



Agenda Item A.3
CONSENT CALENDAR
Meeting Date: January 14, 2026

TO: Chair and Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: JoAnne Plummer, Neighborhood Services Director

CONTACT: 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:

Winter Storms

Recent major winter storms caused significant impacts to Goleta's parks and open spaces. As of the first week of January, 20.33 inches of rain fell at Fire Station 14 near Lake Los Carneros, which is more than triple the rainfall amount typically received by this time of year. Local storm impacts include flooding of most of the lower portion of Bella Vista Park; over two dozen trees downed at Ellwood Mesa; and multiple trees down at Stow House, Berkeley Park, Stow Grove, Winchester I Open Space, and Evergreen Park.

Every time a major storm is forecast, Public Works Department staff are on standby to respond to emergencies. During the past two storms, which fell on public holidays or the weekend, Public Works maintenance workers, supervisors, managers, and Department leadership worked to ensure the safety of our community. Our maintenance team deserves special recognition for responding to multiple call outs during Christmas Eve, working long into the night performing road closures, clearing debris, and responding promptly to citizen requests for service. A significant amount of overtime work was required, which impacts the Department's budget, and additional work is needed to complete the downed tree and debris clean-up, which will impact planned projects for the next two months.

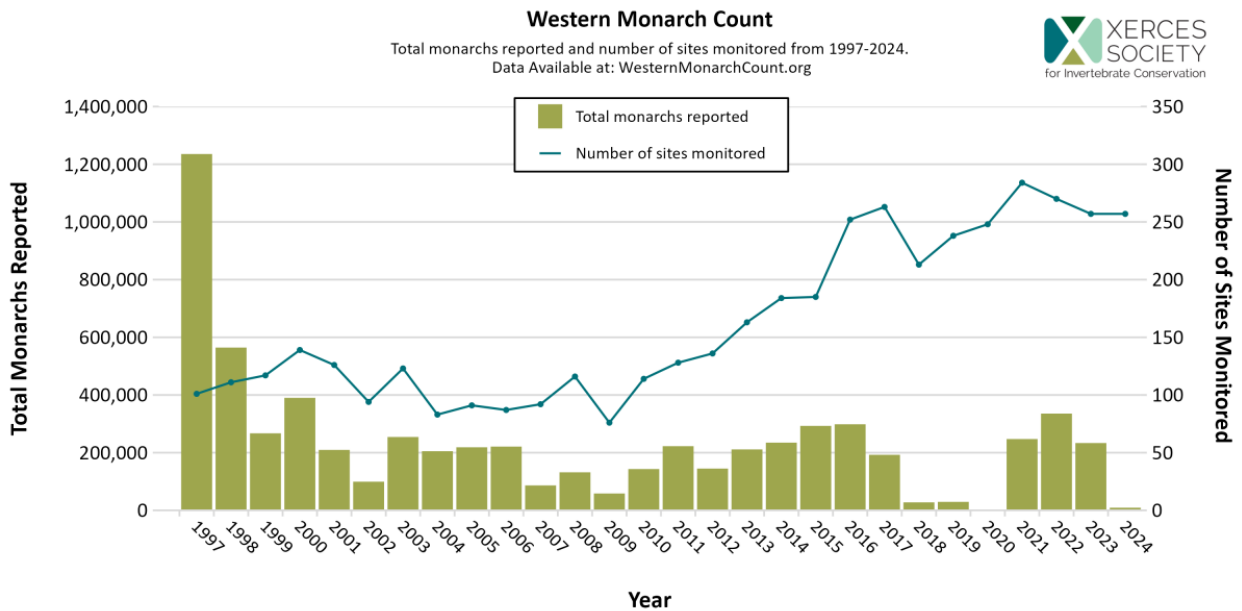
On a positive note, the significant rainfall filled Lake Los Carneros. Parks staff did a controlled release of the lake prior to the major storms to provide more capacity in the

lake for the anticipated incoming storm water. During particularly wet years, this flow fills additional wetlands downstream of the Lake Los Carneros Dam, creating prime wetland habitat for migratory birds and local amphibians.

Monarch Butterfly Population

Consulting biologists performed the seventh monarch butterfly survey of the season at Ellwood Mesa on Monday, January 5th, 2026. Surveys were conducted in the early morning per the Western Monarch Count survey protocol. Only two monarchs were observed throughout the Butterfly Grove, down from a season high of 20 on October 31, 2025. Historically we have seen a drop in monarch numbers at Ellwood after significant rain events due to the dispersal of monarchs from their clustering sites.

Monarch numbers are also low throughout the state. In early-December, the [Western Monarch Count](#) partners and volunteers estimated approximately 8,000 monarchs overwintering in California. This a total that may place this winter as the [second or third lowest on record](#). The mid-season tally last year was 9,119 monarch butterflies. The graphic below illustrates the historic butterfly count results.



Due to the continued low monarch numbers observed in Ellwood, the survey frequency will drop down to once a month rather than biweekly. Our next survey is scheduled for January 30th, 2026.

Park Tree Maintenance

On December 2, 2025, City Council approved a \$1,190,500 contract with West Coast Arborists (WCA) to perform annual tree maintenance in City parks and open spaces. The contract runs through June 30, 2028, with an option to renew for two additional years. WCA will provide a variety of services including tree pruning, removals, tree inventory, and new tree plantings. WCA is anticipated to begin work later this month under the direction of City staff and the contract City arborist. Most trees in our developed parks have not been on a regular, pruning tree maintenance program and this new contract represents a new, programmatic maintenance program for our City park trees, with most trees expected to receive pruning within the next three years. The tree care program is focused on improving tree health and structure, as well as provide important urban forest management tools via a digital inventory and administration software.

Approved By:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JoAnne Plummer', is written over a horizontal line. Below the line, the name and title are printed.

JoAnne Plummer
Neighborhood Services Director