



# County of Santa Cruz

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## DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, OPEN SPACE & CULTURAL SERVICES

979 17<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95062

(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

JEFF GAFFNEY  
DIRECTOR

### PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA

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Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
5:00pm – 7:00pm  
Regular Meeting

**Simpkins Family Swim Center  
Community Rooms**  
979 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

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#### Introductory Items

1. **CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

2. **AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

3. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Any person may address the Commission during its Oral Communication period. Speakers must not exceed three (3) minutes in length, or the time limit established by the Chair, and individuals may speak only once during Oral Communications. All Oral Communication must be directed to an item listed on today's Consent Agenda, Closed Session Agenda, yet to be heard on Regular Agenda, or a topic not on the agenda that is within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Commission members will not take actions or respond immediately to any Oral communication presented regarding topics not on the agenda but may choose to follow up later, either individually, or on a subsequent Commission Agenda. Oral communications will normally be received by the Commission for a period not to exceed thirty (30) minutes. If, at the end of this period, additional persons wish to address the Commission, the Oral Communication period may be continued to the last item on the agenda.

4. **ACTION ON CONSENT AGENDA** (items 9-10)

#### Regular Agenda

5. **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

6. **PARKS DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

7. **INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

- a. **County Strategic Plan Presentation** – Ryan Friedrich, Senior Admin Analyst, CEO
- b. [New Pace Trails](#) – Mike Pruitt, Park Planner II
- c. **Measure Q Grants** – Rebecca Hurley, Deputy Director

8. **ACTION ITEMS**

- a. Elect Chair and Vice-Chair for calendar year 2026.

**Consent Agenda**

Consent items include routine business that does not call for discussion. One roll call vote is taken for all items. Only a Commissioner may pull items from Consent to Regular Agenda. Members of the public must request that a Commissioner pull an item from the Consent Agenda prior to the start of the meeting.

- 9. **Approve minutes from January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026**..... page 3.
- 10. **Consider Reports:**
  - a. Aquatics Section Report..... page 5.
  - b. Arts and Cultural Services Report..... page 7.
  - c. Maintenance Section Report..... page 9.
  - d. Planning Section Report..... page 11.
  - e. Recreation Section Report..... page 17.
  - f. Reservations Section Report..... page 19.
  - g. Volunteer Section Report..... page 20.

**Written Correspondence Listing**

- I. None.

**Adjournment**

**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

5:00 PM Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Simpkins Family Swim Center Community Rooms

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs, or activities. The Simpkins Family Swim Center Community Rooms, located at 979 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA, are an accessible facility. If you are a person with a disability and wish to participate in the meeting and require special assistance in order to participate, please contact the Parks, Open Spaces, & Cultural Services Department at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting to make arrangements. Persons with disabilities may request a copy of the agenda in an alternative format.



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979 17<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95062

(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

JEFF GAFFNEY  
DIRECTOR

### MEETING MINUTES

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Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
5:00pm – 7:00pm  
Regular Meeting

**Simpkins Family Swim Center  
Community Rooms**  
979 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

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#### Introductory Items

- 1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL** Meeting called to order by Vice-Chair Sanford at 5:10 PM.  
**Present:** Nick de Sienes (District 2), Jeremy Sanford (District 3), Elizabeth Hernandez (District 4)  
**Absent/Excused:** Alexis Konevich (District 1) & Anne Less (District 5)  
**Staff:** Jeff Gaffney, Juan Perez Alvarez, Alexis Rodriguez-Rocha
- 2. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS** – No modifications.
- 3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS** – 2 members of the public.
- 4. ACTION ON CONSENT AGENDA** (item 8)  
Approved consent agenda – Motion/Second: de Sienes/Hernandez  
AYES: 3  
NOES: 0  
ABSTAIN: 0  
ABSENT: 2

#### Regular Agenda

##### **5. COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

District 1: Absent.

District 2: Commissioner de Sienes reported that he has been identifying new ways to measure the value County Parks provide by looking at the impact of nonprofits that use park facilities. Using Aptos Soccer Club as an example, he shared that the club's 10-week fall season serves approximately 425 youth and generates about 9,000 child activity hours on County fields. He noted that collecting similar data from other groups could help demonstrate the community's return on investment and reinforce the importance of maintaining park facilities.

District 3: While not a County Parks matter, Vice-Chair Sanford reported on an issue that falls within District 3 and asked for County Parks support in addressing the issue. Over the holiday break, a shooting occurred at Cotoni Coast Dairies in which no one was injured, though a bullet reportedly passed near a jogger's head, causing significant public concern. It was noted that there may be confusion about the land's designation and permitted uses (National Monument vs. BLM land), including among local agencies. The incident sparked conversation regarding the need for clearer communication and improved signage, as none is currently in place.

