



San Mateo County Parks Foundation

inspiring people to care for,
learn about and enjoy our parks

Summer/Fall 2017

The Trail Ahead: Appreciating what it Takes to Care for our Parks

By Michele Beasley

Prepping for a good hike means packing the right gear, dressing in layers, wearing sturdy shoes and bringing lots of water, some food, a map and a hat. When I am prepared, my senses awaken fully to the sights, sounds and scents around me.

I no longer take for granted the fact that the trail is clear. While I may not see another person on the trail, I feel safe. The path has been laid out before me, trail junctions marked by signs and trailheads stocked with fresh maps. I know to watch out for poison oak, ticks and mountain lions. Being aware and prepared is key to an enjoyable outing in one of our San Mateo County parks.

Behind the scenes, there are a lot of people who work hard to make sure that our park outings are memorable, safe experiences. The Herculean task of maintaining 190 miles of trails and nearly 17,000 acres of parklands has been on my mind a lot since our years-long drought was alleviated by this past winter's storms.

"I was leading a hike when another hiker came along and told us there was a tree down on the trail further up ahead. By the time our group hike was done and I went to report it, I learned that the rangers had already come and cleared the tree!"

— **Kathy Korbholz, Friends of Edgewood**

Those storms brought a deluge of rain and a lot of damage to our parks. In a normal year, park rangers work hard to prep the trails for winter storms, but when the extraordinary happens, the work multiplies and takes longer to tackle.



Erosion on trail at Pillar Point bluff.

Matthew Del Carlo

Prepping the parks for winter

Each fall, in preparation for winter, park rangers engage in a series of activities to make sure the parks are safe and ready for visitors: inspecting culverts and

fences, assessing trails for potential erosion and keeping tabs on unhealthy or dying trees. They build retaining walls, remove debris and install water diversion features on the trails.

Oftentimes, this work is done in partnership with volunteers and other groups

who provide the extra hands needed to tackle big projects. Park rangers will work with crews from the California Department of Corrections to remove dead trees and hazardous branches near trails and picnic areas. Volunteer groups like the San Mateo County Horsemen's Association have worked alongside park rangers to add rock on trails and install steel and pressure-treated wood retaining walls where needed. And the summer conservation crews, made up of high-school youth, have helped repair fencing along a trail to keep visitors off a dangerous cliff at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve.

Not only do the rangers spend hours on the trails looking for culvert failures and hazardous trees, they also make sure their equipment, from trucks to chainsaws, is in working order in case of emergencies.

Continued on page 6

Come visit us

Come find us at the Captain's House in Coyote Point.

San Mateo County Parks Foundation

**1701 Coyote Point Drive,
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San Mateo County Parks

Coyote Point Recreation Area

Crystal Springs Trails
San Andreas Trail
Sawyer Camp Trail

Edgewood Park & Preserve

Devil's Slide Trail

Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
Pillar Point Bluffs
Pillar Point Marsh

Flood Park

Friendship Park

Junipero Serra Park

Huddart Park

Memorial Park
Pescadero Creek Park
Sam McDonald Park
Heritage Grove

Mirada Surf

Moss Beach Park

San Bruno Mountain Park

Sanchez Adobe

San Pedro Valley Park

Quarry Park

Woodside Store

Wunderlich Park

Contact information

**San Mateo County
Parks Foundation**

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www.supportparks.org



Take a Walk on the Wild (flower) Side

By Susan Eliot Briggs, Board Member

Even though last winter's storms brought a lot of damage to the parks, there is much to celebrate. One of the many benefits of all of the rain we experienced last winter was the amazing wildflower show that followed in spring. There were all sorts of articles about places you could travel to in order to see the most spectacular flowers, but lucky for us we didn't need to go far — just three minutes off the 280 Freeway at Edgewood Road in Redwood City, to be exact.



Susan Eliot Briggs

As in years past, the Friends of Edgewood hosted free wildflower walks on the weekends from March - June. These walks are a great way to learn more about the plants in the park from knowledgeable docents. However, if like me, you couldn't quite make it to the park for an organized walk, you could still enjoy the flowers on your own.

I took advantage of a rare day off in April to hit the trail early and was rewarded with a beautiful display. The first flower to greet me on the path was the purple Ookow.



Purple Ookow

Other flowers I saw on my walk included:



Sticky Monkey Flower



Bindweed



Crimson Columbine



Yarrow



Lupine

If you would like to learn more about the plants and wildlife at Edgewood Park, please visit the Bill & Jean Lane Education Center which is open on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

This summer we had some fun!

First of all, we kicked off our new park mixer, Coyote Nights. REI Co-op was our event partner on Coyote Nights. They set the scene with hammocks, camp chairs, fire pits, s'mores and more! We also had music, beer, watermelon and 'trailheads' of activities and information. Some people arrived by bike, others brought picnic dinners. What a wonderful way to enjoy the park and meet new people!

