



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:

Wildfire Risk Reduction at Ellwood Mesa

On March 4, 2025, City Council approved a \$1M operating agreement with the Santa Barbara County Fire Department to reduce wildfire risk at the Goleta Butterfly Grove at Ellwood Mesa and surrounding neighborhoods. The work is funded by a \$1.7M CalFire grant the City previously received. County Fire crews will be cutting down dead trees, chipping brush, and creating defensible space around the neighborhood perimeters. A team of biologists will be coordinating protection of nesting birds and other sensitive wildlife. Additionally, the community will be kept up-to-date on the project via the City's comprehensive outreach campaign at Ellwood Mesa, including onsite informational signage, direct mailers, community meetings, videos, and social media. Outreach will continue as the project increases activity throughout the Ellwood Mesa this year.

Parks Maintenance Projects

Parks maintenance crews will be shifting focus in the coming weeks to our annual defensible space program. Extensive weedy grass mowing and downed tree removals will occur throughout our parks system to reduce the risk of wildfire.

The Goleta Community Center field is undergoing a renovation project to improve turfgrass conditions for recreational play. Soil amendments and supplemental grass seed are being added to create a better playing surface and healthy turfgrass roots. The field will be closed for several weeks and scheduling is being coordinated with the adjacent United Boys and Girls Club.

Irrigation improvements are being implemented at Evergreen Park field. The existing irrigation system is an estimated 35 years old and does not adequately cover the field, resulting in bare spots and inefficient watering. The improvement project will add irrigation heads to yield a more consistent playing field and better aesthetics.

Financial Donations

The Parks and Open Space Division would like to recognize two local groups for their financial contributions to ongoing projects. The Optimists Clubs donated \$300 to maintenance of the Al Turnbull Optimists Grove, an oak grove located just south of the South Coast Railroad Museum at Lake Los Carneros Natural and Historical Preserve. And the Women's Service Club of Goleta donated \$275 to the ongoing wildfire risk reduction and tree maintenance efforts at the Goleta Butterfly Grove at Ellwood Mesa. Financial contributions and volunteerism are an increasingly important part of the stewardship of Goleta's unique Parks and Open Space system.

Goleta Butterfly Grove at Ellwood Mesa


Saturday morning volunteer events are continuing at the Butterfly Grove, with a variety of activities scheduled through May 17, 2025. The Bucket Brigade is leading the Saturday morning volunteer events and interested community members can RSVP at: <https://bucketbrigade.volunteerhub.com/vv2/>

More volunteer events will be hosted throughout 2025 and community members can stay up-to-date on all the various activities at Ellwood Mesa by visiting this site: <https://www.cityofgoleta.org/play/parks-recreation-open-spaces/ellwood-mesa-and-monarch-butterfly-habitat/ellwood-now-work-in-progress>

Ellwood Mesa's 20th Anniversary Celebration!

Twenty years ago, Ellwood Mesa was saved from development thanks to the passionate efforts and generosity of community members, organizations, and partners who safeguarded this treasured open space. On Saturday May 17, 2025 from 11 AM - 4 PM the community will come together once again to celebrate the Sperling Preserve/Ellwood Mesa, honor those involved in saving this incredible open space, and look forward to the next 20 years. More information, RSVPs, and volunteer opportunities can be found here: <https://ellwoodfriends.org/anniversary>

Approved By:



JoAnne Plummer,
Neighborhood Services Director