits related to steelhead habitat and water quality, while Ventana Wildlife Society could author an exhibit on the California Condor feeding station and its successful Condor Recovery Program. These displays could remain permanent, or could potentially rotate, highlighting the latest scientific research and/or findings, allowing for seasonal or featured exhibits that keep the Discovery Center fresh with new learning opportunities.

KIOSKS AND SIGNAGE

There are many opportunities to capture and educate audiences, even while they are on-trail. Including a series of interpretive kiosks and signs throughout the Park will expand the educational experience for visitors, offering them chances to learn about the Park's rich and varied cultural and natural history while they are outside enjoying recreational activities. A signage hierarchy will create a streamlined interpretive experience, starting with trailheads and larger kiosks closer to park entrances and trailheads that transition into smaller interpretive boards or trail-side posts further into the Park.

Trail maps, park regulations, seasonal notices, and interpretive information at park entrances and gateway trailheads will orient visitors with important information before they begin to explore the Park. Interpretive boards at key locations throughout the park will provide in-field learning experiences, typically using two-post horizontal boards to highlight more basic information and multi-panel kiosks to expound on important topics in greater depth. These signs can include imagery and interactive elements, in addition to text, to enhance the educational messaging and

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE



Outdoor classrooms and amphitheaters host lecture series



Museum galleries combining history, culture and art

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE



Gateway kiosk provides park information and wayfinding



Trailhead kiosk and mapju



Interpretive signage highlighting native plants



Trail wayfinding markers

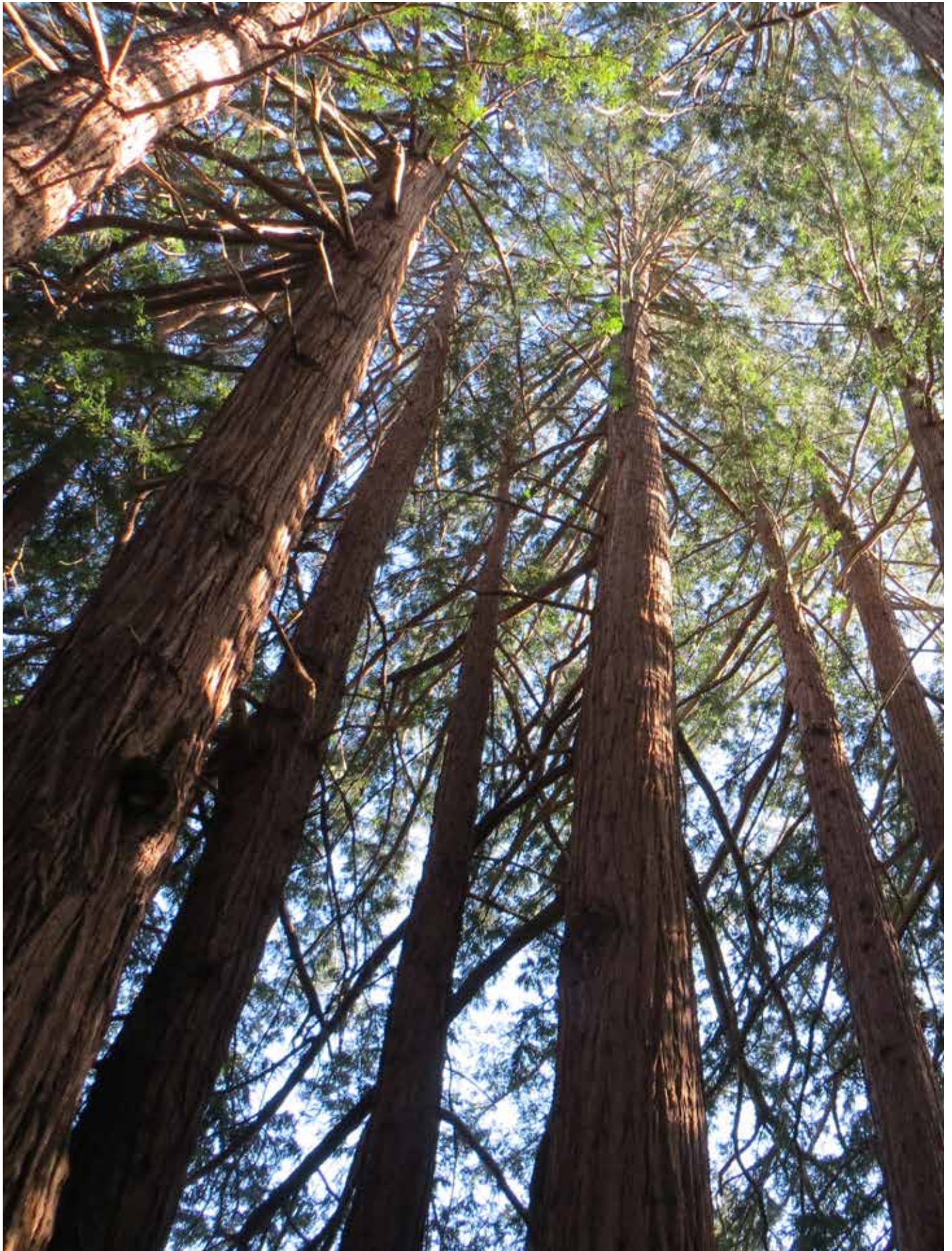
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

take-aways. Further into the Park, smaller single-post horizontal boards or vertical trail signs will provide directional information and abbreviated interpretive tidbits in the more remote areas of the Front Ranch and the Back Country Units. These signs will be a lower-maintenance way of providing important information to hikers and backpackers that are easier to install in the remote locations and the slimmer profiles will be less obstructive to the natural scenery.

