

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
STAFF REPORT**

BOARD MEETING: September 01, 2021

SUBJECT: Monthly Staff Report

PRESENTER: Rafael Payan, General Manager

REPORT: The following briefly summarizes some of the key tasks and projects MPRPD's Staff undertook from mid-July 2021 through mid-August 2021 in addition to performing the District's regular business. This work was accomplished in compliance with the CDC's recommendations and the State's and County's COVID-related guidelines.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

1. **Annual Financial Audit:** The audit is in full swing. Staff have been sending requested documents and communications to the auditor. The Finance Committee is scheduled to meet with the Audit team on Wednesday, September 22 at 1pm.
2. **CalPERS Asset Liability Management Quarterly Webinar:** Staff participated in the virtual webinar. As previously mentioned in a prior monthly staff update, CalPERS did better than expected on investment returns in the FY20-21. This triggered a CalPERS' Funding Risk Mitigation Policy that automatically reduces the discount rate. The policy sets forth the reduction in the discount rate based on excess investment return. This is the first time the Policy has been triggered. Staff does not yet know the exact impact on District contribution rates and will inform the Board as staff obtains more information.
3. **Carmel River Watershed Conservancy (CRWC):** EECO and Admin staff continued to work with CRWC in the development of a video interpretive program showcasing the Carmel River from its headwaters in the Santa Lucia Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The watershed has been professionally recorded via helicopter. Narration is underway. Once completed, the video presentation shall be presented to the Board.
4. **COVID-19:** Staff continues to participate in weekly Monterey County Operational Area meetings related to COVID-19. The Monterey County Health Department reports an increase in COVID-19 cases and Delta variant infections. The County's

Health Officer may soon announce indoor mask recommendation(s) and/or mandate(s).

5. **COVID-19 Prevention Program (CPP) and Return-to-Work Protocols:** MPRPD's revised CPP will be presented for Board review and action at the Board's 09/01/21 meeting.
6. **Finance Committee Meeting:** Staff met with the Finance Committee (Committee) on August 5 to discuss capital improvement funding for Projects A and B, and the former clubhouse building's reroofing and heating, ventilation, and cooling (HVAC) project. The Committee made recommendations on prioritizing and tiering these improvements.

The District has been in consultation with CSDA Finance Corporation regarding alternative funding sources. The Committee recommended that staff seek out a Municipal Advisor. Staff issued an RFP for a Municipal Advisor through the District's ProcureNow procurement site. A Municipal Advisor makes recommendations on funding sources and opportunities and looks out for the best interests of the District in financing structures.

7. **Grants:** Staff continued to work with MPRPD's consultants to identify and pursue what grants MPRPD's grant writer may pursue for Projects A & B.
8. **Locke-Paddon Wetland Regional Park:** Staff continued discussions with the City of Marina to formulate a plan for future facility and site improvements at this park and surrounding areas.
9. **ParkIT!:** The *ParkIT!* coalition plans to meet with a consultant to discuss the potential development of a user survey to gauge public interest regarding shuttle service to the Point Lobos State Natural Reserve and other open spaces along State Route 1.
10. **Project-B Restroom, Bus Drop Off/Pickup, Shade Structures and Tent Pad:** In alignment with the Board's recent authorization, the prefabricated restroom building has been ordered and delivery is expected October/November. Construction documents are being finalized. Project documents will be brought to the Board for review and action prior to bidding. Construction management is anticipated to be provided by Ausonio, Inc.
11. **Proposals for Classification and Compensation Study Received:** Staff is working on contracting for services, as amounts are within the General Manager's \$40K signing authority. Staff should be able to begin the project in September 2021.

- 12. Proposals for Redistricting/Demography Services Received:** Staff is working on contracting for services, as amounts are within the General Manager's \$40K signing authority. Staff should be able to begin the project in September 2021.
- 13. Proposals for Rent Analysis:** Subject to the Board's future authorization, staff will draft and issue an RFP requesting professional services to analyze rental rates for District-owned structures, including residences. This should ensure MPRPD's rental rates are aligned with fair-market rates implemented by other governmental organizations. More information will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.
- 14. Reroof/HVAC Replacement:** The project's construction plans and specifications are still being reviewed by the County of Monterey and may be approved by early September. Monique Miron of CM Construction Services, Inc., is currently coordinating the project's construction schedule and the building's continued use by Wedgewood during construction, for bidding purposes. Wedgewood is extremely busy and is ostensibly booked with events through June 2022, making construction scheduling quite challenging. If the County approves the plans by early September, MPRPD anticipates placing the project out to bid that same month.
- 15. Training:** Staff continued to participate in sessions related to Legal Risks of Returning to Work; Transitioning from Work from Home to Office; California Joint Powers Insurance Authority Workers' Compensation Symposium; and, Liebert Cassidy Whitmore Session - Workplace Violence.