District 4: Commissioner Hernandez reported spending time at Valle Del Pajaro County Park and noted that access remains challenging due to flooding and deteriorating road conditions. The road is often closed, limiting access for neighbors and requiring detours to an alternate entrance. She also observed that some visitors stop to use the restrooms but do not otherwise utilize the park's amenities. She is working to raise awareness of the park and build connections and partnerships to encourage greater community use of the facilities.

District 5: Absent.

**6. PARKS DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Gaffney reported that recent storms caused only minor impacts, with a few downed trees that were promptly cleared and no property damage. Parks facilities remained busy with strong participation in events and activities. Most staff have returned from holiday leave, though some response delays may continue. The Governor's January 10 budget proposal was better than expected; while Health and Human Services may see the greatest impacts, the overall outlook is more positive for the upcoming fiscal year.

**7. ACTION ITEMS**

- a. Approved Parks & Recreation Commission 2024-25 Biennial Report with the addition of the four goals and subgoals proposed by the subcommittee – Motion/Second: Hernandez/de Sieyes  
AYES: 3  
NOES: 0  
ABSTAIN: 0  
ABSENT: 2

**Consent Agenda**

Consent items include routine business that does not call for discussion. One roll call vote is taken for all items. Only a Commissioner may pull items from Consent to Regular Agenda. Members of the public must request that a Commissioner pull an item from the Consent Agenda prior to the start of the meeting.

- 8. Approve minutes from December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025..... page 6.**

**Written Correspondence Listing**

- I. [Email from Amber Jones – Follow Up for the Half Basketball Court at Floral Park.](#)
- II. [Email from Jean Jani – December 8th meeting/discussion for proposed 38th Avenue park design.](#)
- III. [Email from Derek Draper – Next Phase for Floral Park.](#)
- IV. [Email from Jeremy Silveira – Santa Cruz County Outdoor Hockey Rink – Funding & Feasibility Inquiry.](#)

**Adjournment** Meeting adjourned at 5:51 PM.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

5:00 PM Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Simpkins Family Swim Center Community Rooms



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JEFF GAFFNEY  
DIRECTOR

(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

Date: January 30, 2026  
To: Parks and Recreation Commission  
From: Anissa Childers, Aquatic Supervisor  
Subject: Aquatic Section Report

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Although winter is typically a slower season, facility usage did not decrease. Due to the nice warm weather we have been experiencing and the large amount of programming offered, the facility has remained consistently busy throughout the winter months.

### Programming

We introduced a new seasonal program, **Camp Splashgiving**, which featured a different water sport each day. There were 44 participants in total enrolled in the program and maintained a waitlist of 10. We would have loved to fill the waitlist spots for the first session but did not have enough staff to offer more.

**Swim lessons** continued strong – group swim lessons had 157 enrolled participants, while private lessons served 52 participants through two contracted instructors, for a total of 209 swimmers receiving instruction this season.

We offered other programs such as **Noodleball**, with 22 participants enrolled, and **Winter Water Warriors Camp**, with 38 enrolled participants, providing families with continuous Winter programs for youth.

Interest in the non-competitive **Simpkins Sharks Swim Club** remained strong, with 20 new participants attending tryouts, 31 enrolled currently, and 20 more open spots which can be filled. This club has expanded to three practice days per week currently wrapping up a great Winter season which had 30 enrolled.

### Hiring and Training

We had 16 new lifeguards certified through American Red Cross Lifeguard courses, which were offered by our staff. A lifeguard certification course is scheduled for mid-February and has almost reached capacity with 8 participants currently enrolled. Additionally, all 10 lifeguard positions were filled, and we continue to receive applications for the next round of hiring. As we move into Spring, we are currently short on lifeguards, head guards and office staff, but remain hopeful that upcoming recruitment efforts will be successful.

### Facility Usage and Adult Programming

Adult Fitness programming maintained a steady level of participation, with 2,647 participants from November to the present. Water Aerobics classes also continued to perform well, serving 1,347 participants during the same period.

General facility usage remained high throughout the winter season. Warm Water usage recorded 2,821 check-ins, and Lap Swim recorded a total of 4,569 check-ins from November to the present.

### Upcoming Programming and Events

Looking ahead to spring, we will offer a variety of programs, including Junior Guard clinics, Spring Warriors, Swim lessons, Private Swim Lessons, and Simpkins Sharks.

We have our **Light Up the Night Event** coming up in March, which was a great success last year with over 200 people that attended. We plan to offer another 200 open spots for a family night which includes glow-up lights, food truck, games, music, and extended hours.