SELF-GUIDED

Some visitors may want additional information to augment the interpretive signage throughout the Park. A park brochure will present hand-held guidance to the Park and include practical information like park maps and regulations, as well as interpretive information and points of interest. Available at the Discovery Center, these brochures can provide visitors a convenient way to learn about the highlights of the 4,585-acre Park, even if they cannot physically experience all of these unique features during their visit. The printed brochure can also be easily updated and reissued to include relevant seasonal notices, reflect changes to trails or access points, or feature different interpretive highlights and imagery.

Cell-Phone tours have also been a popular method of interpretation in both parks, and historic and cultural sites. These tours allow the visitor more flexibility than a docent-guided tour, and can be completed to any degree, at their own pace and on their own schedule. They also allow for greater depth of information than interpretive boards, but in a more experiential manner than an indoor museum exhibit. Similar to the park brochures, the audio contents of the cell-phone tour can be updated or revised. Both of these self-guided methods allow the District flexibility with the information presented and provide visitors with an educational experience that is varied and changing with each visit.



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NEXT STEPS

INTERIM USE PHASING

FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

CALFIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSE STAGING
AREA

POTENTIAL EMERGENCY ACCESS TO BACK
COUNTRY UNIT

CONTINUED PLAN DEVELOPMENT

NEXT STEPS

INTERIM USE AND PHASING

INTERIM USE

The District plans to hold a Dedication Ceremony on September 28, 2018. The event will celebrate the collaboration between The Trust for Public Land, the Santa Lucia Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, the State of California, the former property owners, and the District in making the former Rancho Cañada Golf Club a public park. This property will offer permit-free access to Palo Corona's numerous trails, and will also serve as one of this nation's most important habitat conservation project sites as the former golf course is restored into natural habitat. A soft-opening will likely take place prior to September 28.

PHASING

Palo Corona's GDP will guide the Park's planning and development, as will the forthcoming Habitat Restoration Plan. Future improvements and programs may include the construction of an enclosed off-leash dog park, equestrian staging area, mountain bike access, and pond expansion. Revenue generating opportunities including analysis of currently unused space at the Discovery Center to determine its programs; and, other potential options will also be pursued, subject to Board approval. The development of Back Country camping and its respective Ranger Residences, campground host sites, and Back Country administrative complexes will similarly be pursued, as will the potential acquisition of adjacent lands suitable for conservation recreation and/or providing access to the Back Country. These endeavors shall be appropriately phased.

SHORT-TERM

- Complete relocation to new headquarters
- Complete initial capital and site improvements at the Discovery Center, trails, Bridge #4, etc.
- Soft-opening limited to Rancho Cañada Units, parking area, Discovery Center, trails to Bridge #4, Southbank Trail, Front Ranch and the former west golf course
- Dedication ceremony on September 28, 2018
- Subject to Board approval, construct emergency event staging area/dog park
- Begin interpretive/educational program
- Develop concession RFP and select firm(s)

MID-TERM

- Develop Habitat Restoration Plan
- Initial implementation of Habitat Restoration Plan
- Upgrading Bridges #1, 2, and 3
- Open the former east course for public use
- Subject to Board approval, establishment of staging areas for equestrian and mountain bike access
- Continue partnering with organizations to provide the region's scientific research at the Discovery Center
- Expand environmental research

LONG-TERM

- Back Country camping and respective ranger and host residences and administrative complexes
- Develop and implement cyclical maintenance program and identify funding
- Adaptive re-use of historic barn