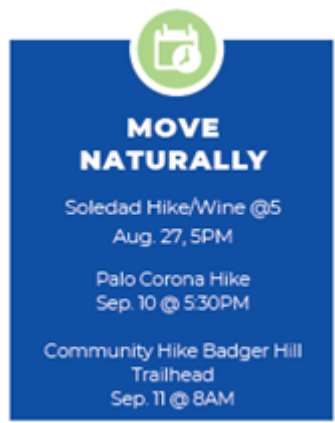
Staff also attended the virtual 2021 California State and Local Government Training Academy. Training was focused on current GASB accounting updates, how to recognize fraud, and how to prevent it. There is extreme focus on IT security due to hacking and ransomware attacks. Staff have been receiving regular training through the IT consultant on IT security.

Staff also participated in two half-day training sessions, sponsored by CSDA, focused on Financial Management. Training included a CalTRUST market review, reserve guidelines discussions, communicating financial information, critical fiscal policies and procedures, fraud and internal controls, and budgeting for the short and the long-term.

The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) recently issued a report focusing on occupational fraud and abuse. The report identifies three primary categories of fraud: asset misappropriation (86% of cases); corruption (43% of cases); and, financial statement fraud (10% of cases). ACFE is the world's largest anti-fraud organization and premier provider of anti-fraud training and education. This webinar especially focused on IT security for governmental organizations.

EECO DIVISION

1. **Blue Zone Monterey County:** Staff met with Blue Zones staff to collaborate on their “Move Naturally” beginner and intermediate hikes at Palo Corona Regional Park on September 10. This is part of their four weeklong Blue Zones Project Kickoff Events, from August 20th to September 16th.

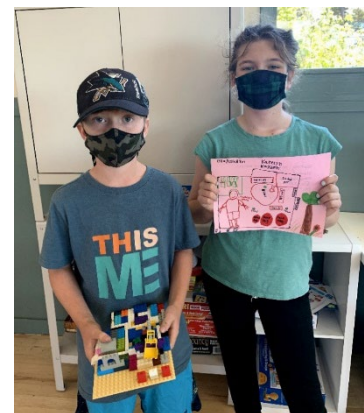
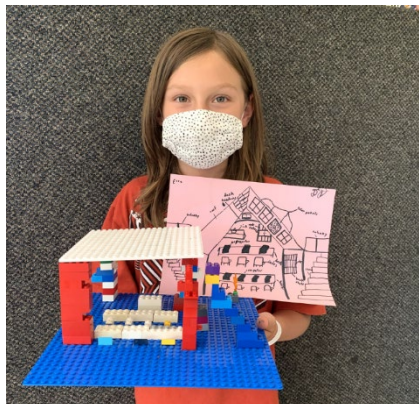
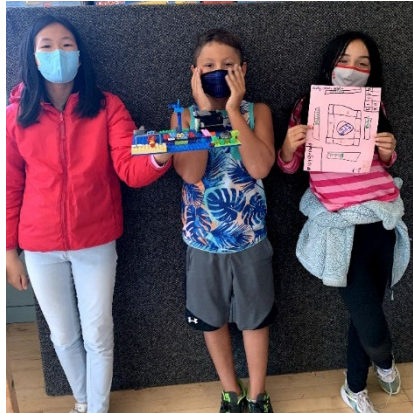


Take your first steps toward better health with Blue Zones Project. Sign up and attend any of the Move Naturally events and if you enjoy it (and we think you will!), stick with us. You can join a Walking Moai. A moai is a group of like-minded people who gather for a similar purpose, like walking.

2. **Community Outreach: Prop 68 Grant Funding and Palo Corona Regional Park “Plan Your Park” Event:** Staff continues to engage the public to determine what proposed amenities they prefer for Palo Corona Regional Park (PCRP). This information will help MPRPD in the development of Regional Park Program (RPP) and Rural Recreation & Tourism (RRT) grant applications.
 - A. **Plan Your Park Survey:** To date, 196 individuals have completed the Dog Park Survey and 215 completed the 20 minute “Plan Your Park” survey.
 - B. **Virtual Public Meeting - Tuesday, August 31, 6:30 pm-8:00 pm:** Staff and consultants hosted the third and final public event to discuss results from previous public surveys on the preferred amenities for this park. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89546939635>. The Monterey Herald included an article and helped MPRPD advertise this event in their Saturday, August 14, edition.
 - C. **Youth Outreach – Outdoor Classroom:** Staff created and hosted a hybrid activity for the Carmel Youth Group’s campers (age 6-14) to gain their input on design elements for the future outdoor classroom at PCRP. Students identified their highest priority features for an outdoor classroom. These included: A roof-covered semi-walled classroom with desks, individual chairs, storage, and access to nearby water features, with interactive opportunities (e.g., playing in an artificial waterfall or pond that has fish). Secondly, these students shared

similar ideas about access to playgrounds other passive (with water and sand) and active (basketball) recreational opportunities, and “relaxation” areas.

