

PUBLIC MEETING ON THE CHORRO CREEK ECOLOGICAL RESERVE RESTORATION

A public information meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 14th from 7-9 pm at the Morro Bay Community Center (1001 Kennedy Way in Morro Bay) to discuss the floodplain and riparian restoration project along the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve.

The 580-acre Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve, also known as Hollister Peak Ranch, was acquired by the California Dept. of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the fall of 2003. Development of a restoration plan began in February 2005, and is a collaborative effort between the CDFG, Coastal Conservancy, and the MBNEP.

The primary intent of the site restoration project is stream bank erosion control, sediment capture, and riparian habitat improvements. The conceptual design process for the site is currently underway via contract with Phillip Williams & Associates.

The September meeting will be the first in a series of three public information meetings held during the

planning and conceptual design process for this important restoration project. The agenda includes background information on the project site, analysis of the existing physical and biological conditions, and a discussion of the goals and objectives for the long-term project. A wealth of technical information will be presented that evening including: topographic maps and surveys; geomorphology and sediment transport; hydrology and hydraulics assessment; and vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, and cultural resources.

The public is invited to this meeting as an opportunity to learn about the site and also to provide input into the future of the reserve.

Additional meeting dates will be set to cover other topics including analysis of project alternatives, and development of the final plan and environmental documentation.

Please check our website (www.mbnep.org) for any changes or updates regarding this meeting.



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GRANT AWARDED FOR LOWER WALTERS CREEK RESTORATION PROJECT

The largest threat to the Morro Bay estuary is excessive sediment deposition in the bay. In the last 100 years, one-third of the bay's volume has been lost to sedimentation. As part of our community's efforts to preserve the estuary, the Morro Bay Conservation Plan (CCMP) recommends restoration of floodplain and riparian habitat to reduce sediments and other pollutants from entering the bay via Chorro and Los Osos Creeks.

Thanks to the award of a \$310,000 grant from the California Dept. of Fish and Game (CDFG), new riparian restoration work will soon be underway in lower Walters Creek. Walters Creek is a tributary to Chorro

Creek that currently provides limited riparian habitat and contains numerous erosion sites which are contributing sediment load to the stream and bay. During the 1940's, alterations were made in the lower Walters Creek watershed to create a military shooting range. Landscape alterations included the construction of multiple berms, creation of five roads that cross the stream, and other various grading activities. Additionally, at some point in the past, 2000 feet of riparian vegetation was removed along lower Walters Creek.

With goals to reverse habitat damage and reduce erosion, significant work will soon be underway. The
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KIDS' BEACH CLEAN UP EVENT REACHES OUT TO CENTRAL VALLEY YOUTH

As part of a statewide effort to educate and excite Central Valley youth about marine resources, over 150 students were bused from the Central Valley to the coast on May 13th. The annual Kids' Beach Clean up included second and third grade students from Strathmore and Seville, small towns in Tulare County. For many of the students this was their first trip to the seashore.

As part of the project, MBNEP staff member, Cheryl Lesinski, traveled to Tulare County and provided each of the participating classes with a pre-event presentation. The students experimented with a watershed model to discover how rain water travels to the ocean and built water cycle bracelets to take home and share with family members.

On the beach clean up day, over a dozen local volunteers helped make the event a success. Volunteers directed each class out on the beach and answered students' endless questions about the sand, shells, seaweed and other new coastal encounters. Approximately half of the volunteers were Cuesta College marine biology students.

This annual outreach effort is funded by the California Coastal Commission's Whale Tail License Plate Program which distributes funds from sales of the special Whale Tail License Plates. The grants support programs that teach California's children and the general public to value and take action to improve the

health of the state's marine and coastal resources. For more information regarding how to purchase a Whale Tail License Plate, visit www.coast4u.org. The MBNEP would like to thank the participating schools, event volunteers and SLO County Parks for use of their facilities.



