

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7-C

MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT BOARD REPORT

DATE: October 1, 2025
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Jake Smith, Planning & Conservation Program Manager
REVIEWED BY: Eric Morgan, General Manager ~- >~
SUBJECT: Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project Monthly Progress Report

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on construction progress for the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project. September marked a major transition, winding down heavy equipment work and shifting focus towards planting and final in-stream work. Segments of the new trail system are now under construction, and the former golf cart bridge has been removed. Work in October will focus on completing habitat structures, completing replanting and reseeding efforts, demobilizing construction equipment, and preparing the site for winter conditions.

REPORT

Project Background

The Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project is restoring approximately one mile of the Carmel River by reconnecting it to its historic floodplain. This multi-year project is transforming a former golf course into thriving river, wetland, and upland habitat that will:

- Support native wildlife, including threatened steelhead trout
- Help reduce flood risk by allowing the river to spread more naturally during high flows
- Create future opportunities for public recreation and outdoor learning

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.

Work Completed This Month (Reporting Period August 25 – September 20, 2025)

Completed Construction Activities

- Pedestrian Bridge Removal: The former golf cart bridge located near the center of the site was successfully removed in early September, allowing restoration of riverbanks to allow more room for natural river flows in that area.

- Trail Installation: Construction of new aggregate trail segments through the site began on September 19th.
- Floodplain Planting: Native plant installation began across multiple zones, with newly installed irrigation systems activated to support new growth.
- In-Stream Habitat Features: Construction of gravel riffles (cobble rock ramps) began in the main river channel.
- River Flow Management: Dewatering operations continued in coordination with wildlife monitoring teams to protect sensitive species during in-stream work, like installation of the in-stream rock riffles.
- Soil Work and Grading: Soil sharing with the adjacent Rancho Cañada Village project also continued and is expected to be completed by the September 30th deadline. Final grading and shaping of upland areas is underway as of writing the report.
- Riprap Removal: Old rock armoring was removed along the riverbank near Bridge 3 after it was removed.
- Project Construction Management: The Project's construction manager, Peter Smith, resigned from his position from ANCHOR engineering. Staff are working with ANCHOR and its subconsultant at Ausonio Inc to identify a qualified replacement to ensure the project is not impacted by this transition.
- Project Tours: The project team facilitated multiple tours with project funders and technical advisors, including the State Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the project's Technical Advisory Committee.

Upcoming Work (Late September – Late October 2025)

Planned Construction Activities

- Install Habitat Structures: Final placement of remaining floodplain habitat features (logs, brush, and woody materials) starting early October.
- Riffle Construction: Continue in-stream riffle construction.
- River Crossing Removal: The temporary earthen river crossing is scheduled for removal in early October.
- Soil Preparation: Begin decompacting floodplain soils to support seed germination and plant growth.
- Seeding and Mulch Application: Apply native seed mixes to upland and riparian zones, followed by straw and tackifier for erosion control.
- Tree Removals (Phase 2): Additional selective tree removals in the Phase 2 area are tentatively scheduled for early October, pending completion of required wildlife surveys and District approval. These early tree removals are intended to reduce the risk of delays during Phase 2 construction next year. While some disruption may occur in currently open portions of the park, public access is expected to remain open during this work.

- Cleanup and Closeout: Haul route and staging area cleanup will begin, along with remaining punch list tasks.

Additional Planned Trail Replacement and Construction Activities

The adopted General Development Plan for Palo Corona Regional Park, along with the Rancho Cañada Trail Replacement and Reconstruction Project, includes the retirement and realignment of trails within the park. These changes aim to improve wayfinding and accessibility while also fulfilling requirements outlined in the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District's (MPRPD) agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This agreement stems from the Multi-Benefit Community Trail Notice of Violation.

Although this trail work is separate from the current scope of the floodplain restoration project, staff are working to advance it so that the project contractor can implement the retirement of concrete cart paths and construct realigned accessible aggregate trail connections. The goal is to substantially complete the revised accessible aggregate trail network in the western portion of the park in time for the reopening of Phase 1 to the public in summer 2026.



Photo 1: Looking at equipment beginning removal of former golf cart bridge (bridge 3).



Photo 2: Installation of instream habitat structure (large woody debris) within the floodplain.



Photo 3: New aggregate trail segment constructed in the floodplain restoration area.



Photo 4: Wildlife biologist surveying for steelhead within the work area.



Photo 5: Temporary native plant nursery/staging area within the project area.



Photo 6: Native plants installed within the floodplain. Nearly 70,000 plants will be installed during this phase,



Photo 7: Recent growth from willow plantings surrounding large woody debris habitat structure (log with root wad).

ATTACHMENT(S)

None