Students also expressed interest in other features such as animal enclosures, solar panels, and fire pits. Some of the student-generated drawings for these amenities are included herein. This type of student participation could potentially encourage students’ interest in pursuing careers in landscape architecture, architecture, planning, engineering, and construction.



Carmel Youth Campers conceptualize outdoor classroom features through schematic design and 3-D modeling using Legos

3. Education:

- A. Digital Education/Social Media:** Social media posts were created and posted. The posts advocated for fire safe and hot weather safe park practices. Other posts included advertising Environmental Education Specialist openings, water

conservation tips, Plan Your Park advertisement and engagement, and July is “Parks Make Life Better” month.



- B. *Let's Go Outdoors!* Catalog and Programs:** Call for instructors was released and open through August 26th. Promotion of programs advertised included remote programs from October to December 2021 and in-person programs as early as January 2022.
 - C. School Programs:** 6th-12th grades field trips and virtual programming are in the development stage. The “Healthy Habitats” pilot program will be inquiry based, focusing and integrating local habitats, opportunities at various Regional Park locations, and use observations during programs to provide real data for analysis while addressing complex ecosystem concepts that can be integrated with public need, demand, and use.
 - D. Transportation Grants:** Pilot programs and a proposed transportation grant will be promoted at the Environmental Education Teacher Open House scheduled to be held at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History in September. Virtual programs may be available as early as October 2021 and field trips may be offered in January 2022, subject to pandemic-related guidelines.
- 4. Monterey Regional Monarch Alliance (MRMA):** Hosted by the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC), staff participated in the general quarterly MRMA meeting to provide highlights for various efforts occurring in Monterey County. The Rotary Clubs of Monterey County are embarking on a countywide project to create significant habitat to support monarch butterflies,

provide ongoing education, and inspire the community to plant additional “habitat islands” in their respective neighborhoods.

5. Service Learning – CSU Monterey Bay: Staff submitted project proposals and attended partner meetings for CSUMB service-learning opportunities. Proposed projects consist of special event website preparation, data management for calendars and contacts, education program assistance, and GIS mapping projects.

6. Special Use Permits (SUP): The following special use permits were issued during this reporting period:

A. Carmel River Steelhead Association: Access was granted to drive vehicles within Palo Corona Regional Park’s Rancho Canada Unit to conduct steelhead trout rescue and electrofishing, and field day certification for volunteers and staff.

Coordinated efforts between Ecological Studies and Carmel River Steelhead Association enhanced the rescue procedures and success rates.

B. Dawn Reis Ecological Studies: SUP authorized driving onto MPRPD properties to access the Carmel River via Palo Corona Regional Park to conduct California red-legged frog (CRLF) tadpole rescues, via netting and relocation, before the river goes subsurface during autumn’s dry season. This project was implemented at the request of California American Water and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

There are more CRLF frog tadpoles near the Palo Corona Regional Park Rancho Canada Unit’s lower bridges than ever seen before. The rescued tadpoles were relocated to deeper pools along the river. Adult CRLFs are not collected and will naturally disperse up to two miles from the breeding site into moist “duff” until wet weather.

C. UC Santa Cruz Fort Ord Natural Reserve: In collaboration with USFWS, UCSC’s Natural Reserve System obtained access to Palo Corona Regional Park’s backcountry to conduct a random sampling of coast buckwheat (*Eriogonum latifolium*) to characterize Smith’s blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes smithi*) habitat quality at each California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) record location. Smith’s blue butterfly is listed as federally endangered, and its life cycle is dependent on Central Coast buckwheat.

7. Training:

A. Staff attended a presentation on “Interpreting Climate Change”; and,

B. Staff attended a “Forging Fire Resilience: Fire Science & Safety Talk with the Santa Lucia Conservancy” outlining the Conservancy’s fire management plan which integrates the use of conservation grazing, control burns, mowing, and shaded fuel breaks.

