

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8-C**

### **MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT BOARD REPORT**

**DATE:** April 1, 2026  
**TO:** Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Jake Smith, Planning & Conservation Program Manager  
**REVIEWED BY:** Eric Morgan, General Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Construction Update

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#### **SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project. Phase 1 construction was successfully completed in 2025, coming in \$1.1 million under budget. The Project is now transitioning into Phase 2 construction for 2026, with Phase 3 site maintenance and cleanup to follow in 2027. This report summarizes the Phase 1 milestones, details the updated 100% design for upland mounds, and outlines the anticipated construction timeline and temporary public access changes for the upcoming phases.

#### **REPORT**

##### **Project Background**

The Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project is restoring a 1-mile section of the Carmel River and reconnecting approximately 40 acres of floodplain habitat. This multi-year effort transforms a former golf course into restored riparian habitat designed to:

- Improve habitat for native wildlife, including threatened steelhead trout.
- Reduce local flood risk by allowing the river to spread naturally during high flows.
- Create future opportunities for public recreation, trails, and environmental education.

The project is being completed in three phases over three years. Construction of Phase 1 began in June 2025 and continues with funding from state and federal sources.

#### **Phase 1 Construction Recap (Work Completed June – November 2025)**

Phase 1 (West Side) was completed in 2025. To increase Phase 2 productivity based on lessons learned, a portion of Phase 2 clearing and grubbing was also completed proactively in Fall 2025. Key Phase 1 milestones included:

- Earthwork: Excavation and grading of 266,650 cubic yards of soil. This material was utilized in a new upland mound on the southern edge of the unit, with the remainder transferred to the adjacent Rancho Cañada Village (RCV) development.
- Habitat Creation: Constructed 23 large wood habitat structures and 3 new in-channel riffles (using 1,544 cubic yards of gravel) to provide channel complexity and escape cover for juvenile salmonids.
- Revegetation: Sowed 30.55 acres with native seed, planted 3,026 arroyo willow cuttings, and installed 78,225 native plants in the floodplain. Macerated 1,100 cubic yards of removed native plants for reuse as protective wood chips.
- Infrastructure: Demolished 6,649 square yards of legacy concrete cart paths and constructed 3,756 square yards of new aggregate trail .

### **Updated 100% Upland Mound Design**

The design engineering team at Applied River Science is finalizing \ revisions to the 100% design for the upland mounds north of the river. These adjustments are necessary to account for a 30% greater-than-expected soil compaction rate observed in Phase 1, the completion of the RCV development soil export, and confirmation of the final Carmel Area Wastewater District (CAWD) sewer line alignment. Additionally, the design incorporates revisions to ensure the mounds are constructed with a natural, rolling terrain rather than a linear, engineered appearance. Ultimately, this rebalanced design safely accommodates the excavated material while serving as an essential visual and sound barrier against development, smothering invasive grasses, and facilitating new park amenities.

### **Phase 2 Construction Lookahead (April – October 2026)**

Phase 2 construction will commence in April 2026 and focuses on the eastern (upstream) portion of the site. All required regulatory permits for Phase 2 implementation remain fully secured and active.

Please note: The following timeline represents a preliminary, high-level schedule for Phase 2 construction and is subject to change based on weather, site conditions, and contractor progress.

- Late April: Site Preparation. Crews arrive to stage equipment, install perimeter fencing, and implement initial stormwater protections.

- May: Demolition & Earthwork. Major landscape transformation begins, including demolishing legacy cart paths, stripping topsoil, and mass excavation/rough grading across the southern floodplains and side channels.
- June: River Access & Material Harvesting. Work moves into the river corridor. Crews will install clear water diversions, begin constructing the new pedestrian bridge abutments, and harvest native willow cuttings and root wads from the site.
- July: In-Channel Work & Bridge Installation. A period of heavy civil and in-stream construction. The team will construct new in-channel rock riffles, place large woody debris for habitat, and physically install the new pedestrian bridge.
- August: Planting & Trail Building. Focus shifts to restoration and access. Crews will install the irrigation system, plant over 80,000 native plants and 20,000 willow cuttings, and construct the new pedestrian pathways.
- September – Early October: Final Infrastructure & Closeout. The final weeks are dedicated to applying native seed mixtures and protective mulch, completing the driving range well pump station, and performing final site clean-up before demobilization in early October.

### **Phase 2 & 3 Public Access (April – October 2026)**

Public access across the river is currently available via Bridge 1 and Bridge 2 and the west side of the park remains closed behind construction fencing. Trail access routing will shift over the next two years to ensure safety during Phase 2 and 3 operations and completion of primary trail removal and construction activities outlined in the [Rancho Canda Trail Retrofit and Reconstruction Project](#), a separate project, and MPRPD's agreement with California Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding resolution of the Multi-benefit Community Trail. Anticipated access changes are as follows:

April 15 – June 15, 2026 (Maximum Closure):

- Closed: The majority of the Rancho Cañada Unit. Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 fencing will be actively put in place.
- Open Access: Routing to Palo Corona Regional Park will be restricted to a narrow trail along the western property boundary connecting to Bridge 5.

June 15, 2026 – June 15, 2027 (North & West Reopening):

- Closed: The entire Southern floodplain will be restricted to the public.
- Open Access: Phase 1 construction fencing on the north and west sides will be removed, successfully restoring public access to Bridges 4 and 5.

June 15, 2027 – June 15, 2028 (Major Reopening):

- Closed: Phase 2 fencing will be reduced to just a small footprint around the south side of the newly constructed Bridge 1.
- Open Access: The entire north side of the unit will open, along with the majority of the Southern floodplain.

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

None