NEXT STEPS

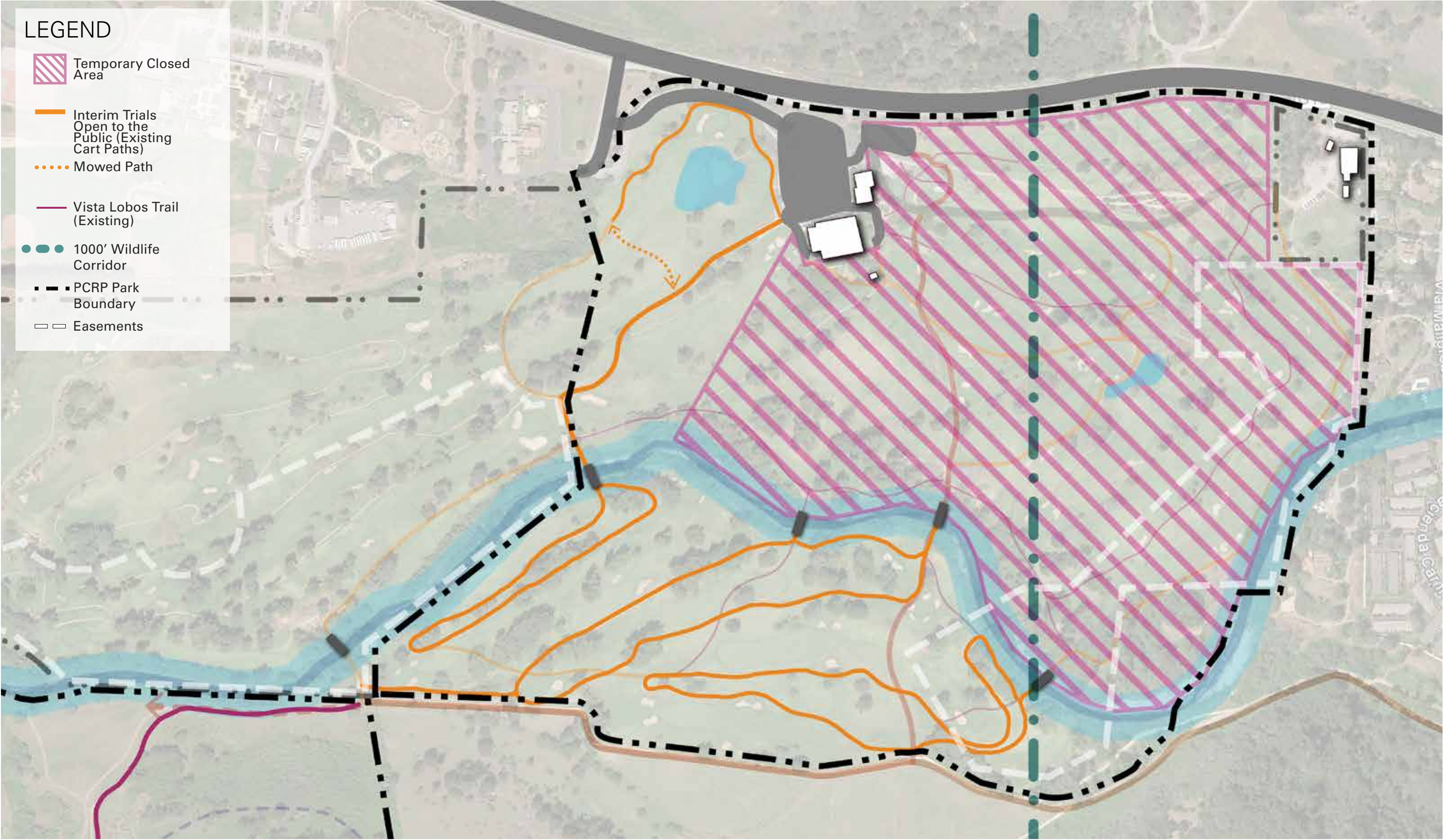


Figure 17: Interim Trails Plan - Rancho Cañada Unit

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FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

REVENUE GENERATION

An RFP for the continued use of the Banquet Rooms, commercial kitchen, and former Bar and Grill will be published. Revenues from this agreement will be used to hire staff, make improvements, and enhance programming.

GRANT FUNDING AND DONATIONS

Grant funding will be pursued for the Habitat Restoration Plan's design, development and initial implementation. Funding for capital improvements and site modifications will also be pursued.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Palo Corona Regional Park can play a major role in fulfilling regional visions of offering world class outdoor recreation along California's scenic Central Coast. In order to accomplish some of these broader goals, MPRPD should continue to look to its like-minded peers for support and partnership. Trail connectivity between surrounding open space, restoration of the Carmel River watershed, and education of our future environmental advocates can be made tangible through collaboration and resources-sharing with agencies and local organizations.

Palo Corona is the great north-south connector along the coastal mountains and east-west from valley to sea. Visitors will treasure the amazing asset of this patchwork of parkland, and will be more concerned about seamless access through property lines than the names of the managing organizations. Creating a collective partnership between MPRPD, California State Parks (CSP), the Santa Lucia Conservancy (SLC), Trout Unlimited, the Point Lobos Foundation, the Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT), the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and others will help to create a cohesive management framework between agencies so that connecting roads and trails allow visitors can pass through park boundaries uninterrupted and emergency personnel to reach remote interior locations.

Partnerships with Monterey County, the SLC, BSLT, and CSP will result in an equally important connection where the Carmel River enters the ocean. The Carmel River FREE project has brought many agencies together to restore the Carmel River watershed, an invaluable ecological and recreational asset to the region. Integrated planning and management of these parklands can afford visitors access to the Pacific Ocean at Carmel River State Beach from Carmel's historic ranch lands and rolling hills at Odello East and Palo Corona. Additionally, resources can be pooled for large-scale restoration efforts to improve the quality of this riparian habitat that supports steelhead, red-legged frogs, and many other sensitive species.

The Monterey Peninsula has a thriving community for environmental education, a critical factor in childhood development as well as creating earth-conscious adults. MPRPD runs many of its own successful educational programs through LGO!, and has existing relationships with organizations running other educational programming, like SLC, BSLT, Ventana Wildlife Society and the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History. MPRPD should continue to foster these partnerships as well as consider forging new relationships to reach broader audiences, like MEarth, Camp Sea Lab, and other organizations that champion youth and community education, service learning, and underserved populations.

While collaborative efforts between organizations can accomplish common goals, these relationships can be complicated, especially with the reality that each organization has to meet its own needs first. While goals are often ambitious, funding sources are usually scarce, and organizations in the region may be competing for the same funding sources and user groups. Communication between groups should be kept open so program directors are aware of potential new projects and can facilitate collaboration on similar efforts. Regular meetings of the Environmental Education Network should continue. Resource sharing of funding, staff, research, and materials should be encouraged.