We also co-sponsored the first ever Coyote Point Kite Festival, which brought the Berkeley Kite Wranglers to our beautiful park on the bay for some air and wind magic! It was wonderful to see so many people either bring their own kites or design one of our donated kites to fly in the park! Both events will be back next summer.

Coyote Nights with REI Co-op



Susan Eliot Briggs

Coyote Point Kite Festival



Justin Knowles



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The Trail Ahead

(Continued from page 1)

This past winter's storms wreaked havoc

Powerful storms this past winter brought intense wind, flooding and buckets of rain to Northern California. It ranks as the second wettest winter in California in 122 years of record-keeping. Our San Mateo County Parks were not spared. It is admirable how quickly park staff got to work clearing trails throughout the park system.

Challenges in the parks included everything from eroding bluffs at Mirada Surf and Pillar Point, to flooding at Coyote Point and Memorial Park; rockslides at Devil's Slide to mudslides at Wunderlich and fallen trees at Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve. Yet time and again, park staff and volunteers were fast on the job to address problems. However, mitigating shoreline erosion and rerouting trails takes time and careful consideration.



Weakened by drought, many trees fell during last winter's storms.

On the coast, sometimes the best policy is to do a managed retreat, let nature do its thing and ensure that visitors are safe and aware of erosion. Visitors should always use caution when walking on or below the bluffs. In Wunderlich Park, a section of the Alambique Trail was wiped out by a mudslide and remains completely impassable. The area lies at the Bear Gulch Trail intersection and restricts hiker and equestrian access to Skyline Boulevard. Rangers have scoped out an alternate route and hope to open it by early October.



Alambique Trail in Wunderlich Park was washed away by a mudslide.

Gratitude for a comfortable hike

Despite the challenging winter, San Mateo County's parks and trails are safe and, for the most part, accessible thanks to the behind-the-scenes work of our parks department. Just as I prepare myself for my jaunt with the right gear, park staff and volunteers are working diligently to prepare the parks for you and me, so we can focus on looking for wildflowers or listening for birds, or simply letting our minds wander in peace. I, for one, am grateful for this experience.

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation is raising money to repair trails in need of extra help. Please join us in supporting this effort.

Quarry Park Master Plan

The San Mateo County Parks Department is developing a master plan for Quarry Park, as well as Mirada Surf East and West, that will help guide park improvements over the next 20 years. These parks are located in the town of El Granada and are linked by a trail. Quarry Park is a 517-acre community park that once supplied the rock that built Highway 1 and the Half Moon Bay Airport. Mirada Surf West is a scenic coastal bluff that includes a section of the popular California Coastal Trail.

A second community meeting on the master plan was held in July. People discussed park needs such as trails for mountain bikes and off-leash dog areas. Breakout groups discussed:

- Their desire to see clearly defined trails with multiple points of access to the park
- Meeting the park needs of 6-18 year olds
- To fence or not to fence: Should there be an enclosed dog park?
- A pump track, which is a type of off-road terrain for bikes and very important to the community
- Other park uses like pull up bars, bocce ball courts and pickle ball

The final community meeting will take place on Tuesday, October 3 at 7pm at El Granada Elementary School at 400 Santiago Street in Half Moon Bay.

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New viewing platform at Sequoia Flat crossing in Memorial Park

Last year, we wrote about the elimination of the last two barriers to fish passage along Pescadero Creek in Memorial Park. Those barriers, a swim dam and vehicle ford, were removed. The natural creek bed was restored where the dam had been and the vehicle ford was

replaced with v-notched weirs and pre-cast arched culverts. This allows freer passage for fish at a wider range of water levels, especially for juveniles during low flows.

The finishing touches for this project were completed in May. Final project

improvements include a removable railing, three interpretive panels and a new bench at the Sequoia Flat crossing. This crossing is heavily used by campers in the park and the new features provide a good opportunity for them to see the creek and the new fish passage.



Thank you for the generous gifts you gave last spring!

As a result of your generosity, we are able to fund the following programs and projects:

- The installation of new trail signs in all coastal county parks from San Pedro Valley to Mirada Surf and Quarry Park.
- Continued efforts to re-establish the federally-listed Bay checkerspot butterfly to Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve.
- Rerouting a section of the Alambique Trail in Wunderlich Park that was washed away by a mudslide during last winter's storms.
- Offering low-income, public transportation-dependent communities the opportunity to access two of our stunning parks through the County Park Shuttle.
- Covering the transportation costs for low-income schools and after school programs that want to take their kids on field trips, but lack the funding to do so.

In addition, we supported the Volunteer Program, Bicycle Sunday and the Summer Conservation Crews.

All of this was made possible through the generous support of our donors. Thank you for helping us steward our parks and open spaces! (For more information about this gift, visit our website at www.supportparks.org/news/)



San Mateo County Parks Foundation

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For more information, please contact Michele Beasley, Executive Director, at Michele@SupportParks.org or (650) 321-5812.

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The San Mateo County Parks Foundation is committed to providing funding to improve the quality of County Parks for our community.

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