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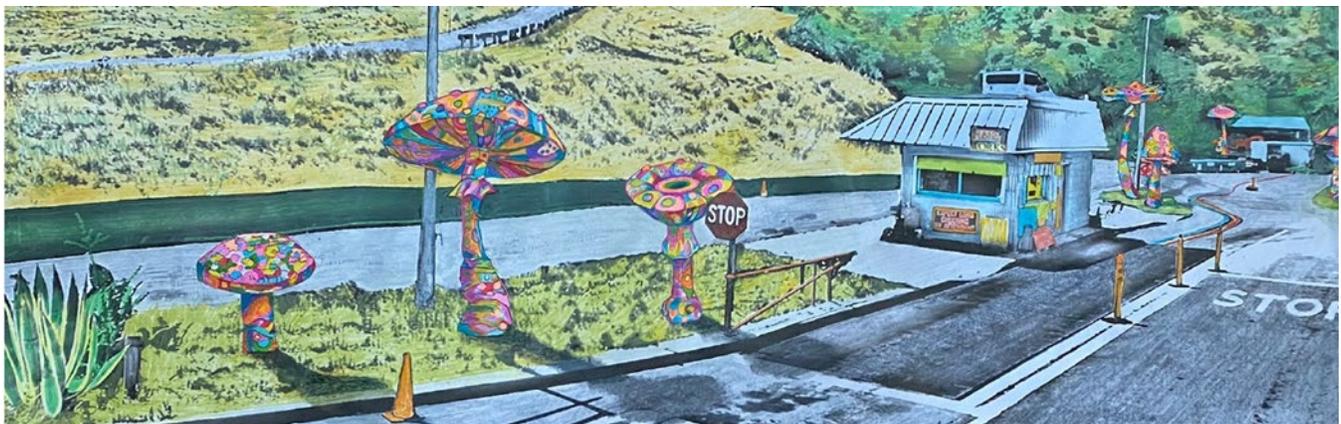
JEFF GAFFNEY  
DIRECTOR

(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

Date: February 6, 2026  
To: Parks and Recreation Commission  
From: Kathy DeWild, Arts Programs Coordinator  
Subject: Arts & Cultural Services Section Report

### Percent for Art Public Art Projects

Artist Mary Tataro continues her work on her public art project “Humongous Fungus” (pictured below). The nine mushroom-shaped sculptures of welded metal covered with steel mesh, fiberglass cloth, and resin, then overlaid with weather-resistant reclaimed materials will be installed at the **Ben Lomond Transfer Station** in spring 2027. La Neta, the public artists for the **Juvenile Hall** project, have met with the youth who live at the facility to introduce their project and how they can participate in the process. Bruce Harman’s proposal for the **Behavioral Health Bridge Housing** public art project was approved by the Board of Supervisors in December. Bruce will be fabricating the first phase (Monarchs on the guardrail fencing) in the coming weeks, for installation in late February.



The **Pace Trails** public art panel will be choosing an artist to continue in the selection process in February. The artist’s proposal will then go to the Arts Commission for their consideration and if approved, onto the Board of Supervisors for final approval. The Pace Trail Construction Project will expand the existing 4.5-mile Quail Hollow Ranch trail network by connecting to the Pace property with a half-mile Access Trail, finally opening public access to the property. The site-specific artwork will enhance the experience of Pace Trail hikers and is required to feature imagery that reflects the area’s unique habitat, plants, and animals. Upcoming public art projects include the Rail Trail Segments 10 & 11 and the Simpkins Family Swim Center waterslide.

## Art Exhibition



### **County Government Center Exhibition – 701 Ocean St., 1st & 5th floors**

Currently on display through Feb 27: Martina Goulart, Painting; Margaret Michel, Mixed Media Sculpture; Ann Baldwin May, Textiles; Jessica Woods, Painting; Kara Capaldo; Photography. Join the artists at the First Friday Event, February 6 from 5-7PM.

### **Sandra Cherk at 500 Westridge – South County Government Center**

Pastel Paintings by Sandra Cherk through May 22 in the lobby of the Santa Cruz Agricultural Commissioner/Tax Collector/County Clerk offices. Sandra is a native Californian whose art is inspired by the landscapes of her home - the forests, ocean, and open hills. The rich colors and workability of soft pastels allow Sandra to develop landscapes with her trademark softness, serenity and depth.

### **Winging It: Birds of Live Oak at the Simpkins Family Swim Center/Live Oak Library Annex**

Feb. 19-May 22 at 979 17th Ave. Soar through this exhibition of local art and history! Winging It shares artwork inspired by birdwatching in this area, as well as Live Oak history that makes it inviting for our feathered friends. Winging It: Birds of Live Oak will give visitors a chance to learn a little bit about Live Oak history in a lighthearted yet meaningful way, as well as celebrate the creatives that live in our area. Artists featured include Shmuel Thaler (photography), Enrique Lopez (woodblock), and Elijah Pfothhauer (mixed media), as well as local students' work.

## Nominations for Arts Awards



**Through the Spotlight Award**, the County Arts Commission publicly recognizes individuals who have achieved a high level of excellence and creativity in their work, but who have not received widespread acknowledgment of their talent. This annual award recognizes younger artists as well as those who are discovering their artistic voice later in life. The award is given to artists who work in the following mediums: visual art, performing arts, and literary arts.

Nominations for the 2026 Spotlight Awards are due on March 9. Visit [scparks.com](https://www.scparks.com) for more information.