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CALFIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSE STAGING AREA

MPRPD is working with CalFire on developing a MOU for emergency use and operations/maintenance. More information will be posted to MPRPD's website as it is developed, please visit the website for the most current information.

POTENTIAL EMERGENCY ACCESS TO BACK COUNTRY UNIT

While Palo Corona's Back Country Unit offers incredibly beautiful views of both the coast and the valley, it's remoteness presents a challenge with keeping visitors, wildlife, and neighbors safe. Emergency vehicles will need access to the Back Country Unit from major roads, especially to sites developed for camping and day use.

The San Jose Creek Trail connects to SR-1 and travels along San Jose Creek through Point Lobos Ranch to the property line at Whisler Wilson. Coordinating with California State Parks would allow for emergency access through Point Lobos Ranch to the northern portion of the Back Country Unit. This could be a potential access point for emergency personnel to reach to potential day-use and primitive campsites at the Whisler-Wilson cabin, and Vizcaino Point.

Rancho San Carlos Road runs along the east side of the property and connects to several existing fire and service roads. This could be a potential access point for emergency personnel to reach the potential day-use and primitive campsites at Corona Homestead area, Seneca Creek and the southeastern portion of the Park via the Seneca Loop service route west to the Seneca Creek trail. Emergency crews could also access the southwestern side of the Park from SR-1 by Highlands Road via Corona Road, a route that would allow access to Palo Corona Peak. Agreements may need to be made with partner agencies and private property owners in Quail Meadows and Carmel Highlands to allow for access through these routes.

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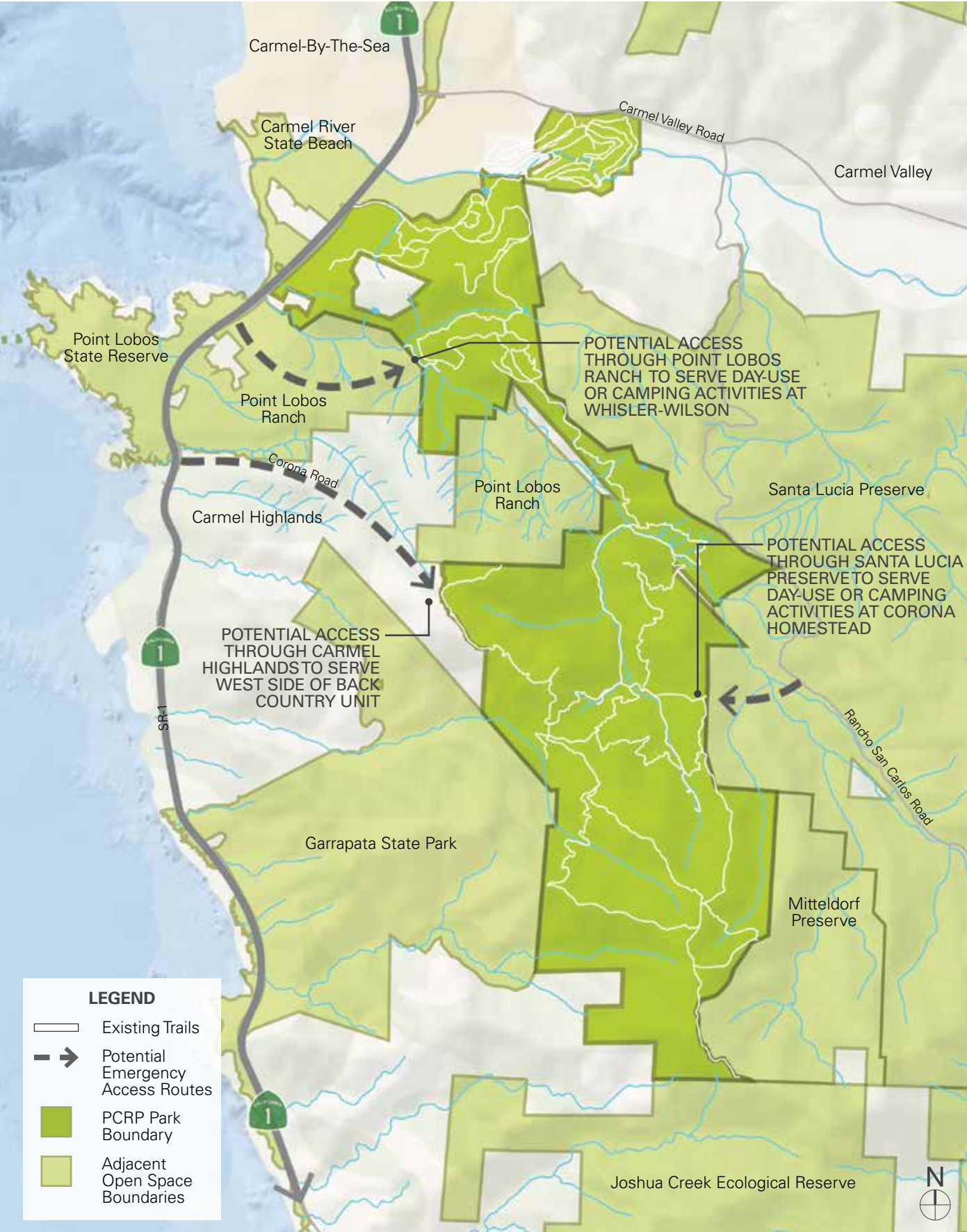


