

Volunteer News

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Quarterly Update

of

All District Volunteer Programs

Volunteer Efforts Increase at El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve

The construction and use of illegal trails at El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space (ECdM) Preserve continues to be a problem. While the District has been unable to locate and contact the individuals responsible for secretly constructing (and re-constructing) these trails, Skyline area rangers have cited several people for using them. For several years, these rangers, maintenance staff, volunteers, and members of the California Conservation Corps (CCC) have monitored this situation and poured tons of time and effort into removing the trails and restoring the impacted areas.

Locating and restoring these damaged areas are two keys to controlling streambed sedimentation and protecting critical downstream steelhead trout and coho salmon habitat. Steelhead are federally listed as a threatened species, and coho salmon are listed by state and federal agencies as endangered on California's Central Coast.

And the process is not limited to searching for new illegal trail sections. Previously restored sections must also be checked as these individuals will sometimes destroy the restoration work that has been done by re-opening that trail section.

After the illegal, undesignated trails have been located, staff installs 'Area Closed' signs and works with CCC

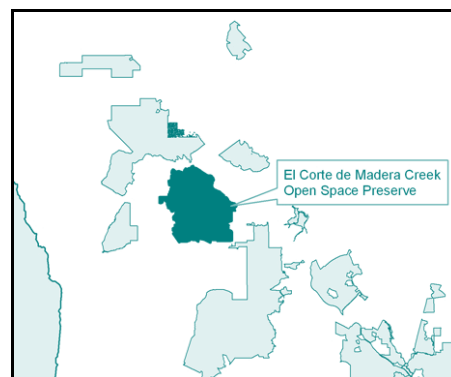
members to restore the area by re-establishing the grade and covering the site with dead brush, limbs, and leaves. This is difficult work and especially frustrating when it involves restoring the same site multiple times.

The areas are then patrolled for signs of further illegal use. It is important to note that **ECdM visitors are required to stay on designated trails — all off trail use is a misdemeanor.**

It is unfortunate that so much time and effort must be spent on this issue, which has also occurred at other preserves such as Purisima Creek Redwoods and Fremont Older.

The *search and restore* efforts are not only costly, they also impact the time that can be spent performing normal day-to-day preserve maintenance, as well as responsibilities involved with the ECdM Watershed Protection Plan (WPP).

To help ensure the success of the WPP, volunteers from Responsible Organized Mountain Pedalers (ROMP), REI, and the District's Preserve Partners program have been busily helping staff brush, realign, and construct new sections of trail. They have also assisted in removing invasive, non-native vegetation and planting various native shrubs. For more information regarding this important project, please visit www.openspace.org.



Northern District Boundary & Area Preserves

Meanwhile, District Trail Patrol Volunteers are now working side-by-side with Skyline rangers patrolling and monitoring the illegal trails situation. Later this year, these efforts will increase with the introduction of ECdM *group* patrol days. The goal is to flood the preserve with 15-20 trail patrol members and staff, and provide information to visitors regarding illegal trails, the WPP, and other important issues.

In an effort to recruit more help, staff recently explained these problems at a volunteer training session. The majority of the group was not aware of this situation, reinforcing the theory that education and awareness are key to stopping this illegal activity (one reason behind featuring this article).

The District Volunteer Program is dedicated to working with staff in stopping the construction and use of these illegal, undesignated trails. Please direct any comments or suggestions regarding this issue to:

Paul McKowan, Volunteer Coordinator
650.691.1200 volunteer@openspace.org



GPS to Geo

When Technology Meets the Outdoors

Have you ever been out at a preserve and observed somebody

looking around intently as though they might have lost, or are in search of something? Maybe they were looking in the branch of a tree or behind a rock.

You may have been witness to a geocacher in action! No need to be alarmed, geocaching is a recreational adventure game wherein a registered member hides a cache and posts the location coordinates online for others to find using a Global Positioning System (GPS) Unit.

Caches typically consist of a container, ranging in size from a film canister to an appropriately labeled Tupperware, a logbook, and if space permits, small

items for amusement or trading. As the folks at www.geocaching.com tell it, it's "the sport where *you* are the search engine."

Geocaching, "geo" for geology and "caching" for the act of hiding a cache, originated in Oregon in 2000 and was made possible in part as a result of the U.S. Government's decision to remove "Selective Availability" from GPS signals available to the public. This act made it possible for the average citizen to pinpoint his or her location (or the location of an old Tupperware container) anywhere in the world within a few yards.

A game was born out of this and starting with 75 caches logged in its first year, the numbers have grown tremendously to

over 420,000 caches in 222 different countries.

Several hundred caches already registered with geocaching.com and placed on District lands were recently recognized and approved by the District and on June 15 of this year, the General Manager signed the District's "Geocaching Guidelines" as written by the Operations Department and approved by the Board of Directors.

Geocaching can be done on foot, on bike, and even by car and is an excellent way to get today's technology-driven kids (and adults) outdoors. Geocachers are typically very respectful of the environment as demonstrated by the "cache in, trash out" program and are careful to obey any regulations placed on them by land agencies in order for the activity to be allowed.