Over the last 42 years, the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission has selected outstanding artists nominated by the public and has honored them through the Artist of the Year Award. The Artist of the Year award is presented for outstanding achievement in the discipline of performing, visual, and literary arts. Nominees must be a resident of Santa Cruz County and must have: a national or international reputation, contributed to the cultural enrichment of the local community, and created or presented work in Santa Cruz County.

Nominations for 2027 Artist of the Year are due on March 16. For more information about how to nominate an artist, [click here](#).



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DIRECTOR

(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

Date: February 9th, 2026  
To: Parks and Recreation Commission  
From: Jesse Williams, Parks Superintendent  
Subject: Maintenance Section Report

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### North County, Highlands and Emeline Maintenance Shops

North County Maintenance has been working to clean up the **Big Creek/Greyhound Rock Property** for future use as a coastal campground and reestablish the trail system connecting to **Greyhound Rock Coastal Access**.

Maintenance restored the flagpole at **Ben Lomond County Park** and added solar lighting. This, along with additional plantings are the latest improvements to the park. Come see it in spring, we have lots of bulbs planted! Maintenance also reestablished river access at the park, complete with a self-closing gate for child safety.

The failed walkway and retaining wall in front of the **Ben Lomond Library** were repaired. This will help with safe access to the library and the front of the park.

North County Maintenance has been working with Cal-fire at the **Miller Property** in Boulder Creek 3 days a week on a shaded fuel break along King's Creek Road.

All the decorative hawthorns along the entrance to **Highlands County Parks** have received a much-needed trim for visual safety of park goers.

Two new batting cages are being built at **Anna Jean Cummings Park** with the assistance of park maintenance staff to relocate water lines and critical infrastructure to the park.

Park Maintenance installed a completely new split rail fence and signage for the lot at **Moran Way and East Cliff**. We will be replanting the area with native trees and shrubs after we have established the grading and drainage is functioning properly.

The stairs at **Opal Cliffs Beach Access** were revamped with extra material along the railings for added safety.

### Mid County, Simpkins and Felt Street Maintenance Shop

Mid County Maintenance prepared the front planter area at the **Felt Street Office** for new landscaping. We will be partnering with County Park Friends on this project. Staff are continuing to set up the maintenance shop area at the Felt Street Offices where Mid County Maintenance Operations work out of.

There is an upcoming maintenance day at **Simpkins Family Swim Center** for some much-needed cleaning and repairs. This will be an all-crew day with most of our maintenance staff so that we can take advantage of a rare day when the pool is closed. There has been a lot of work on the pool pump room at the swim center and we are currently repairing the boilers that heat the pool.

Staff are removing the rubber matting from bridge at **Jose Avenue County Park**, that had started to delaminate and was a potential tripping hazard, the bridge will be assessed and repaired as needed.

The Mid-County Maintenance Team also continues to do lots of routine winter maintenance, clearing leaves, tree work, mowing, etc.

### **South County, Pinto Lake and Aptos Polo Grounds Maintenance Shops**

South County Maintenance installed a DG path at the **Freedom Annex** for county staff to walk from their parking areas to the offices.

At **Pinto Lake County Park** staff restored the Lady of Guadalupe (Virgen Mary) area. The area had become overrun with litter and had expanded into the surrounding Oak woodland habitat. Staff cleaned the area and spread 100 yards of wood chips to help restore the surrounding hillside and banks of the lake. Our South County Maintenance Supervisor and Lead worker are working to replace a deteriorated drainpipe at the park.

Our staff repaired fencing at **Aldridge Lane County Park** that was broken by tree branches in one of our winter storms.

Tree work has kept the team busy in the winter. They recently pruned Sycamore branches on communication lines at **Scott County Park**. Staff worked with Lewis Tree Service to remove an Oak tree that fell across the driveway at **Aptos Village County Park**.

Parks Maintenance staff partnered with the Sheriff's Office to clean up an encampment site where an individual built structures off of Highway One.

### **Seasonal Maintenance or Upcoming Maintenance County Wide**

Beach access at Greyhound Rock will soon be addressed to allow safer access. The current access was damaged in winter storms and the trail needs to be rerouted at the beach.

North Coast Rail Trail restrooms at Yellow Bank will become part of the north coast maintenance route in early February.

The Pace Trail at the Pace Family Wilderness will be completed and maintained as part of the trail system at Quail Hollow Ranch this summer.

Full rebuilding of the handicap ramp at the Ben Lomond Library is coming soon.

Staff and CalFire are working on a continued effort at the Miller Property for the shaded fuel break project.

Flower benches at Floral Park will be reinstalled in a different location on the perimeter of the field.

### **Maintenance Staffing Changes**

A **Park Maintenance Worker I** position is going to be filled. This recruitment yielded the most applicants in recent history - with 361 people applying! Interviews will begin in early February.

### **Vehicle/Equipment Update**

Parks is working to obtain a maintenance truck with funding from the RTC for the North Coast Rail Trail maintenance agreement.



