

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT STAFF REPORT**

**BOARD MEETING:** May 01, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Monthly Staff Report

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Rafael Payan, General Manager

**REPORT:** The following briefly summarizes some of the key tasks and projects the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) staff undertook from mid-March 2024 through mid-April 2024 in addition to performing MPRPD's regular business.

**ADMINISTRATION DIVISION**

**1. Auction**

Staff continue researching options to eliminate the growing stash of furniture, fixtures, and equipment stored under the Administration office building.

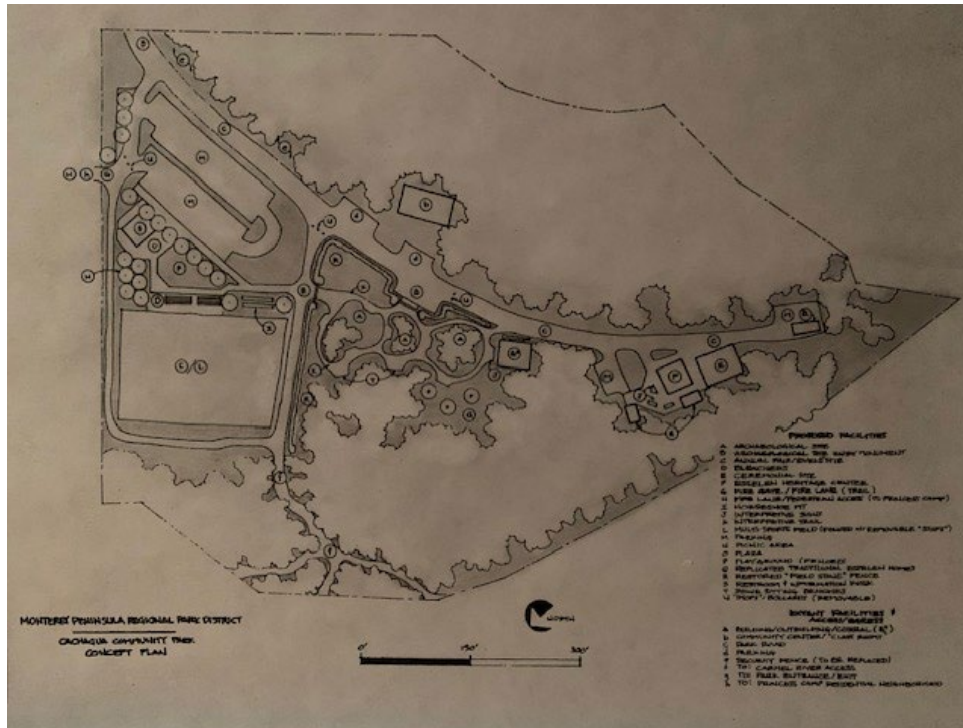
**2. Biologist**

Administration and Planning & Conservation divisions continued to work together to develop the in-house biologist job description. This position will be submitted to the Finance and Personnel committees, then to the Board, for consideration. The biologist will be an integral part of MPRPD's Planning & Conservation Division.

Staff met with the United State Fish & Wildlife Service, Point Blue, and the City of Marina representative regarding the protection of the Western Snowy Plover and its habitat. These organization's representatives unanimously encourage and support MPRPD's hire of a permanent in-house biologist. This position is vital and crucial to MPRPD's success at Marina Dunes Preserve, the RCU's Floodplain Restoration Project, working at MPRPD's other properties, and shall provide continuity of research, planning, monitoring, analysis, and response.

**3. Cachagua Community Park**

Staff are working with tribal, community, and school district representatives to discuss the planning of various proposed site improvements and facilities at this park. A community meeting to solicit public input, and an onsite meeting to ground-truth and revise the park's initial concept plan, are also being discussed. These parties and staff will continue to work on the park's enhancement. Updates will be presented to the Board as additional information becomes available.



### Cachagua Community Park – Initial Concept Plan

#### 4. CalPERS Actuarial Pension Evaluation and Staffing Increases

Staff continued analysis of these items to forecast short-term and long-term financial implications.