Please read the District's Geocaching Guidelines before you begin geocaching. **Visitors are responsible for knowing and obeying these Guidelines to help ensure a safe, enjoyable visit.**

Members of the group "Geocachers of the Bay Area" will work together with an assigned staff member from the District's Public Affairs Department to ensure that Geocaching activities taking place on District lands are done so within the established Guidelines. For more information about geocaching, variations on the game, history, advice on purchasing a GPS unit, or to register a free account, visit:

www.geocaching.com

For information regarding geocaching specific to the Bay Area, visit:

www.thebga.net

The District's Geocaching Guidelines can be read online at:

http://www.openspace.org/activities/geocaching_guidelines.asp

Outdoor Service Projects - Fall 2007

September

09/08/07	9:30 - 2:30	Rancho San Antonio	Trail Work
09/22/07	9:30 - 2:30	Thornewood	Habitat Restoration
09/27/07	9:30 - 2:30	St. Joseph's Hill	Seed Collection

October

10/06/07	9:30 - 2:30	El Corte de Madera	Trail Work
10/13/07	9:30 - 2:30	South Skyline Area	Fence Construction
10/16/07	9:30 - 2:30	El Corte de Madera	Planting
10/20/07	9:30 - 2:30	Skyline Ridge	Resource Mgmt
10/25/07	9:30 - 2:30	El Corte de Madera	Planting
10/27/07	9:30 - 2:30	South Skyline Area	Fence Construction
10/27/07	10:00 - 2:30	Pulgas Ridge	Resource Mgmt

November

11/03/07	9:30 - 1:30	South Skyline Area	Fence Construction
11/17/07	9:30 - 2:30	El Corte de Madera	Planting

December

12/01/07	9:30 - 2:30	Foothills Area	Resource Mgmt
12/08/07	9:30 - 2:30	Purissima Creek	Habitat Restoration

To sign up or receive more information, contact:

Paul McKowan, Volunteer Programs Coordinator
(650) 691-1200 volunteer@openspace.org

Welcome Teresa Gibson

New Public Affairs Administrative Assistant

Teresa Gibson is pleased to join the Public Affairs Department as its Administrative Assistant. For the previous five months she worked at the Skyline Field Office as a Seasonal Open Space Technician where she gained great appreciation for the beautiful preserves. She has comprehensive administrative skills as well as environmental experience. As a docent for the Sempervirens Fund and resident of the Santa Cruz mountains, she has acquired much knowledge of the local ecology.

Teresa is passionate about trees. At Our City Forest in San Jose, she worked as a Project Coordinator for urban tree planting projects. She has extensive experience working with volunteers from these projects as well as from her time as a Lead Volunteer at TreePeople and from facilitating educational tree planting workshops for Trees for a Green L.A.

Los Angeles was her home until 2003, when she happily became a Bay Area resident. Her pastimes include hiking, camping, backpacking, and gardening. She also enjoys swing dancing, singing, yoga and metaphysics, and is a holistic healing arts practitioner.

Cross-Pollination Amongst the Programs



You're a docent who overheard a volunteer talking about the feeling of accomplishment after helping to remove an invasive grass from an area. You're a volunteer from the Trail Patrol Program who's been by the David C. Daniels Nature Center and looked around with envy as a Nature Center Host shared the District's mascot snake "Snickers" with a curious child (*in a shaded building!*). Congratulations! You are volunteering at an agency that affords you the opportunity to contribute in many different ways. The District Volunteer Program, consisting of the docent program, under the leadership of Renée Fitzsimons, and the volunteer program, under the leadership of Paul McKowan, has a total of 9 sub-categories with a 10th in process. They are, in no particular order, Outdoor Activity Docents, Outdoor Education Leaders, Nature Center Hosts, Community Outreach Volunteers, Trail Patrol Volunteers, Preserve Partners, Crew Leaders, Special Project Field & Office Volunteers, Conservation Easement Monitors, and the soon to be launched ARMS (Advanced Resource Management Stewards). We encourage all volunteers to give 'cross-pollinating' a try!



Top 5 reasons to 'cross-pollinate' into another program!

1. Increase your awareness of what other programs are doing.
2. Feel more at ease when talking about the District as a whole.
3. Allows for more flexibility in scheduling your time.
4. You'll provide a fresh eye *and* experience for program ideas.
5. You will benefit by expanding your experience and knowledge all while meeting a new set of networking friends!

PICCHETTI RANCH – Perspectives

When was the last time you stepped through a portal in time? With just a bit of local travel you can discover a site that will connect you to the past as it is preparing for the future. Maybe you have never been to Picchetti Ranch Preserve or perhaps have stayed away too long – recent changes at the Preserve make now the perfect time to visit.

The District acquired Picchetti Ranch in 1976 from the Picchetti family who settled there in about 1880 and built the winery and surrounding ranch buildings. The winery is one of eight surviving historic structures and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2006, work was completed on the historic Picchetti Winery building to comply with new seismic ordinances adopted by Santa Clara County. The District received a \$50,000 grant from the California Heritage Fund Grant Program and a \$66,000 grant from the Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission to implement improvements to the winery building, which were also made to the winery

entrances and paths around the building to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.



Following the seismic retrofit work, District Planning staff envisioned an opportunity to share Picchetti Ranch's history with visitors by developing and installing interpretive signs to bring to life the Picchetti story. Four signs were ultimately erected – featuring a perspective of the entire site, the winery and stable area, the homestead house, and the main house. The signs add to visitors' enjoyment of the winery and provide a link to the past that can be shared forward.

Picchetti Ranch is located in the Cupertino foothills. If you would like to visit the Preserve and winery, exit Foothill Expressway from Highway 280, travel 3.5 miles southwest (toward the mountains) on Foothill Boulevard/Stevens Canyon Road. Turn right on Montebello Road. The Preserve is 0.5 miles up Montebello Road on the left.

Master Plan Open Houses Scheduled for Fall

La Honda Creek & Sierra Azul / Bear Creek Redwoods



Later this year, the District will host Open House Meetings for the La Honda Creek and Sierra Azul / Bear Creek Redwoods Master Plan projects. These meetings will provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions prior to the Public Hearings. Specific dates, times, and locations will be determined by early September. We value your input and hope to see you at these important meetings!



For more information regarding these Master Plans, please visit - www.openspace.org