



TO: Chair and Members of the Public Tree Advisory Commission

SUBMITTED BY: Luz “Nina” Buelna, Interim Public Works Director

PREPARED BY: George Thomson, Parks and Open Space Manager

SUBJECT: Parks and Open Space Division Report

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a report regarding recent activities and initiatives in the Parks and Open Space Division.

DISCUSSION:

California Coastal Commission Approves Permit for Butterfly Grove Project

The California Coastal Commission approved the Ellwood Mesa Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan Phase 1 Implementation Project at their May 10, 2024 meeting in Crescent City. The project’s general scope includes planting new trees and native plants, improving trail improvements, creating new signage, building a footbridge to span Devereux Creek, and improving butterfly viewing areas. City staff are currently working with Coastal Commission staff to satisfy the special conditions of the permit, including the public access plan and an integrated pest management plan. The City expects the permit and work to commence this month, with an irrigation installation and plantings to commence later this summer.

Wildfire risk reduction work, permitted under a separate Coastal Development Permit, is ongoing at Ellwood Mesa. Work commenced in May and is expected to continue through October. Several different contracted crews have been focused on felling dead eucalyptus trees, chipping up tree limbs and dead shrubs, removing non-native ground level vegetation, and mowing annual non-native grasses. The City developed an outreach webpage for all Ellwood Mesa projects to provide up-to-date information:

<https://www.cityofgoleta.org/play/parks-recreation-open-spaces/ellwood-mesa-and-monarch-butterfly-habitat/ellwood-now-work-in-progress>

Winter Storm Damage & Repair Projects

Several severe storms impacted Goleta in early-February, causing over 80 individual incidents that required responses from Public Works Department staff. The storms caused a wide variety of impacts, including over 75 downed trees, several landslides along beach access points, and severe damage to transportation infrastructure.

The most destruction to City park and open space lands occurred at Ellwood Mesa. The area was temporarily closed to the public while work crews performed safety assessments, removed debris, reduced the risk to the community and sensitive habitat areas, and erected temporary fencing and signage. The authorized vehicle access road near the southern terminus of Santa Barbara Shores Drive was completely washed out during the storm and emergency and maintenance vehicles could no longer access Ellwood Mesa via City property. An emergency project to replace the culvert was coordinated with the California Coastal Commission and other regulatory agencies to obtain the proper emergency permits and the project is now complete.

Emergency work to remove partially fallen and downed public trees throughout Goleta commenced during the storm events and was completed by City staff and contractors. Public trees that fell across trails and roadways and were on private property were prioritized. A team of biologists provided onsite monitoring and pre-work surveys to ensure that impacts to wildlife were minimized. Electric chainsaws, which are much quieter than gasoline-powered saws, were used at the most sensitive locations to reduce impacts further. In some locations, debris was stockpiled to be chipped later this year since soil was too saturated to allow for heavy equipment and chippers.

Arbor Week 2024

The City of Goleta celebrated Arbor Week with the planting of seven trees at Rancho La Patera and Stow House near Lake Los Carneros on March 14, 2024. Six olive trees were installed along the historic driveway leading up to the Stow House and a native coast live oak was planted to replace a large oak that died several years ago. Goleta Mayor Paula Perotte, Goleta Valley Historical Society Director of Operations Lisa Potter, and the City's Parks and Open Space Division had the honor of planting the latest additions to Goleta's diverse urban forest.

Arbor Week was kicked off at the Goleta City Council meeting on March 5 with an official proclamation presented to Public Tree Advisory Commissioner Ken Knight and Parks and Recreation Commission Chair Richard Jenkins. View the proclamation here: <https://tinyurl.com/2dxa3f8a> and a press release here: <https://www.cityofgoleta.org/Home/Components/News/News/14878/3875>.

Maintenance Worker Promoted to Public Works Supervisor

Juan Jimenez was recently promoted to the Public Works Supervisor position in the Parks and Open Space Division. Mr. Jimenez started his career at the City in October 2018 as a Maintenance Worker I on the Parks team and was promoted to the Maintenance Worker II position in 2023. In his new role, he is responsible for implementation and daily oversight of the many maintenance programs that keep our 30 parks and open spaces clean, safe,

and beautiful. He supervises four Maintenance Worker I/II staff, as well as oversees the daily activities of contract janitorial, landscape maintenance, tree trimmers, and specialty tradespeople working to make Goleta parks the best they can be.