#### 5. FEMA – Winter 2023 Storm Damage Compilation

Administration and Operation divisions’ staff continued working on FEMA’s Damages Reporting Requirements and Requests for Additional Information. The San Clemente damages are still under FEMA Environmental Hazard review. DeDampierre Ballpark parking lot is being addressed with the USFWS and Planning & Conservation Division. Administration staff anticipate requesting an extension to complete both projects. Current deadline for completion is July 14, 2024. Updates will be presented to the Board as additional information becomes available.

#### 6. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget

Staff finalized the draft budget and reviewed it with the Finance Committee on April 9. The Finance Committee asked staff to review new, proposed positions and additional staffing requests with the Personnel Committee and seek their recommendations, then meet again with the Finance Committee and get their recommendations, which would subsequently be presented to the Board.

The General Manager will present recommendations on how to move the draft Budget forward at the May 1 meeting. It is still staff’s desire to present the draft Budget for Board consideration on June 5.

## **7. Grant Management**

Staff have instituted regular meetings to develop protocols and put systems in place for managing the restoration grants, expected to begin summer 2025.

Staff met with NOAA grant project coordinator and Planning & Conservation Division staff to get acquainted and begin conversations regarding the NOAA BIL grant.

Staff met with State Manager for PROP 117 funds to determine if funds were still available and to establish a timeline and criteria for future use.

Regional Government Services and MPRPD staff continue an extensive review of all active MPRPD grants, developing protocols as needed, and maintaining files.

## **8. Internal Communications**

The General Manager and staff continue their long-standing, regular weekly and monthly meetings with staff to discuss current District projects and issues of concern.

Division Leads meet on a weekly basis and an All Staff meeting is convened monthly. Agendas are circulated in advance, offering all staff the opportunity to populate the agenda regarding topics they would like to discuss in more detail. All staff members have an equal opportunity to contribute their recommendations. The General Manager has added regular additional meetings with each Division Team.

## **9. Locke-Paddon Community Park**

In coordination with the City of Marina, a future joint presentation will be provided to the Board regarding various proposed enhancements for this park. One of the scope items that has preliminarily been discussed by the City of Marina and MPRPD's Board and staff is the proposed Asian-America Garden. This garden will recognize and celebrate the cultures and many accomplishments the Asian Community has accomplished to make this a better region.

## **10. Solicitations & Contracts**

Staff continue to develop solicitations and contracts utilizing OpenGov Procurement. Solicitations for Acquisition of a Four-Wheel Drive Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV), 4WD Front Loader Utility Tractor with Box Scraper & Forks, RCU Mobile Office Trailer (EECO) and RFP for On-Call Environmental Management and Planning Services were issued.

Approval for the equipment acquisitions is expected to go before the Board at the May 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. Three contracts for three different firms are being processed for On-Call Environmental Management and Planning Services. Each of these contracts are under \$40,000.

## 11. Strategic Plan Update

Staff have met with several Board members to further discuss the Strategic Plan. An option that may help advance this plan may be to dedicate a portion of future Board meetings to specifically focus on the Strategic Plan's development in a public setting. Staff's recommendation to the Board will be presented at a forthcoming meeting.

## 12. Training

Staff participated in Human Resources training with HackingHR and the Society for Human Resource Management. Sessions also included sexual harassment training.

Staff also participated in the annual 2-day Prevailing Wage updates.

MPPRD personnel and Volunteers have participated or shall participate in First-Aid Training. Sessions have included Wilderness First Aid and CPR and AED use.

The latter was led by the American Heart Association. The goal is to have all staff and Volunteers trained so that we are prepared to render life-saving measures.



**American Heart Association First Aid/CPR/AED Training**

## 13. Transparency Certificate

Staff continue efforts to renew the SDLF Transparency Certificate. Staff and Board Members have been requested to complete, or have completed, certain required training items, such as harassment training for supervisory and non-supervisory employees, as well as ethics training for all Board Members. Staff are updating the website with current required documentation.