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(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

Date: February 6, 2026  
To: Parks and Recreation Commission  
From: Park Planners - Rob Tidmore, Mariana Colibri-Urgo, Mike Pruitt, Zane Mortensen  
Subject: Planning Section Report

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### **Coastal Rail Trail**

Segments 8-11: The RTC provided direction to pause work on the Ultimate Trail and proceed with taking steps necessary to complete the Interim Trail as efficiently as possible while pursuing options to keep the existing rails where feasible. Staff are working on a contract amendment with the design consultant to proceed with the Interim Trail for Segments 10 & 11. The amendment is expected to include scope to explore design options of the Interim Trail that keep the rails in place and is expected to go to the Board of Supervisors on February 24<sup>th</sup> for approval.

Ecology Action is continuing to lead the non-infrastructure programming portion of the project, coordinating with 10 area schools on bicycle and pedestrian education classes, and the creation of a community incentive program that will target low-income monolingual Spanish speaking residents of Live Oak, Pleasure Point, and Capitola.

North Coast Rail Trail (Segment 5): RTC and Parks staff are currently working with the contractor to complete the punch list for the parking lot, and the parking lot is tentatively scheduled for opening to the public on February 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Freedom Lake Restoration Plan**

Watsonville Wetlands Watch (WWW) is actively collecting background data to support planning studies for the site. A Working Group has been established to guide these efforts and will prepare a background memo outlining preferred alternatives in 2026. Current activities focus on riparian enhancement and invasive species management, including acacia removal near Sunflower Lane and along Freedom Boulevard, cape ivy removal, native understory revegetation, and bank stabilization in affected areas. Additional acacia removal and riparian restoration are planned upstream of Sunflower Lane within the park and are expected to be completed by March.

In addition to on-the-ground restoration work, WWW is conducting site monitoring and research to inform management strategies. This includes drone imagery and analysis for mapping, water quality monitoring, ongoing eDNA sampling, and a hydrology study -including bathymetry and water quality monitoring. Research on potential restoration and management methods is also underway. The Working Group will compile these findings into a comprehensive memo to outline preferred site alternatives and guide future planning decisions.



Drone Imagery and Site Photos

**Greyhound Rock**

Draft biological and cultural reports have been submitted, and seismic trenching was completed across the development area. Based on the draft findings, the northern portion—where trenching was proposed—consists of previously disturbed habitats and contains no indigenous archaeological resources. Two trenches were excavated perpendicular to the dominant trend of local faults: an upcoast (longer) trench and a downcoast (shorter) trench.

The trenching work yielded positive results: no fault was identified on site, no new cultural resources were discovered or impacted, and vegetation and other biological resources were minimally affected, all under strict environmental compliance protocols. The geological and biological consultants also implemented robust erosion control measures, leaving the site stabilized and prepared for the rainy season. Parks staff are currently working to mitigate the willow areas affected during trenching. This mitigation is scheduled to be completed by February, and the biologist will include it in their final report.

Final reports for biological, cultural, and geological studies are currently in development and are expected to be completed by March. These reports will inform site planning and guide the identification of suitable locations for the environmental education center and cabins. Concurrently, the project manager will initiate development of the RFP to advance the project’s planning phase.



LONG TRENCH



LONG TRENCH



SHORT TRENCH

## **Moran Lake County Park**

**Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan (HMP):** Staff are working on completing CEQA review of the HMP. The HMP clarifies that habitat management will prioritize public safety, protection of monarch habitat, and restoration of native species and habitat for biodiversity, in that order. The HMP will also outline regularly recurring, proactive arborist inspections to assess grove risk, hazard abatements as identified, regular maintenance of trimmed trees, continued drainage improvements to reduce ponding at the base of trees, and ongoing native tree and shrub planting. County Parks' consulting arborist completed a risk assessment of all the trees in the park, and no immediate hazards were identified that required immediate action.

**Tree Work:** No tree work is scheduled during Monarch season. Additional tree work is planned for Summer 2026, pending funding availability.

**40 Moran Way:** Maintenance staff have finished adjustments to the fence layout, and the first phase of work is complete. Planting the site with native trees and shrubs is expected to occur next rainy season.

## **Pace Property Connection Trails**

Trail construction is underway. Volunteers have made great progress on the trail work. The Middle Loop trail and the Lower Loop trail have been connected. Finishing work remains on these trails. The Santa Cruz Mountain Trail Stewards have led two weekend volunteer days providing excellent construction support. Park staff have scheduled coordination with the California Conservation Corps to perform work on the Middle Access trail and invasive French Broom removal as part of the grant requirement. Coordination with AmeriCorps is underway for trail construction on the remaining access trail sections. A design firm for the interpretive signs has been chosen as well as the Call to Artists for the project. The project team is striving for a productive winter/spring trail construction season anticipating the late spring and summer construction moratorium in the sandhill habitat for the endangered Mount Hermon June Beetle. The excellent volunteer effort has provided solid trail construction progress and Parks is capitalizing on the momentum for the project moving forward. A soft opening for the trail is anticipated for later spring with final completion end of summer to early fall 2026.