Figure 18: Preferred Alternative plan for the Back Country Unit. GIS data provided by Turf Image Geospatial Consulting

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CONTINUED PLAN DEVELOPMENT

With the completion of the information presented earlier, there are other elements that will be completed to include in the General Development Plan or will be stand along plans that will be updated as needed. The following is a summary of the types that will be completed.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) DOCUMENT

MPRPD understands there is a need for a CEQA document to assess the environmental impacts associated with the proposed uses identified in the General Development Plan. A programmatic level of assessment will be performed which will identify any follow-up environmental reports that may be necessary for specific project improvements. The following Best Management Practices (BMP) will implemented to minimize potential impacts.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP)

BMP-1: Biological Resources Screening and Assessment

For projects within the Plan Area that would require ground disturbance through clearing/grading or vegetation trimming or removal (e.g., trail improvements, new trails, connector trails, ranger houses, etc.), such as construction of the restrooms, dog park, and pond extension, the District shall engage a qualified biologist to perform a preliminary biological resource screening to determine whether the project has any potential to impact special status biological resources, inclusive of special status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities, jurisdictional waters (including creeks, drainages, streams, ponds, vernal pools, riparian areas and other wetlands), critical habitat, wildlife movement area, or biological resources protected under local or regional ordinances or an existing Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan HCP/NCCP. If it is determined that the project has no potential to impact biological resources, no further action is required. If the project would have the potential to impact biological resources, prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a project-specific biological analysis to document the existing biological resources within a project footprint plus a minimum buffer of 500 feet around the project footprint, as is feasible, and to determine the potential impacts to those resources. The project-specific biological analysis shall evaluate the potential for impacts to all biological resources including, but not limited to special status species, nesting birds, wildlife movement, sensitive plant communities, critical habitats, and other resources judged to be sensitive by local, state, and/or federal agencies. If the project would have the potential to impact these resources, the following best management practices [BMP-2 through BMP-10] shall be incorporated, as applicable, to reduce impacts to a less than significant. Pending the results of the project-specific biological analysis, design alterations, further technical studies (e.g., protocol surveys) and consultations with the USFWS, NMFS, CDFW, and/or other local, state, and federal agencies may be required. Note that specific surveys described in the best management practices below may be completed as part of the project-specific biological analysis where suitable habitat is present.

BMP-2: Special Status Plant Species Surveys

If the project-specific biological analysis determines that there is potential for significant impacts to federal or state listed plants from project development, surveys for special status plants shall be completed prior to any vegetation removal, grubbing, or other construction activity (including staging and mobilization). The surveys shall be floristic in nature and shall be seasonally timed to coincide with the target species identified in the project-specific biological analysis. All plant surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist during the blooming season prior to initial ground disturbance. All special status plant species identified on site shall be mapped onto a site-specific aerial photograph or topographic map with the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. Surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the most current protocols established by the CDFW, USFWS, and the local jurisdictions if said protocols exist. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the implementing agency, and the CDFW and/or USFWS, as appropriate, for review and/or approval.

BMP-3: Special Status Plant Species Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation

If federally and/or state listed or CRPR List 1B or 2 species are found during special status plant surveys [pursuant to Best Management Practice BMP-2], and listed species would be directly impacted, or there would be a population-

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level impact to non-listed species, then the project shall be re-designed to avoid impacting those plant species, where feasible. Rare and listed plant occurrences that are not within the immediate disturbance footprint, but are located within 50 feet of disturbance limits shall have bright orange protective fencing installed at least 30 feet beyond their extent, or other distance as approved by a qualified biologist, to protect them from harm.

BMP-4: Restoration and Monitoring

Development and/or restoration activities at the Rancho Cañada Unit shall be conducted in accordance with the future Habitat Restoration Plan. If federal or state listed plants or non-listed special status plant populations cannot be avoided in the Front and Back Country Units, and will be impacted by development under the GDP, all impacts shall be mitigated by the District at a ratio to be determined by the District (in coordination with CDFW and USFWS as and if applicable) for each species as a component of habitat restoration. A restoration plan shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and submitted to the District for review and approval. (Note: if a federally and/or state listed plant species will be impacted, the restoration plan shall be submitted to the USFWS and/or CDFW for review, and federal and/or state take authorization may be required by these agencies). The restoration plan shall include, at a minimum, the following components:

- Description of the project/impact site (i.e., location, responsible parties, areas to be impacted by habitat type)
- Goal(s) of the compensatory mitigation project [type(s) and area(s) of habitat to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved; specific functions and values of habitat type(s) to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved]
- Description of the proposed compensatory mitigation site (location and size, ownership status, existing functions and values)
- Implementation plan for the compensatory mitigation site (rationale for expecting implementation success, responsible parties, schedule, site preparation, planting plan).
- Maintenance activities during the monitoring period, including weed removal as appropriate (activities, responsible parties, schedule)
- Monitoring plan for the compensatory mitigation site, including no less than quarterly monitoring for the first year (performance standards, target functions and values, target acreages to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved, annual monitoring reports)
- Success criteria based on the goals and measurable objectives; said criteria to be, at a minimum, at least 80 percent survival of container plants and 30 percent relative cover by vegetation type
- An adaptive management program and remedial measures to address any shortcomings in meeting success criteria
- Notification of completion of compensatory mitigation and agency confirmation
- Contingency measures (initiating procedures, alternative locations for contingency compensatory mitigation, funding mechanism)