8. **Transportation Grant Coordination:** MPRPD is pleased to announce development of the pilot ***Let's Go Outdoors! Transportation Fund Grant Program*** with the help of the Community Foundation of Monterey County (CFMC). The goal is to reach students, organizations, and community groups within the District and to get people outdoors, visiting nature inspired environmental education institutions including aquariums, museums, and discovery centers, and exploring the natural world. The next steps include:
 - A. Determining the best investment option(s) for the grant program. The neat thing about working with CFMC is the public can contribute to the project's funding portfolio through financial contributions;
 - B. Drafting the "Fund Agreement" between MPRPD and CFMC for the MPRPD Board's consideration; and,
 - C. Launching the program as early as this Fall.
9. **Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan:** Staff met with Susan Morley, Archaeological consultant, for recommendations on setting up a process to reach out to the region's Indigenous communities' representatives to gather stories to be used for interpretive programming.
10. **Volunteers:** Dr. Doug Smith, professor in the Applied Environmental Science Department at CSU Monterey Bay, presented on "Sea Level Rise in Southern Monterey Bay: History, Processes, and Management" at MPRPD volunteers' monthly meeting on July 29. Volunteers and staff were fascinated by the facts, figures, and illustrations that were presented and enjoyed the informative Q & A session afterward. This informative presentation was recorded and is available to view upon request.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE DIVISION

1. **CAWD Sewer Line:** Ops Staff continues to coordinate with Carmel Area Wastewater District to prepare for replacement of the wastewater main thru the Rancho Canada Unit. Rangers participates in weekly check-in meetings with the Carmel Area Wastewater District's, Graniterock Construction's, Psomas Construction Management's, Rincon Consultants', and MNS Engineers' personnel. The project was scheduled to break ground at Rancho Canada Unit as early as August 30, 2021.
2. **Frog Pond Wetland Preserve Maintenance:** Per the Habitat Protection, Interpretation, and Enhancement Plan, Rangers are conducting sedimentation and vegetation removal at the Frog Pond Wetland Preserve. This project includes the strategic removal of tullies and the relocation of accumulated sediment from the

pond floor. Encroaching tullies and trapped sediment limit the pond's holding capacity and reduce the amount of surface water available to wildlife. For this project, staff utilized MPRPD's excavator, bucket tractor, and dump truck to haul and relocate excavated materials and spoils.



Ranger John removing tullies using the excavator



The District's tractor was used to remove accumulated sediment

3. Fuel Mitigation at Garland Ranch Regional Park: At the Board's direction, and in consultation with Cal Fire, MPRPD staff has begun implementing immediate fuel mitigation projects at Garland Ranch Regional Park. The following outlines a timeline of recent activities:

- A.** On July 27, 2021, staff met with Cal Fire to discuss and obtain their recommendations for fuel mitigation at GRRP. Kevin Kamnikar (local Fire Marshal and Division Chief) with the Monterey County Regional Fire District was unable to attend this meeting because he has been dispatched to the Dixie Fire. Cal Fire provided guidance and direction to help MPRPD base its schedule and objectives for addressing fuel mitigation at GRRP (short-term goal).
- B.** On July 29, 2021, staff met with a group of concerned citizens, including Tom Oliver, Margaret Oliver, Nancy Abellgard, and Ann Notthoff. Staff explained what MPRPD has previously done and is doing to address fire fuels on its properties. Staff also discussed the process by which the allocated \$250K will be spent on short-term goals, including fuel reduction projects this season and long-term projects (fire management plan). Staff shared with them that an inmate crew had been scheduled to begin work on thinning the eucalyptus grove located within GRRP, in consultation and direction with Cal Fire.
- C.** On August 9, 2021, an inmate crew from Gabilan Conservation Camp began thinning the eucalyptus grove at Garland Ranch Regional Park. In consultation and cooperation with members of MPRPD's Rangers, the inmate crew moved quickly to remove sapling eucalyptus trees smaller than 6" in diameter, and low-hanging branches that were within reach of powered pole saws. Quite a bit of work was completed on the first day. Unfortunately, MPRPD was notified on the morning of the second scheduled day that the crew's captain had tested positive for Covid-19 and the crew would not be returning due to possible exposure. The camp remains on lockdown until further notice.

MPRPD will continue to seek assistance from the Gabilan Conservation Camp, in alignment with pandemic-related parameters, to continue advancement of this project. In the meantime, the MPRPD is exploring grant funding opportunities with the assistance from RGS Consultants and its partners at Cal Fire and Monterey County Regional Fire. These grant funds, if awarded to MPRPD, may help advance the District's short-term and long-term fuel load and fire management goals.