Staff need sufficient time for the volunteer reviewers to review and check the items off the list. This takes considerable time on the part of the reviewer, so staff need to allow several weeks for this process. The sooner staff can present the completed

checklist for review, the more likely MPRPD will be able to renew our certificate before it expires this spring.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH (EECO)**

### **(COMMUNITY OUTREACH)**

#### **1. California Wildlife Day (CWD) | Sunday, March 24, 2024 11 am-3 pm**

As the morning's heavy rains subsided, the cloudy day was greeted with an estimated 1,260 friends and families enjoying the festivities. MPRPD and the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy annually host CWD, the largest public event for conservation organizations in the area.

CWD activities filled the entire park entrance and the Wedgewood banquet rooms. The indoor space hosted 26 conservation-orientated exhibitors, keynote presenters speaking on Sudden Oak Death and the effects of recent fires, the SLO Beaver Brigade speaking about the reintroduction of beavers in CA, and student art. The outdoor tent at the multi-purpose pad was labeled the "Kid Zone" and included a steelhead obstacle course, a "Species on the Edge" interactive table, coloring activities, and crafts for children and adults.

There was standing-room-only for the Rumsen Ohlone Community Tribal Dancers and the Conservation of Raptors programs. "Walks and Talks" were held every hour, and the food vendors were pleased with the sales volume.



**We thank and appreciate our Volunteers, Partners, and Supporters**

#### **2. Marina Earth Day at Locke-Paddon Wetland Community Park**

The Citizens for Sustainable Marina, planners for this inclusive event on Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup> from 9 am to 1 pm, ran full-page ads in both the *Herald* and *Monterey County Weekly* announcing the event and thanking their supporters, including “Earth Champion Donors,” the Sierra Club, City of Marina, Terracon, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, “Green Team Donors,” Chuck Haugen Conservation Fund, Monterey Peninsula Engineering, Greenwaste, Marina Club Casino, and Springhill Suites. Sixty-second commercials ran on K WAV and other radio stations.

The estimated total turnout for the event was ~200 visitors. The wet and rainy weather likely lowered visitation. Still, the community celebration bustled with activity and joy. MPRPD ran the welcome/service project registration booth as well as an interactive and educational *Species on the Edge* themed table. A Western Snowy Plover nesting habitat display inspired several positive conversations about the importance of symbolic fencing and other important measures.

The 99 service project participants completed 6 service projects including raised bed garden planting, weeding, French broom removal, and pollinator garden planting, in addition to enjoying the free food, music, interactive booths, and toy giveaways for the youth. KSBW produced a story of the event: <https://www.ksbw.com/article/city-of-marina-celebrates-new-trail-ahead-of-earth-day/60490687>







**Images from Marina Earth Day at Locke-Paddon Wetland Community Park**

**3. Social Media Posts (March 16, 2024 - April 13, 2024)**

For this reporting period, post topics included upcoming *LGO!* programming, California Wildlife Day (CWD) promotion, CWD Species on the Edge campaign, Marina Earth Day at Locke-Paddon promotion, and educational content about the flora and fauna of MPRPD parks.

The followings of MPRPD social media accounts grew during this reporting period.

**i. Facebook stats - [@MPRegionalParkDistrict \(1\) Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District \(MPRPD\) | Carmel CA | Facebook](#)**

- a.** April 13 Follower Count: 2,826 (+126)
- b.** Facebook Page Reach (number of accounts that viewed a piece of content at least once): 10,002 (↓ 5.8%)
- c.** Top 3 posts for likes/reactions (March 16 – April 13):
  - March 23: Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community Dancers at Upcoming CWD (3,900 reach) (135 likes/reactions)



- March 16: Upcoming CWD Speaker Highlight (2,000 reach) (53 likes/reactions)
- March 20: CWD Species on the Edge tricolored blackbird highlight (864 reach) (45 likes/reactions)

ii. **Instagram stats - @mprpd\_igo: Monterey Peninsula Park (@mprpd\_igo) • Instagram photos and videos**

- April 13 Follower Count: 1,521 (+55)
- Instagram Page Reach (number of accounts that viewed a piece of content at least once): 1,110 (↑ 23.3%)
- Top 3 posts for likes/reactions (March 16 - April 13):
  - March 23: CWD Schedule (529 reach) (77 likes/reactions)
  - March 23: Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community Dancers at Upcoming CWD (409 reach) (50 likes/reactions)
  - April 3: GRRP Seasonal Waterfall and Carmel River “Reel” Video (337 reach) (48 likes/reactions)





Lee Larrew  
I loved working on LGO!