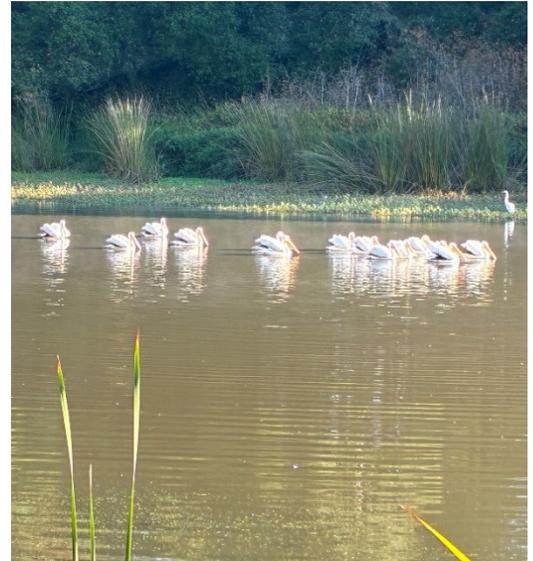


## **Pinto Lake**

County Parks, in partnership with the City of Watsonville and County Environmental Health, continues to advance coordinated efforts to address long-standing water quality impairments at Pinto Lake. The lake is listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act for nutrients and cyanotoxins and is subject to a phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) with a 2029 compliance target. Over the past year, partner agencies have expanded water-quality and flow monitoring to better understand contaminant input sources, completed updated sediment and nutrient assessments, coordinated with local universities on data collection, and evaluated treatment alternatives through recent technical studies to further characterize internal sediment

loading and watershed nutrient contributions.

Building on this work, the County submitted an NPS 319(h) grant application to the State Water Board in December 2025 and is currently pursuing additional funding through Proposition 4 administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board. These funding efforts will support planning and implementation of key restoration measures, including in-lake phosphorus sequestration, lake aeration, and invasive species removal, as well as upstream improvements such as sediment basin and drainage retrofits, partnerships with farmers and adjacent landowners, and riparian restoration to reduce nutrient loading. Concurrently, the County and City are implementing targeted monitoring to establish baseline conditions, identify priority source areas, and support adaptive management. Together, these integrated actions are intended to achieve sustained progress toward TMDL compliance and long-term improvement in Pinto Lake water quality and ecological health.



### **Santa Cruz Coastal Lagoons & East Cliff Drive Resiliency Study**

County Parks was awarded a \$650,000 grant from the State Coastal Conservancy to prepare a planning-level feasibility study of nature-based adaptation strategies to address sea-level rise along East Cliff Drive at three coastal lagoons—Schwan Lagoon, Corcoran Lagoon, and Moran Lagoon—in mid-Santa Cruz County. The project seeks to identify preferred adaptation strategies for each location that prioritize nature-based solutions, protection of coastal resources and ecosystems, maintenance of coastal access, and resilience of critical infrastructure.

Monitoring at the three lagoons is ongoing in partnership with California State Parks and Santa Cruz County Environmental Health. ESA has completed multiple field efforts, including RTK-GPS topographic surveys, bathymetric mapping, sediment and water quality sampling, and planning for long-term monitoring installations. The County has also completed the Existing Conditions Report, which compiles historical data, prior studies, and recent field findings to establish a comprehensive project baseline.

The project has moved into the engagement phase, with Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) engagement underway and the first TAC meeting completed. In parallel, the project website is in development and expected to launch soon, providing background information, monitoring updates, and public engagement opportunities. The Community Engagement Plan has been finalized, and additional outreach will occur as the project progresses.



## **Valle del Pájaro**

Long-term planning is underway. The County has selected Mithun to lead the development of a Master Plan, with a strong emphasis on community engagement throughout the process. The Master Plan process began in Fall 2025, starting with a kickoff meeting that included the planning team, the consultant, and County Park Friends. Mithun has developed the draft site analysis and is currently developing the community engagement framework. The first engagement event will take place in March.

In addition, Parks is collaborating with the consultant on a site assessment to identify key issues and outline potential strategies for sediment management and the overall hydrological approach at Paulsen Road and its larger watershed. The goal of this analysis and strategy development is to establish a strong foundation for subsequent planning and design efforts.



## **Miller Property County Park**

The Miller Property County Park Shaded Fuelbreak Project is a collaborative wildfire prevention effort between Santa Cruz County Parks and CAL FIRE (San Mateo–Santa Cruz Unit). The project aims to establish a shaded fuelbreak along Kings Creek Road to reduce wildfire risk, strengthen community resilience, and improve forest health by reducing the potential for catastrophic wildfire. CAL FIRE began on-the-ground fuel reduction work in December 2025, and to date has completed several acres of vegetation treatment along the roadway corridor.