Gabilan Conservation Camp thinning eucalyptus grove at GRRP

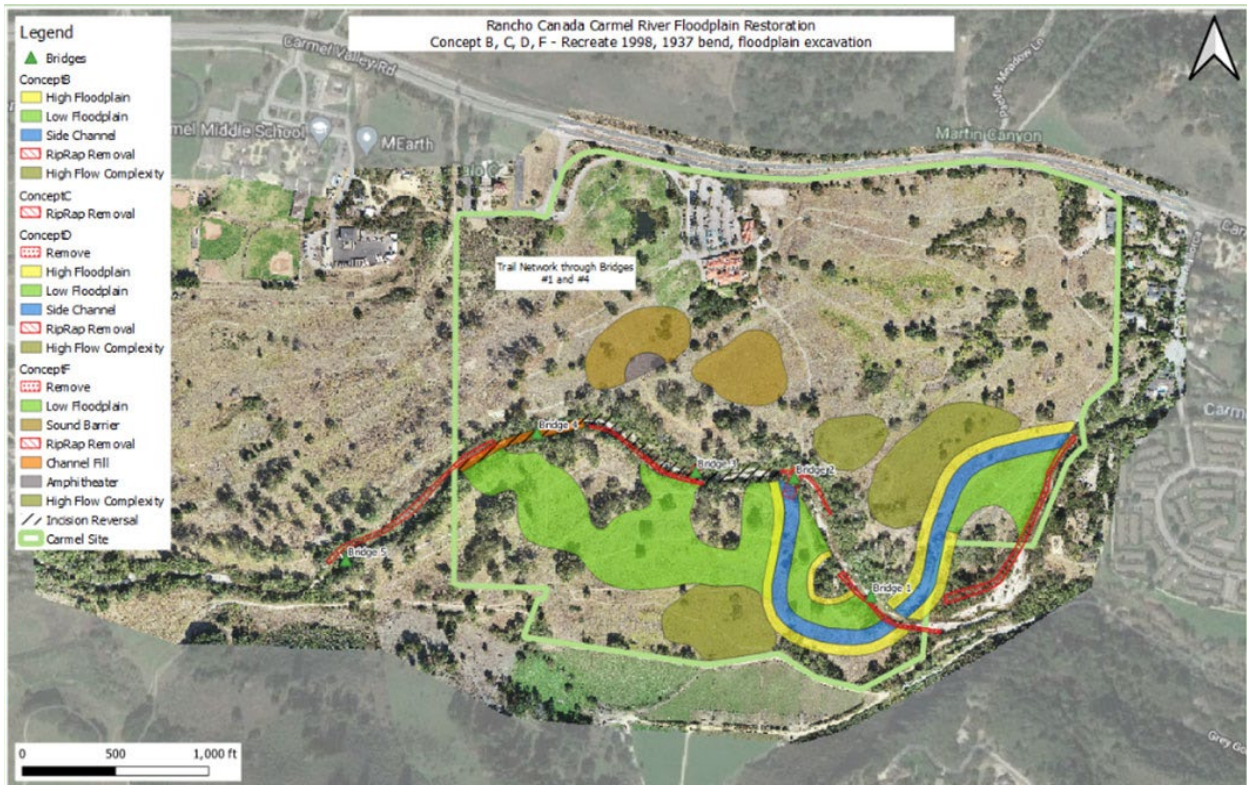
- 4. Laguna Grande Park Site Walk:** On August 14th, Ops staff participated in a Site Walk of the Laguna Grande in coordination with BFS Landscape Architects, the cities of Monterey and Seaside, and the Laguna Grande Joint Power Authority's (JPA) representatives. Director Raskoff, the District's representative on the JPA, also attended.

The purpose of this meeting was to “seek public input on the maintenance of trails and vegetation at Laguna Grande Park”. Neighboring homeowners in attendance voiced their concerns about the ongoing homeless encampments within the park. BFS staff explained the planning process being undertaken, which includes permitting and environmental analysis, to which MPRPD contributed \$60K.



BFS leading discussion at Laguna Grande Park Site Walk

5. Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration: The Technical Advisory Committee met on August 18th to discuss the conceptual design for the Rancho Canada Floodplain Restoration project. McBain Associates - the project's prime consultant, provided a presentation that outlined six various alternatives and the pros/cons of each. Each stakeholder was asked to provide their comments by September 1st. Comments, concerns, and recommendations to these six alternatives will narrow the selection to two preferred concepts or combinations of concepts. MPRPD's Board will be provided high-quality maps detailing the two preferred concepts for its review and direction at a future meeting.



EXAMPLE: One alternative – Combine concepts B, C, D, and F