



Agenda Item A.3
CONSENT CALENDAR
Meeting Date: March 8, 2023

TO: Chair and Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Jaime A. Valdez, 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:

Storm Damage

Several substantial storm events in the past two months caused significant damage to park and open space infrastructure and natural features, including:

- Several dozen trees were toppled by high winds at Ellwood Mesa, Evergreen Park, Stow Grove Park, and several smaller open spaces.
- The authorized vehicle access road to Ellwood Mesa and associated culvert in Devereux Creek were damaged by storm water flows. This vehicle access point, near the end of Santa Barbara Shores Drive, is the primary maintenance and emergency vehicle access route to the bluff and beach.
- Significant erosion occurred at the Ellwood Bluffs, including at two beach access points and two blufftop lateral trails.
- Sinkholes developed at Jonny D. Wallis Neighborhood Park and Evergreen Park.
- An approximately 42-inch storm drain pipe failed on San Pedro Creek at Stone Bridge Open Space.

City staff in the Public Works Department are addressing the storm damage with assistance from professional consultants and contractors. Most of these repairs require environmental permitting and monitoring by qualified biologists, adding to the overall time and costs to complete the work. Staff are working diligently to address the storm damage. Some of the work may be eligible for reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Parks and Open Space Division Staff Recruitments

The Administrative Assistant position in the Parks and Open Space Division was recently filled by Alexis Andrade. Ms. Andrade successfully served in this role as a temporary employee for the past several months, demonstrating great customer service, attention to contract and accounting details, and enthusiasm for being a key team member in running a full-service municipal park system. She brings with her a wide range of professional experience, including, most recently, working as a Supervising Administrative Assistant for the City of San Luis Obispo, where she provided administrative support to the Community Development Department, led and managed staff, prepared agenda packets and minutes for boards, committees, and commissions, and prepared and managed budget documents. As the Division's Administrative Assistant, Ms. Andrade helps guide park maintenance requests from the public to the proper resolution; assists with contracts, grant agreements, and procurement; and helps develop and maintain Division protocols, including recordkeeping of playground inspections, hazard tree assessments, grant reports, and financial documents. She will also staff the Public Tree Advisory Commission.

Recruitments for the Parks and Open Space Division Public Works Supervisor and two Parks and Open Space Division Maintenance Worker 1 positions are nearing completion. The Public Works Supervisor position, responsible for overseeing daily maintenance activities, is in the final stage of hiring and the role is anticipated to be filled by April. The two Maintenance Worker positions are also completing the final interview process and are anticipated to be filled by May.

The final staff vacancy in the Division, the Environmental Services Specialist, is undergoing a job class specification review to reflect the core functions of the position and draw more qualified job applicants more accurately. The current job description is more reflective of a career in solid waste, recycling, and storm water management. The Parks and Open Space Division is working with the City's Human Resources staff to complete this job class review. However, it will likely take City Council approval, putting the recruitment out several months.

Monarch Butterfly Count at Ellwood Mesa

A team of biologists and trained volunteers conducts monarch butterfly surveys every two weeks at the Ellwood Mesa Monarch Butterfly Grove. The November 15 survey observed 6,064 monarch butterflies and 41 clusters at Ellwood. By mid-January 2023, following strong storms, the monarch butterfly population at Ellwood fell to below 20 individuals. The current overwintering monarch butterfly season is effectively over at Ellwood. Monarchs are anticipated to return in October.

Monarch butterfly numbers were up regionally this winter. The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, an international nonprofit organization that protects the natural world through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitats, reported a

total of 272 overwintering sites across coastal California and a few sites in interior California and Arizona were surveyed, with volunteers tallying 335,479 monarch butterflies during this year's Thanksgiving Count, which ran November 12 to December 4, 2022. These numbers indicate an overall upward trend in the regional population as compared to recent years, however individual sites may be in decline. Past butterfly surveys across the western US are summarized in this chart:

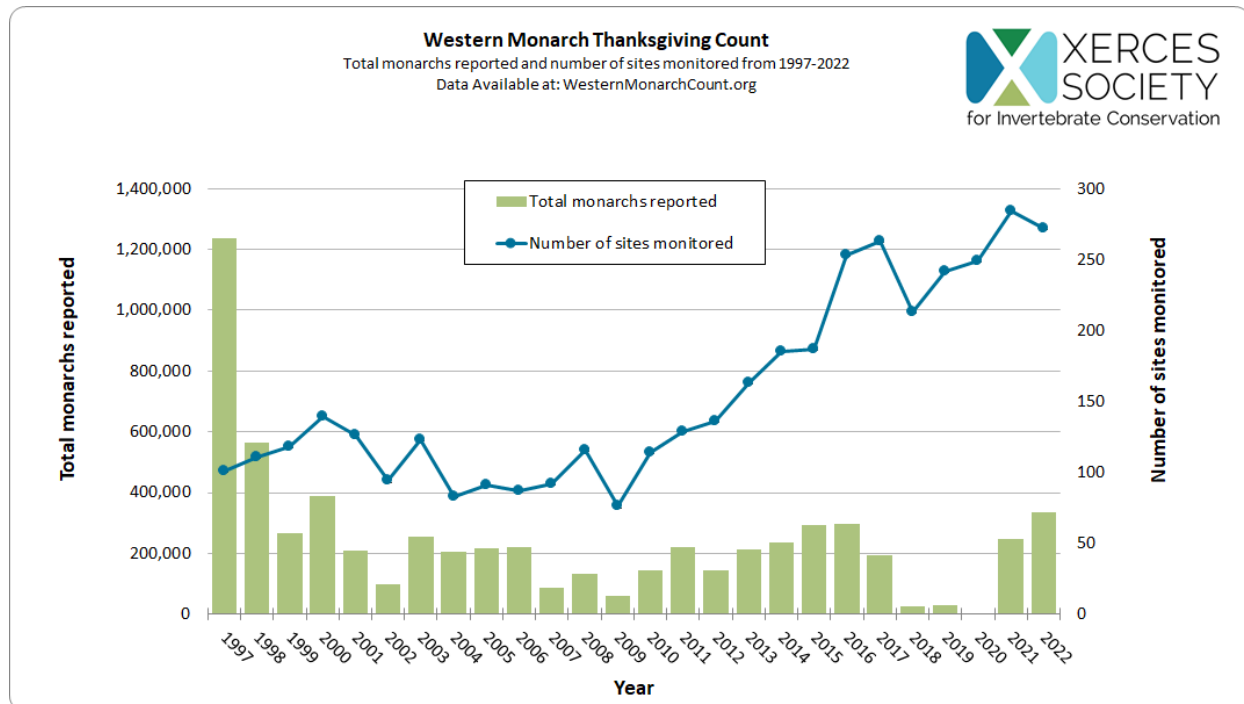


Figure 1 Total monarchs reported and number of overwintering sites monitored for the Western Monarch Thanksgiving Count from Nov. 1997 to Dec. 2022. <https://www.xerces.org/blog/western-monarch-thanksgiving-count-tallies-over-330000-butterflies-before-storms-batter>

Approved By:

Jaime A. Valdez,
Neighborhood Services Director