BMP-5: Endangered/Threatened Species Habitat Assessments and Protocol Surveys

Specific habitat assessments and survey protocols are established for several federally and state endangered or threatened species. If the results of the project-specific biological analysis determine that suitable habitat may be present for any such species, protocol habitat assessments/surveys shall be completed in accordance with CDFW, NMFS, and/or USFWS protocols prior to issuance of any construction permits. If through consultation with the CDFW, NMFS, and/or USFWS it is determined that protocol habitat assessments/surveys are not required, said consultation shall be documented prior to issuance of any construction permits. Each protocol has different survey and timing requirements. The applicants for each project shall be responsible for ensuring they understand the protocol requirements and shall hire a qualified biologist to conduct protocol surveys.

BMP-6: Endangered/Threatened Species Avoidance and Minimization

The following measures shall be applied to aquatic and/or terrestrial species as determined by the project-specific biological assessment.

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- Ground disturbance shall be limited to the minimum necessary to complete the project. The project limits of disturbance shall be flagged. Areas of special biological concern within or adjacent to the limits of disturbance shall have highly visible orange construction fencing installed between said area and the limits of disturbance.
- All projects occurring within/adjacent to aquatic habitats (including riparian habitats and wetlands) shall be completed between April 1 and October 31, if feasible, to avoid impacts to sensitive aquatic species.
- All projects occurring within or adjacent to sensitive habitats that may support federally and/or state listed endangered/threatened species shall have a CDFW- and/or USFWS-approved biologist present during all initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities. Once initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities have been completed, said biologist shall conduct daily pre-activity clearance surveys for endangered/threatened species. Alternatively, and upon approval of the CDFW, NMF, and/or USFWS, said biologist may conduct site inspections at a minimum of once per week to ensure all prescribed avoidance and minimization measures are fully implemented.
- No endangered/threatened species shall be captured and relocated without express permission from the CDFW, NMFS, and/or USFWS.
- If at any time during construction of the project an endangered/threatened species enters the construction site or otherwise may be impacted by the project, all project activities shall cease. A CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist shall document the occurrence and consult with the CDFW and USFWS, as appropriate, to determine whether it was safe for project activities to resume.
- For all projects occurring in areas where endangered/ threatened species may be present and are at risk of entering the project site during construction, exclusion fencing shall be placed along the project boundaries prior to start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The placement of the fence shall be at the discretion of the CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist. This fence shall consist of solid silt fencing placed at a minimum of 3 feet above grade and 2 feet below grade and shall be attached to wooden stakes placed at intervals of not more than 5 feet. The fence shall be inspected weekly and following rain events and high wind events and shall be maintained in good working condition until all construction activities are complete.
- All vehicle maintenance/fueling/staging shall occur not less than 100 feet from any riparian habitat or water body. Suitable containment procedures shall be implemented to prevent spills. A minimum of one spill kit shall be available at each work location near riparian habitat or water bodies.
- No equipment shall be permitted to enter wetted portions of any affected drainage channel.
- If project activities could degrade water quality, water quality sampling shall be implemented to identify the pre-project baseline, and to monitor during construction for comparison to the baseline.
- If water is to be diverted around work sites, a diversion plan shall be submitted (depending upon the species that may be present) to the CDFW, RWQCB, USFWS, and/or NMFS for their review and approval prior to the start of any construction activities (including staging and mobilization). If pumps are used, all intakes shall be completely screened with wire mesh not larger than five millimeters to prevent animals from entering the pump system.
- At the end of each workday, excavations shall be secured with cover or a ramp provided to prevent wildlife entrapment.
- All trenches, pipes, culverts or similar structures shall be inspected for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.
- The CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist shall remove invasive aquatic species such as bullfrogs and crayfish from suitable aquatic habitat whenever observed and shall dispatch them in a humane manner and dispose of properly.
- Considering the potential for projects to impact federal and state listed species and their habitat, District shall contact the CDFW and USFWS to identify mitigation banks within Monterey County during development of the GDP. Upon implementation of development projects included in the GDP, but on a project-by-project basis, if the results of the project-specific biological analysis determines that impacts to federal and state threatened or endangered species habitat are expected, the applicant shall explore species-appropriate mitigation bank(s) servicing the region for purchase of mitigation credits.