Above, Kids' Beach Clean Up enthusiasts created a 100-foot long message to all California residents to "PROTECT" our coastal areas and oceans. Below, students and teachers from Strathmore Elementary wave to the helicopter pilot and Thom Ream, our aerial art photographer.



MBNEP PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION

SWAP is a non-profit volunteer organization founded in 1971 by Emily Polk, Ansel Adams, Margaret Owings and Edgar Wayburn. Its goal is to provide a mechanism for preserving unique undeveloped natural areas, often in urban regions, that would otherwise be lost to development. SWAP chapters throughout California have facilitated the acquisition and transfer of thousands of acres of land to state and county parks departments.

In the Morro Bay watershed Emily Polk of SWAP led the effort to save the Los Osos State Reserve that was purchased by California State Parks in 1971. The Estero Chapter of SWAP (forerunner of the current Los Osos/Morro Bay chapter) also facilitated saving the Baptista Ranch on Turri Road and the Griffith property across Los Osos creek from the Baptista Ranch. In 1985 neighbors of the Elfin Forest formed the Los Osos/Morro Bay chapter of SWAP in a continuing effort to save the Forest. In 1987 State Parks was able to purchase the northern 50 acres of the Forest and in 1994 SLO County acquired the remaining 40 acres adjacent to Los Osos. As a condition of purchase by the County, SWAP agreed to "adopt" the El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area for ten years in exchange for sufficient funds to complete the purchase. The formal "Adopt-A-Park" agreement between SWAP and County Parks has been recently renewed for a further ten years.

The location of the Elfin Forest at the edge of the Morro Bay estuary results in a mutual interest in maintenance of the Forest by both SWAP and MBNEP. Much of the forest slopes toward the bay, and thus erosion and pollutant runoff are major concerns. The primary erosion control is to maintain a healthy native plant community to stabilize the sandy soil during seasonal heavy rains. Because of heavy use of trails in the Forest, a regular program of erosion control using flow barriers and deflectors along the trails is also necessary. Also, many visitors bring pets to the Forest, and education and use of "Mutt Mitts" to control pet droppings is encouraged.

Because the Forest has such a varied biota and a unique location it is ideal for teaching students and the general public about the coastal dune community and the importance of the estuary. Examples are field trips provided for elementary school students that are coordinated with classroom curricula. Monthly nature walks are conducted, and led by experts in plant and animals present in the Forest. The schedule of activities open to the public is announced in the media. Because preservation of the Elfin Forest is in the



Elfin Forest in Los Osos offers breath-taking views of the estuary. The boardwalk makes for easy walking and loops through the park.

interest of both SWAP and the MBNEP they will continue to work together.

For further information about SWAP visit our web site at www.elfin-forest.org, or write to SWAP, P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412.

MBNEP WELCOMES NEW VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

The MBNEP is pleased to welcome Annie Gillespie to the program as the new Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator.

As a long-time volunteer for the program, Gillespie has participated in everything from water quality monitoring to phytoplankton pulls. She is finishing her bachelors' degree in the Ecology and Systematic Biology major at Cal Poly. With additional coursework in the areas of forestry and natural resources and GIS, Gillespie brings many skills to the program. She looks forward to a busy summer monitoring season out on the watershed and the bay.



Annie Gillespie, the new Volunteer Monitoring Program Coordinator, has spend many seasons as a volunteer, and her experience includes macroinvertebrate sampling.

LATEST FROM THE MORRO BAY VOLUNTEER MONITORING PROGRAM

The VMP has had a very successful spring, conducting its ongoing monitoring throughout the watershed. The summer season is always busy and the program is seeking additional volunteers in the following areas:

Beach Debris Monitoring

The VMP is seeking volunteers to conduct a monthly debris monitoring survey at Montana de Oro. Volunteers hike a 500 meter site along the sandspit and tally the debris they find. The data helps track marine debris reaching our shores and also results in a clean beach! Each survey requires approximately two hours. Contact program staff at 805.772.3834 to learn more.