1w Love Reply Hide



Esther Malkin  
So great Laguna Grande Regional Park is included! Thx

1w Love Reply Hide



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD)

Published by Let's Go Outdoors · 20h ·

Thank you to our community for a wonderful California Wildlife Day!  
Special thanks to our speakers, Kerri Frangioso and Cooper Leinhart, who shared their invaluable insights and research, to falconer Antonio Balestreri for inspiring conservation, to The Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community Dancers for their powerful celebration of culture and history, to all volunteers, and to all the exhibitors for enriching California Wildlife Day with their knowledge, enthusiasm, and commitme... See more



Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD)

Published by Let's Go Outdoors · March 23 at 4:56 PM ·

Join us for California Wildlife Day TOMORROW RAIN or SHINE on Sunday, March 24th from 11 am to 3 pm at Palo Corona Regional Park!

We'll have another great line-up of speakers, guided nature walks, activities, exhibitors, food for purchase, live music, information on species on the edge, and more!

This is a FREE event, all are welcome!

For more information see: <https://cawildlifeday.net/> (link in bio).

Califo... See more

**CA WILDLIFE DAY**  
PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK  
MARCH 24, 2024

**TOMORROW!  
RAIN OR SHINE!**

**SPECIES ON THE EDGE**

**South-central California Steelhead**  
*Oncorhynchus mykiss*

**FEDERALLY LISTED THREATENED SPECIES**

**LEARN MORE AT EVENT**

[www.cawildlifeday.net](http://www.cawildlifeday.net)

**4. Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC)**

Staff met with TAMC representatives for an introductory meeting to discuss their efforts in securing “active transportation” grant funds for trail upgrades at Laguna Grande Regional Park. The conversation included brainstorming options and partnership opportunities to support TAMC’s grant efforts. The funds are proposed to connect Laguna Grande to the Monterey Coastal Recreation Trail, and Roberts Lake as Phase 2 to advance boarder trail connectivity efforts.

**5. Unusual Visitor - No foolin’**

On Monday, April 1, staff had an unusual visitor in the GRRP Visitor Center -- a juvenile Northern Pacific Rattlesnake with tiny rattles. Two visitors at the door noticed it before walking into the center. Staff assessed the situation, asked the visitors to close the door, and contacted Ranger Jeff Niewenhuis, who quickly came and relocated it over 1 mile away. Thanks Jeff! Great teamwork.