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BMP-7: Non-Listed Special Status Animal Species Avoidance and Minimization

The project-specific biological analysis shall identify some or all of the below measures that will be required and applicable to the individual project:

- For non-listed special status terrestrial amphibians and reptiles, coverboard surveys shall be completed within three months of the start of construction. The coverboards shall be at least four feet by four feet and constructed of untreated plywood placed flat on the ground. The coverboards shall be checked by a qualified biologist once per week for each week after placement up until the start of vegetation removal. All non-listed special status and common animals found under the coverboards shall be captured and placed in five-gallon buckets for transportation to relocation sites. All relocation sites shall be reviewed by the qualified biologist and shall consist of suitable habitat. Relocation sites shall be as close to the capture site as possible but far enough away to ensure the animal(s) is not harmed by construction of the project. Relocation shall occur on the same day as capture. CNDDDB Field Survey Forms shall be submitted to the CDFW for all special status animal species observed.
- Prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a survey of existing buildings to determine if bats are present. The survey shall be conducted during the non-breeding season (November through March). The biologist shall have access to all structures and interior attics, as needed. If a colony of bats is found roosting in any structure, further surveys shall be conducted sufficient to determine the species present and the type of roost (day, night, maternity, etc.).
- If bats are roosting in the building during the daytime but are not part of an active maternity colony, then exclusion measures must include one-way valves that allow bats to get out but are designed so that the bats may not re-enter the structure. Maternal bat colonies shall not be disturbed.
- Pre-construction clearance surveys shall be conducted within 14 days of the start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The surveys shall cover the entire disturbance footprint plus a minimum 200-foot buffer, if feasible, and shall identify all special status animal species that may occur on-site. All non-listed special status species shall be relocated from the site either through direct capture or through passive exclusion. A report of the pre-construction survey shall be submitted to the District for their review and approval prior to the start of construction.
- A qualified biologist shall be present during all initial ground disturbing activities, including vegetation removal to recover special status animal species unearthed by construction activities.
- Project activities shall be restricted to daylight hours.
- Upon completion of the project, a qualified biologist shall prepare a Final Compliance Report documenting all compliance activities implemented for the project, including the pre-construction survey results. The report shall be submitted to the District within 30 days of completion of the project.
- If special status bat species may be present and impacted by the project, a qualified biologist shall conduct, within 30 days of the start of construction, presence/absence surveys for special status bats in consultation with the CDFW where suitable roosting habitat is present. Surveys shall be conducted using acoustic detectors and by searching tree cavities, crevices, and other areas where bats may roost. If active roosts are located, exclusion devices such as netting shall be installed to discourage bats from occupying the site. If a roost is determined by a qualified biologist to be used by a large number of bats (large hibernaculum), bat boxes shall be installed near the project site. The number of bat boxes installed will depend on the size of the hibernaculum and shall be determined through consultations with the CDFW. If a maternity colony has become established, all construction activities shall be postponed within a 500-foot buffer around the maternity colony until it is determined by a qualified biologist that the young have dispersed. Once it has been determined that the roost is clear of bats, the roost shall be removed immediately.

BMP-8: Pre-construction Surveys for Nesting Birds for Construction Occurring within Nesting Season

For projects under the GDP that require the removal of trees or vegetation that may contain a nesting bird, construction activities shall occur outside of the nesting season wherever feasible (September 16 to January 31), and no mitigation activity is required. If construction activities must occur during the nesting season (February 1 to September 15), surveys for nesting birds covered by the California Fish and Game Code shall be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 14 days prior to vegetation removal. The surveys shall include the entire segment

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disturbance area plus a 200-foot buffer around the site. If active nests are located, all construction work shall be conducted outside a buffer zone from the nest to be determined by the qualified biologist. The buffer shall be a minimum of 50 feet for non-raptor bird species and at least 150 feet for raptor species. Larger buffers may be required depending upon the status of the nest and the construction activities occurring in the vicinity of the nest. The buffer area(s) shall be closed to all construction personnel and equipment until the adults and young are no longer reliant on the nest site. A qualified biologist shall confirm that breeding/nesting is completed and young have fledged the nest prior to removal of the buffer. A report of these preconstruction nesting bird surveys shall be submitted to the District to document compliance within 30 days of its completion.

BMP-9: Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP)

If potential impacts to special status species are identified in the project-specific biological analysis, prior to initiation of construction activities (including staging and mobilization), all personnel associated with project construction shall attend WEAP training, conducted by a qualified biologist, to aid workers in recognizing special status resources that may occur in the Plan Area. The specifics of this program shall include identification of the sensitive species and habitats, a description of the regulatory status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, and review of the limits of construction and best management practices required to reduce impacts to biological resources within the work area. A fact sheet conveying this information shall also be prepared for distribution to all contractors, their employers, and other personnel involved with construction of projects under the GDP. All employees shall sign a form documenting provided by the trainer indicating they have attended the WEAP and understand the information presented to them. The form shall be submitted to the District to document compliance.

BMP-10: Invasive Weed Prevention and Management Program

For those projects where activity would occur within or adjacent to sensitive habitats, as determined by the project-specific biological analysis, prior to start of construction an Invasive Weed Prevention and Management Program shall be developed by a qualified biologist to prevent invasion of native habitat by non-native plant species. A list of target species shall be included, along with measures for early detection and eradication. All disturbed areas shall be hydroseeded with a mix of locally native species upon completion of work in those areas. In areas where construction is ongoing, hydroseeding shall occur where no construction activities have occurred within six (6) weeks since ground disturbing activities ceased. If exotic species invade these areas prior to hydroseeding, weed removal shall occur in consultation with a qualified biologist and in accordance with the restoration plan. Landscape species shall not include noxious, invasive, and/or non-native plant species that are recognized on the Federal Noxious Weed List, California Noxious Weeds List, and/or California Invasive Plant Council Lists 1, 2, and 4.