The project is located along Kings Creek Road within the bounds of Miller Property County Park near the communities of Boulder Creek and Riverside Grove in Santa Cruz County. Vegetation management activities extend up to 300 feet both east and west of the roadway, encompassing approximately 52 acres in total—39 acres west of the road and 13 acres east. A 50-foot bankfull elevation buffer is maintained from Kings Creek and its associated riparian corridor to ensure all work remains outside of sensitive riparian resources.

Fuel reduction work is being carried out by CAL FIRE engine crews during non-fire assignments, with oversight and coordination provided by Santa Cruz County Parks. Work is expected to continue through February 2026 and may extend throughout the year depending on weather conditions and CAL FIRE crew availability, with additional treatment occurring as opportunities allow.





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979 17<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95062

JEFF GAFFNEY  
DIRECTOR

(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

Date: January 29, 2026  
To: Parks and Recreation Commission  
From: Jaime Jimenez, Recreation Supervisor  
Subject: Recreation Section Report

### Partnerships with Local Recreation Departments

The Recreation Team is collaborating with the Board of Supervisors to develop the Kick-Off Santa Cruz 2026 initiative, in anticipation of major sporting events hosted by neighboring Santa Clara County, including the Super Bowl and the World Cup. A series of family-friendly events are being planned across South County, Mid County, and North County during the first week of February to celebrate the Big Game. Looking ahead to June, two (2) Soccer Fun Days are tentatively scheduled for Anna Jean Cummings Park on June 13, followed by a community event hosted by the City of Scotts Valley on June 14.

### Recreation Programs & Contractual Agreements

The Recreation Team hosted “Breakfast with the Grinch” on Saturday, December 13th at the Simpkins Family Swim Center – Live Oak Community Rooms. The event offered two seating times, allowing attendees to enjoy live music, raffle opportunities, photos with the Grinch, and performances by participants in the local ACE (After-School Child Enrichment) program.



During the holiday break, the Recreation Team also facilitated four (4) Winter Camps, providing safe and engaging environments for youth while supporting human development through structured recreational opportunities. Camps were held at Pinto Lake County Park, Quail Hollow Ranch, Aptos Village Park and Mar Vista Elementary School between December 26<sup>th</sup> and January 9<sup>th</sup>. A community member shared:

*“Stella and Max had such a wonderful time at camp this week! They had the option to stay home today, and they both begged to go and attend camp with you all. They particularly loved the long hike with the solo hike part. They deepened their relationship with the land and the flora and fauna of the ecosystem. Thank you for being so welcoming to my kids! We are tremendously grateful for your care and attention to their experience! - Warmly – Katrina”*

This winter, the Recreation Team is actively monitoring two (2) ongoing contracts: Cha-Cha and East Coast Swing Dance and GOAT – Outdoor Strength & Training.

Our Active Adult Programs continue to provide both fee-based and free recreational opportunities for community members. Programs include Mall Walking and Bridge Club. In December, the Mall Walking group hosted a Holiday Celebration Potluck at the SFSC Live Oak Community Rooms. Participants continued their walking and stretching routines, engaged in cognitive and analytical games such as Bingo, and enjoyed healthy food options, fostering human development and creating positive recreational experiences.

### **Marketing Efforts**

The County Parks Summer/Fall Activity Guide is being developed. The material will be published in both English and Spanish.

The Parks Department continues to create marketing flyers in both Spanish/English. As well as social media posts and updates.





# County of Santa Cruz

## DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, OPEN SPACE & CULTURAL SERVICES

979 17<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95062

JEFF GAFFNEY  
DIRECTOR

(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

Date: February 6, 2026  
To: Parks and Recreation Commission  
From: Garrett Smart, Recreation Supervisor  
Subject: Reservations Section Report

### **Athletic Field Reservations**

Athletic Field Reservations for the upcoming season are underway, and the reservation process is actively in progress. Staff are coordinating with returning user groups and new applicants to ensure a smooth and organized reservation cycle for the year. Preparations are focused on managing availability, scheduling, and field readiness to support a successful season of use.

### **Special Event Reservations**

Special Event bookings are beginning to increase as the year progresses. Interest in park facilities for festivals, community gatherings, and private events continues to grow, and staff are working closely with organizers to support event planning and permitting.

### **Recreation Software Update**

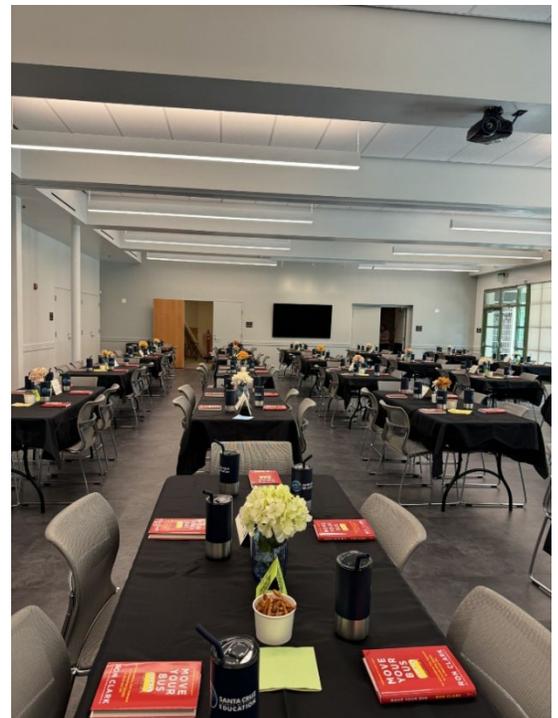
Implementation of the new recreation software through Rec.us remains a work in progress. Staff is continuing to collaborate on development, testing, and configuration, with the shared goal of launching the system in late 2026 or early 2027.