**A juvenile rattlesnake enters Garland Ranch Regional Park Visitor Center**

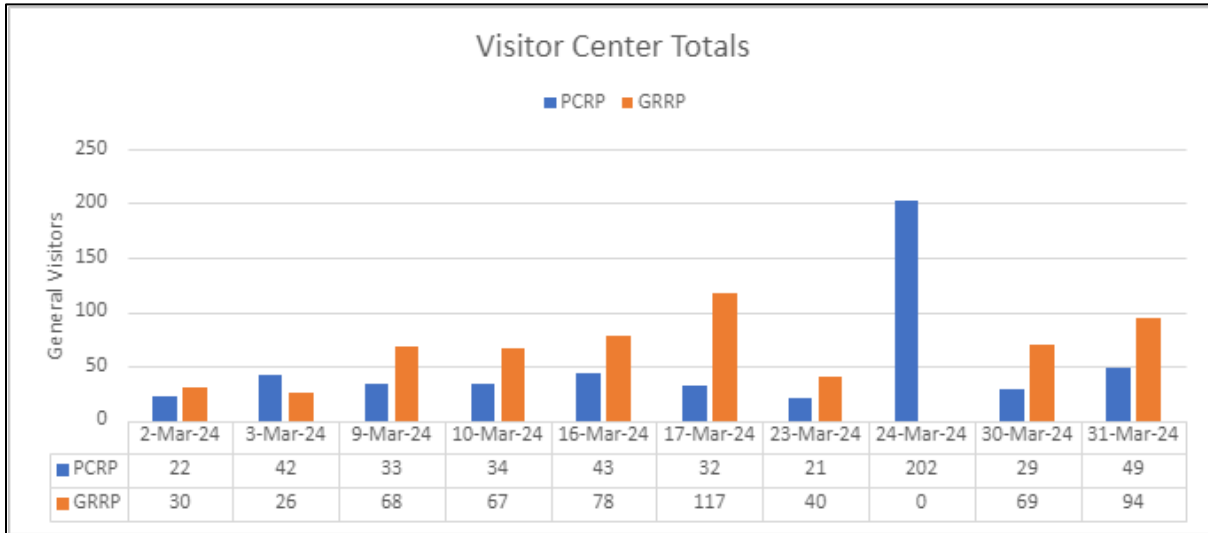
**6. Visitor Center Totals**

Staff continue to record visitation on weekends, 10 am-4 pm, at both the PCR Discovery Center (DC) and the GRRP Visitor Center (VC). One or both centers have also been opened on select holidays.

Expanded (summer) opening hours for both centers went into effect in April 2024. The Garland Visitor Center is now open Thursday-Sunday, and the Palo Corona Discovery Center is open Friday-Sunday, 10 am-4 pm. Both centers will also be open on Monday holidays through September.

The chart below summarizes weekend and holiday visitor contacts with staff or volunteers in March 2024. Wet weather events impacted park visitation on multiple weekends in April. Dates with 0 contacts recorded (3/24/24 at the VC) indicate that

the center remained closed; the unusually high total at PCRP on 3/24/24 reflects the Discovery Center being open during California Wildlife Day.



**Visitor contacts at the PCRP DC and GRRP VC in March 2024**

**(FACILITIES)**

**7. Centers Extended Summer Hours**

As mentioned above under “Visitor Center Totals,” both centers have expanded (summer) hours of operations from April-October 2024. The Garland Visitor Center is now open Thursday-Sunday, and the Palo Corona Discovery Center is open Friday-Sunday, 10 am-4 pm. Both centers will also be open on Monday holidays through September.

**8. GRRP Outdoor Classroom and Shade Structure**

The site plans are completed and submitted to the County for review. The construction “bids solicitation” request is planned to be submitted for Board review in June or July. Construction contract approval anticipated in August; with construction starting as early as August or as late as October 2024. The project will take two to three weeks to construct.

**(PERMITS AND GRANTS)**

**9. Special Use Permits (SUP)**

Staff prepared and issued the following Special Use Permits (SUP) and Encroachment Permits during this reporting period:

**A. California Native Plant Society (CNPS)**

Vegetation mapping for SLO, Monterey, and San Benito Counties is designed

for multiple uses including, not limited to, regional fire and fuels management planning, game management and wildlife habitat identification, water conservation and management, and watershed assessments. Any rare species that are observed incidental to vegetation sampling will be recorded and reported to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB).

**B. California Native Plant Society (CNPS)**

Wildflower collection at PCPR for the CNPS wildflower show. April 22-23 marks the 63<sup>rd</sup> annual wildflower show, considered to be the largest wildflower show in the northern and western hemispheres. Predictions are for a super bloom of flowers this year.

**C. Point Lobos Docent Trainees**

Point Lobos Docent Trainee Group 2024 uses multipurpose of multipurpose pad and picnic tables for lunch.

**D. Sudden Oak Death (SOD) Blitz 2024**

The entrance of the PCPR Discovery Center is the staging area for the annual Sudden Oak Blitz which runs this year from Friday, April 26 to Tuesday, April 30 this year.

Citizen scientists and neighbors collect leaf specimens suspicious of containing the Phytophthora ramorum pathogen. The UC Berkeley diagnostic laboratory analyzes each sample. Once all samples have been evaluated, a map will be generated highlighting the areas sampled, and the presence or absence of the disease at each location.

**E. Transportation Grant**

The Transportation Fund is gaining momentum. Since October 2023, \$20,277 has been awarded to provide transportation funding to MPPRD lands.

The most recent grants have been awarded to the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy, Washington Union School District, Frank Ledesma Elementary School, and the Central Coast YMCA, with applications from Girls Incorporated and Habitat Stewardship Program (University Corporation) under review.