BMP-11: Sensitive Natural Community Avoidance

If sensitive natural communities are identified through the Biological Resource Assessment, they shall be avoided to the maximum extent possible and all project elements associated with the GDP shall be situated outside of sensitive habitats. Bright orange protective fencing installed at least 30 feet beyond the extent of the sensitive natural community during construction, or other distance as approved by a qualified biologist, to protect them from harm.

BMP-12: Restoration for Impacts to Sensitive Natural Communities

Impacts to sensitive natural communities (including riparian areas and waters of the state or waters of the U.S. under the jurisdiction of the CDFW, USFWS or RWQCB) may be mitigated through the funding of the acquisition and in-perpetuity management of similar habitat. Funding and management of internal mitigation areas can be managed internally. Funding and management of off-site mitigation lands shall be provided through purchase of credits from an existing, approved mitigation bank or land purchased by the District and placed into a conservation easement or other covenant restricting development (e.g., deed restriction). Internal mitigation lands, or in lieu funding sufficient to acquire lands shall provide habitat at a 1:1 ratio for impacted lands, comparable to habitat to be impacted by individual project activity.

- Restoration and Monitoring. If sensitive natural communities cannot be avoided and will be impacted by development under the GDP, a compensatory mitigation program shall be implemented in accordance with Best Management Practice BMP-4 and the measures set forth by the regulatory agencies during the permitting process. All temporary impacts to sensitive natural communities shall be fully restored to natural condition.

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- Sudden Oak Death. All nursery plants used in restoration shall be inspected for sudden oak death. Vegetation debris shall be disposed of properly and vehicles and equipment shall be free of soil and vegetation debris before entering natural habitats. Pruning tools shall be sanitized.

BMP-13: Jurisdictional Delineation

If potentially jurisdictional wetlands are identified by the project-specific analysis, a qualified biologist shall complete a jurisdictional delineation. The jurisdictional delineation shall determine the extent of the jurisdiction for CDFW, USACE, and/or RWQCB, and shall be conducted in accordance with the requirement set forth by each agency. The result shall be a preliminary jurisdictional delineation report that shall be submitted to the implementing agency, USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW, as appropriate, for review and approval. Jurisdictional areas shall be avoided to the maximum extent possible. If jurisdictional areas are expected to be impacted, then the RWQCB would require a Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) permit and/or Section 401 Water Quality Certification (depending upon whether or not the feature falls under federal jurisdiction). If CDFW asserts its jurisdictional authority, then a Streambed Alteration Agreement pursuant to Section 1600 et seq. of the CFGC would also be required prior to construction within the areas of CDFW jurisdiction. If the USACE asserts its authority, then a permit pursuant to Section 404 of the CWA would likely be required. Furthermore, a compensatory mitigation program shall be implemented in accordance with Best Management Practice BMP-4 and the measures set forth by the aforementioned regulatory agencies during the permitting process. Compensatory mitigations for all permanent impacts to waters of the U.S. and waters of the state shall be completed at a ratio as required in applicable permits, but shall not be less than a minimum ratio of 1:1. All temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. and waters of the state shall be fully restored to natural condition.

BMP-14: General Avoidance and Minimization

Potential jurisdictional features identified in jurisdictional delineation reports shall be avoided. Projects implemented under the GDP that may impact jurisdictional features shall include a report detailing how all identified jurisdictional features will be avoided, including groundwater draw down.

- Any material/spoils generated from project activities shall be located away from jurisdictional areas or special-status habitat and protected from storm water run-off using temporary perimeter sediment barriers such as berms, silt fences, fiber rolls (non-monofilament), covers, sand/gravel bags, and straw bale barriers, as appropriate.
- Materials shall be stored on impervious surfaces or plastic ground covers to prevent any spills or leakage from contaminating the ground and generally at least 50 feet from the top of bank.
- Any spillage of material will be stopped if it can be done safely. The contaminated area will be cleaned and any contaminated materials properly disposed. For all spills, the project foreman or designated environmental representative will be notified.

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION PLAN

As described in the General Development Plan, the opportunity for interpretation and education within Palo Corona is impressive. MPRPD is currently working to develop the overall framework and coordinate with other agencies and organizations about the type and location of these facilities.

OPERATIONS PLAN

MPRPD will be preparing an operations plan that includes how the District will operate and manage the property. This will evolve over the next couple years and will reflect what is learned now that the District will be maintaining this new park facility. .

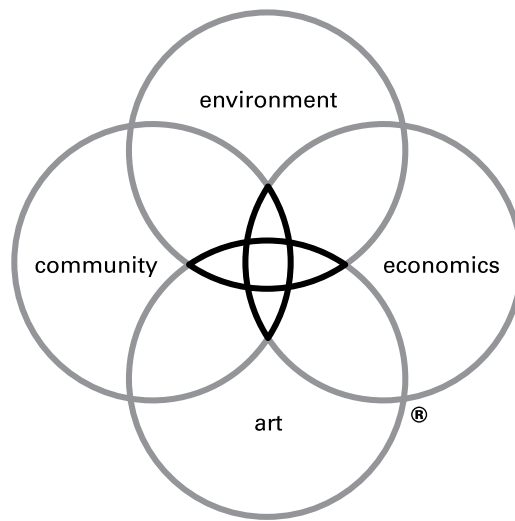
NEXT STEPS



Partnership with VWS on condor feeding station. Source: MPRPD



Opportunity for partnerships to expand educational programming. Source: Santa Lucia Preserve



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