The Year in Review
2019-2020

A report to our community showcasing our work to support San Mateo County Parks by funding projects, people, and programs

“Right from the beginning of the pandemic, the Parks Foundation uplifted spirits and gave people hope by emphasizing everyone’s deep connections with nature through our County parks.”

– Lennie Roberts, San Mateo County Legislative Advocate, Green Foothills

Photo by Justin Knowles
To Our Extended Parks Family,

Thank goodness for parks! They have been life savers this year. And thank goodness for you! You have shown the parks love when they need it most. We know that parks are an essential part of a healthy community. After this year, I think many more people would agree.

One year ago, we welcomed Nicholas Calderon to his new role as San Mateo County Parks Director. Since then, the Parks Department has dealt with a pandemic, wildfire and record numbers of visitors. Through it all, my gratitude has grown – for parks, for those who care for them and for you, our park supporters.

San Mateo County Parks didn’t come about by accident. We are able to enjoy these parks today because people just like you have envisioned and supported this park system for more than one hundred years. That vision was invaluable this year! Parks are a treasure we should never take for granted. They are in our hands now. It is our responsibility to care for them so that for generations to come, they can be enjoyed.

People don’t just want to go to parks, people need to go to parks for peace of mind and exercise, for safe socializing and fresh air. The global pandemic lays bare how important park access is to communities, and how inequitable that access is. Parks saw some of their highest usage ever this year, while at the same time, the call to enjoy only nearby nature meant some communities saw their access cut off. Increasing access has positive ripple effects throughout a community and on the parks themselves.

In addition to supporting a healthy mind and body, parks and open space are a cushion against the impacts of a changing climate. They help clean the air we breathe and the water we drink. Redwood forests remove and store more carbon from the atmosphere per acre than any other forests on the planet. We can return the favor by helping the land recover quickly from wildfire, floods and drought.

Setting aside parkland is one very important element; stewarding that land for the benefit of healthy people, healthy communities and future generations is another. **The parks need our continued investment.**

We at the San Mateo County Parks Foundation have learned a lot over this past year, and we will continue to listen and learn. One thing is for certain - the parks are our shared legacy. With them in our hands now, how will we respond to this moment in time?

Michele Beasley, Executive Director
and the Board of the San Mateo County Parks Foundation
Your gifts support projects throughout the County

This year’s project highlights:

California native landscaping has been added to Sanchez Adobe, nicely complementing the newly completed ADA-compliant pathways.

Doctors at San Mateo County Health are prescribing time in nature to patients at risk of obesity and diabetes. These prescriptions double as a San Mateo County Parks parking pass and address one barrier to park visitation: parking fees. These passes can be used at any County Park that charges a $6 parking fee, like San Pedro Valley.

Tools for volunteers always come in handy. A large group used weed wrenches to remove an entire forest of invasive French broom in Huddart Park. Over 3,000 plants were pulled in just an hour and a half!

The Foundation hosted a “walk and bird” event at Pillar Point Bluff and Marsh with Sequoia Audubon's Malia and Chris where we spotted many waterfowl and shorebirds as well as this northern harrier.
Bike fix-it stations have been installed throughout the San Mateo County Parks system, including at San Bruno Mountain, to aid you should you face a bicycle fix-it emergency.

As one of several underwriters on OpenRoad with Doug McConnell, the Parks Foundation helped produce a segment that profiled the Crystal Springs Regional Trail and its history, the reservoir's function and the surrounding watershed.

The Parks Foundation provides grants to volunteer groups and for park ranger projects, like rebuilding the Lawler Ranch Bridge, a key equestrian connection east of Wunderlich Park.

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Photo by Rob Cala

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A second round of Foundation-funded improvements is going in at Memorial Park; this time at campsites, which will have new redwood picnic tables and barbeque grills in time for the 2021 season.

Providing bus transportation that connects children to parks for a lesson in nature is one of our favorite things to fund and we can’t wait for it to return. Just one park visit, like this one to Edgewood Preserve, is all it takes to capture and hold a child’s imagination.

Guests were wowed by Kenny Elvin, master falconer, at our final Coyote Nights of summer 2019. Kenny brought his falcons, owls and kookaburras to laugh at and entertain guests. We look forward to seeing this event return to Coyote Point.

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The Parks Foundation has provided incredible support for the Interpretive Program by funding a bilingual interpretive intern and partnering with County Parks on events. The Parks Foundation has also helped raise the profile of the Department with a great TV spot on OpenRoad with Doug McConnell. We are grateful!”

– Katherine Wright, Park Ranger III

“During COVID-19, San Mateo County Parks are more important than ever for our family. They offer a safe refuge for us to get outside, climb trees, and explore close to home. The parks also provide a bulwark against wildfires. We believe supporting our parks is more important than ever!”

– Justin Knowles, SMCPF Board Member & Parks Volunteer

Looking to the future

The Parks Foundation continues to make improvements at Memorial Park in advance of its centennial in 2024 and is eager to support efforts around overall forest health of the Pescadero Creek Park Complex.

The Flood Park Landscape Plan cleared another hurdle this fall after San Mateo County Parks made improvements based on community feedback. We are happy to see this project move closer to implementation, which will bring much needed playing fields and other amenities to south San Mateo County.

We are committed to supporting San Mateo County Parks in their efforts to make the parks more inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible. This work has begun, but there is much more to do. Join Us!