Early recipients of the grant include the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History and the Wahine Project. The breadth, depth, and diversity of past and current awardees and applicants reinforces MPPRD commitment to reach a boarder, more diverse pool of applications that represents all our constituents.

**F. Habitat Stewardship Program is requesting funds for ten field trips, from December 2024 through March 2025, to bring students to Marina Dunes Preserve to assist in planting native dune species as part of their education and restoration activities. No special use permit was required.**

G. The Frank Ledesma Elementary School was awarded \$2,000 to bring 90 fifth-grade students, their teachers, and chaperones to Palo Corona Regional Park. As this is part of the MPRPD Healthy Habitats education program, no special use permit was required.

### **10. Volunteer Program**

MPRPD's treasured Volunteers enjoyed a fun and an educational icebreaker, live music, good food, and sincere appreciation from MPRPD's Board and staff for their time and energy at the Annual Volunteer Recognition Event.

## **OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE DIVISION**

### **1. Corona Peak Picnic Table**

The picnic table located at Corona Peak in the Palo Corona Regional Park backcountry has been replaced. The previous table was destroyed by the wind event that impacted the region on February 4, 2024. This table will be utilized as an aid station for the upcoming Race for Open Space, which is scheduled for May 11.



**Palo Corona Backcountry Picnic Table**

### **2. FEMA Assistance Projects Delayed**

The FEMA-funded storm recovery projects (for damage suffered during January 2023) continue to be delayed allowing FEMA's Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) team an opportunity to conduct additional analysis of the projects' environmental compliance. This delay may require the District to seek an extension of the deadline for project completion. The District is hopeful that FEMA will grant permission to continue these projects in the next few weeks.

### 3. Garland Park Trail Maintenance

A Gabilan Conservation Camp crew spent a couple of days at Garland Park clearing drain dips, high-limbing, and improving the trail tread along Garza's Canyon Trail. This time of year, moisture conditions are ideal for projects that involve movement of soil. Rangers will continue to prioritize projects that require soil relocation and compaction until moisture conditions diminish.



**Gabilan Crew Working on Garza's Canyon Trail**

### 4. Kiosk Installation at Palo Corona Front Ranch

Rangers installed a new information kiosk at the junction of the Southbank Trail and the Palo Corona Front Ranch. The cost of this kiosk is reimbursable by FEMA because the previous kiosk was crushed by a large cottonwood tree during a winter storm last year. During the interim, staff relied on temporary signage to convey park rules, regs, and information.



**Ranger Installing Kiosk at PCRFP Front Ranch**



**Final Product**

**5. Palo Corona Front Ranch Trail Maintenance**

Rangers took advantage of ideal soil conditions to blade and roll the trails throughout Palo Corona Regional Park's Front Ranch Unit. This time of year, impacts from cattle grazing and rainfall require trail tread surface maintenance, which staff are able to accomplish in-house utilizing District equipment. Staff also worked with a Gabilan Inmate Crew to remove a cluster of oak trees that had fallen across the road leading to Inspiration Point and Animas Pond.



**Trail Tread Maintenance**



**Gabilan Crew removing fallen Oak Trees**

**6. Rancho Canada Unit Restroom Repairs**

Rangers are collaborating with a contractor to repair and replace a door latch on the Rancho Canada Unit restroom building where an interior handle has fallen off and required a family cabin to be closed temporarily.



**Broken handle on PCRP restroom building**



## 7. Signage Repairs at Garland Park

Rangers repaired one of the Moo Property interpretive panels after the legs had deteriorated, broken, and caused the sign to topple. Fortunately, the panel was not damaged, and was reinstalled in the same location. This sign was funded by the Big Sur Land Trust during the acquisition of the Moo Property years ago and has proven to be extremely resilient. There are 4 of these interpretive panels throughout the Moo Property/River Trail corridor.



**Rangers Reinstalling Interpretive Panel**

## 8. Storm-damaged Gate Replaced

The gate at the entrance into the Kahn Ranch Addition of Garland Ranch Regional Park was recently replaced. The previous gate was dragging due to its excessive weight/length and saturated soils surrounding the hinge post. Staff replaced this gate with a newer-style, lighter, Powder River model.