### **Wedding Reservations**

The wedding season is picking up, with increased inquiries and bookings across park locations. Staff are excited to continue conversations with Zola to explore opportunities for increased visibility and streamlined booking processes.

### **Meeting Room Information**

Informational packets for each meeting room are currently in development and will be made available online. These packets will provide detailed information for the public, including room features, capacities, and rental guidelines, to support clearer expectations and easier planning. The picture featured is the Live Oak Community Rooms set up for a meeting.





# County of Santa Cruz

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(831) 454-7901 FAX: (831) 454-7940 TDD/TTY: call 711

Date: February 9th, 2026  
To: Parks and Recreation Commission  
From: Emma Lee, Volunteer Program Coordinator  
Subject: Volunteer Section Report

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### **701 Ocean St. County Building**

The succulent planting and beautification project is still ongoing at the County building! We've continued to eradicate weeds and plant succulents around the entrance of the facility. We have two community volunteer days scheduled in 2026: **February 13<sup>th</sup>** and **February 27<sup>th</sup>** from 2:00pm – 5:00pm. Weather permitting, we'll be there to weed, plant succulents and spread more mulch!

### **Anna Jean Cummings County Park**

We now have monthly volunteer days scheduled at Anna Jean Cummings County Park! On the **last Saturday of the month**, currently extending from March through June from 9:00am – 12:00pm, we'll be pulling invasive plants along the established hiking trails. This is an effort to increase trail access and restore native habitats. We also once again have had workability groups joining us weekly to pick up litter, rake, blow leaves, and pick up extra tasks as needed.

### **Ben Lomond County Park**

Volunteers Kym and Phil Morello have continued to support Ben Lomond County Park and are planning to resume their planting efforts in the garden beds, they have completed the planting of donated daffodil bulbs to bring a pop of color to the park in the Spring.

### **Felton Discovery County Park**

Along with the quarterly community volunteer days in partnership with the Felton Library Friends, we also once again have the Earth Steward Group volunteering at the park! Students will continue to prune, pull invasive plants and weeds, and pick up garbage. They're planning to be at the park next on March 26th.

### **Quail Hollow Ranch County Park**

Volunteers and Park Hosts have continued to help lead the Senior Walks and Full Moon hikes at Quail Hollow Ranch! Additionally, Nest Box volunteers are projected to begin their season in March. Our visitor center has remained open on a weekly basis thanks to our Park Docents Kathy and Richard James, Kathy Sparrow, Suzanne Rather, Cathy Hoeft, and Steve Bakaley!

Our Quail Hollow Park Hosts have also helped to open the house for parkgoers when docents aren't scheduled. We'll be hosting our annual Volunteer Recognition Awards in the Spring. Stay tuned for the scheduled date! We look forward to celebrating our wonderful Quail volunteers.

## **Pace Property**

We're continuing volunteer efforts for the Pace Trails Project! Thanks to our amazing volunteer leads, Zack Steinkamp and Jeff Ustick, we had five volunteer days in November, seven scheduled in December and seven more in January. The lower loop of the trail was completed before the end of January. We'll be out on the trail, weather permitting, most Mondays and Saturdays from 9:00am – 1:00pm. In addition to the great volunteers we are working with, the California Conservation Corps. Are going to help us complete the trails, as well as a month-long partnership with the AmeriCorps from March 19<sup>th</sup> – April 20<sup>th</sup>. Working with the CCC and AmeriCorps should push this trail project over the finish line.

## **South County Park Hosts**

Park Host at Bert Scott, Kris, and at Pinto Lake, Alex and Elizabeth, continue to focus on park stewardship and assist volunteer efforts across the county. They also continue to close parks in the South County area. Alex leads the volunteer days at Floral Park, with assistance from Alex. Both Alex and Elizabeth will continue to spearhead the planting project at Pinto Lake County Park.

## **North County Park Hosts**

Park Hosts at Quail Hollow, Beth and Steve, continue their projects around the ranch and assist visitors in the park. Beth continues to be at every Pace Project volunteer day to check in on volunteers! Beth will also assist with the upcoming events at 701 Ocean Street and future volunteer days at Felton Discovery Park.

Click here to visit the Santa Cruz County Parks website to view the Volunteer Calendar and sign up for volunteer opportunities!