Phytoplankton Monitoring

The quarantine season has begun, which is the time of year when phytoplankton levels increase, including the toxic strains which can be harmful to marine mammals

and humans who consume contaminated shellfish. Additional volunteers are needed to expand the monitoring effort. Volunteers use a fine mesh net to filter phytoplankton from the water and then analyze the sample under a microscope. Pulls are conducted from Morro Bay and Cayucos on a monthly basis, and each one takes approximately two hours. If you are interested in joining the MBNEP's Phytoplankton Team, please contact program staff.

Stream Profiling

This monitoring gives you an opportunity to see parts of the watershed that most people don't have access to. Help monitor stream profiles using basic surveying techniques to track stream channel and bank erosion. This important data helps us to understand sedimentation in our watershed, a major threat to Morro Bay. Each site requires approximately two hours and the monitoring will begin in July.

WALTERS CREEK RESTORATION PROJECT *continued from front page*

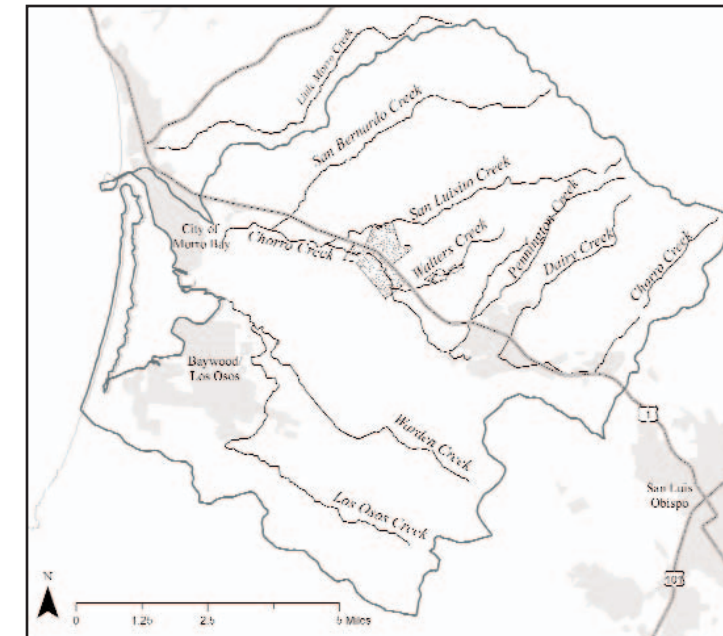
project will remove three of the failing stream crossings, and replace the other two crossings with appropriate structures. Additional work includes repairing eroding stream banks, restoring 3-5 acres of floodplain, and planting native vegetation on a half mile reach of lower Walters Creek.

The restoration work will be a collaborative effort between CDFG, MBNEP, California Conservation Corps, National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Gun Club lessees. The total project cost is \$400,000 and the work should be completed in the fall of 2006, during low-flow stream conditions.

It is worth pointing out that this substantial individual project will also create a link with current and future restoration projects in the Chorro watershed. The riparian repair work will link directly to the upper Walters Creek Grazing Management and Riparian Restoration Project on Cal Poly property that included

installation of riparian cattle fencing, stream bank stabilization, and revegetation along 3,000 feet of upper Walters Creek. Just downstream is the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve, where restoration of the historic floodplain will provide water quality and habitat benefits. The design for this project will start later this year, with implementation expected in 2006. When all of these projects are completed, a corridor of approximately 3.5 miles of improved and restored riparian habitat and approximately 45-65 acres of restored floodplain will exist.

For more information, contact Bill Hoffmann at 805.772.3834. Additional information about past projects is available in the MBNEP 2003-2004 Annual Report. You can pick up a copy at the Estuary Nature Center on the Embarcadero, download a copy from our website's publications page (www.mbnep.org), or call our office at the number above and request that a copy be mailed to you.



The restoration area for the Lower Walters Creek project is highlighted above along with adjacent projects including the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve and the Upper Walters Creek restoration project. The Morro Bay Watershed boundary is marked with black line.