## 9. Tractor/Loader Purchase

Following approval by the Board at the April 2024 meeting, staff released a Request for Proposals for purchase of a 4WD tractor with front loader and box scraper attachments. At the May meeting, staff will request Board approval for the General Manager to enter into an agreement with the lowest responsive bidder for purchase of the proposed unit. This tractor will be housed at Palo Corona Regional Park and allow Rangers to complete road and trail reconstruction projects in-house.

## 10. Tree Removal at Palo Corona - Rancho Canada Unit

Rangers coordinated the removal of 4 dead pine trees near the main entrance to Palo Corona Regional Park adjacent to Village Park Drive. Tope's Tree Service was contracted to complete this project, as specialized equipment was necessary to safely remove the trees and not impact the roadway or adjacent habitat.



**Topé's Tree Service Removing Dead Pine Trees  
on Village Park Drive**

#### **11. Violations at MPRPD Parks**

Spring is upon us thus Rangers have been addressing an increase in violations of park rules and regulations. Citations were issued this month for violations including:

- Mountain biking on non-bicycle designated trails at Garland Park
- Bringing a non-service canine into the Palo Corona Front Ranch

Both parties admitted to seeing posted regulatory signage prohibiting said activities but chose to proceed anyway.

### **PLANNING AND CONSERVATION DIVISION**

#### **1. Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 Work Plan and Budget**

Staff are working to identify project priorities, staffing needs, and budget needs for FY24/25. These will be brought to the Board for review and approval by the June Board meeting.

#### **2. On-call Environmental Management and Planning Services**

Planning & Conservation and Administration divisions are in the process of entering into contract with three pre-qualified Environmental Management and Planning firms to support a variety of Planning & Conservation Division projects and programmatic needs. The on-call contracts will streamline the process of securing consultant support and increase the division's capacity to deliver projects.

#### **3. Proposed Resource Management Specialist & Wildlife Biologist Positions**

Staff have developed draft position descriptions for the proposed Resource

Management Specialist and Wildlife Biologist positions that will be part of the Planning & Conservation Division. Staff anticipate bringing these proposed positions to the MPRPD Personnel Committee for feedback before presenting the positions to the Board for consideration and approval as early as June of this year.

**4. Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project**

Staff continue to work on final permitting and design for the Floodplain Restoration Project and are awaiting final responses from funders regarding two additional grant applications. The Project remains on track to begin construction in July of 2025.

**5. Marina Dunes Preserve Coastal Dune Restoration and Enhancement Project**

Staff continue to work with Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) to negotiate an agreement that outlines how MST will provide MPRPD with funding in exchange for MPRPD implementing restoration activities at Marina Dunes Preserve that mitigate offsite impacts associated with MST's SURF! Busway and Rapid Transit Project. Staff expect to bring a funding agreement to the Board for review and approval at the June 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**6. Low-effect Habitat Conservation Plan (LEHCP) for the Rancho Cañada Unit of Palo Corona Regional Park**

Staff are currently reviewing an initial draft LEHCP document and are compiling edits and comments that will be addressed before a revised draft report is shared with USFWS. The detailed project schedule has not yet been updated, but staff expect the LEHCP to be completed and an Incidental Take Permit to be issued to MPRPD by Fall/Winter 2024.

**7. FORTAG at Laguna Grande Regional Park**

Staff are coordinating with the Transportation Agency of Monterey County, the Cities of Monterey and Seaside, and representatives of the Fort Ord Regional Trail & Greenway (FORTAG) on the development of a grant funding application for final design, permitting, and construction of the FORTAG trail segment through Laguna Grande Regional Park via the California Transportation Commission Active Transportation Program. Staff expect to provide a letter of support before the grant is submitted in June 2024.

**8. Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Mitigation Projects**

Staff are preparing bid documents for the Eucalyptus removal and East Garzas Road shaded fuel break projects to secure contractors to implement both projects later this summer. Meanwhile, staff continue working to secure remaining permits from California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Cutting Green Tape Program and the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District. Staff will provide a summary and schedule for project outreach and education plans once a project implementation schedule is confirmed.

**END OF REPORT**