

SPRING 2021

# THE PARK POST

Hikes • History • Horses



Friends of Huddart  
& Wunderlich Parks

THOUGHTS FROM

## The Park Bench

The arrival of spring is always refreshing. Especially this year with the hope our lives are returning to something akin to our pre-Covid existence.

The Friends are fortunate to operate many of our activities in an outdoor environment, so our Meet-a-Mini program, Weed Warrior initiative, and small group docent-led hikes have flourished throughout the year.

To meet the demands of so many Wunderlich Park visitors interested in local history, we have expanded the Folger Stable Carriage Museum hours to include both Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

We are also evaluating the condition of the "Ice House" a historic structure next to the entrance bridge in Wunderlich, for a future historic preservation project.

The health of the forests in our parks is of great concern for fire prevention and for maintaining a balanced ecosystem. San Mateo County Parks will be starting their Forest Health and Fuel Reduction projects in both Huddart and Wunderlich Parks this summer (see Forest Resiliency article in this issue).

The Friends are truly grateful for the enormous support we have received from you throughout this pandemic year. We look forward to better, healthier times ahead for all. On behalf of the board, staff, and volunteers, I wish you a safe and happy summer.

Sincerely,

President  
Board of Directors



# PANDEMIC IN THE PARKS

BY JANET GALEN

Before COVID, the biggest challenge for the rangers in Huddart and Wunderlich was maintaining aging facilities. District Manager and Park Ranger IV Rogelio Castaneda's focus was also the management of park vegetation and fire fuel reduction along with park and public safety. A 15-year veteran of County park service, he and an eight-person crew have overseen the well being of 2000 acres and 40 miles of trails in both parks. But when COVID arrived, a lot changed.

One result was a big influx of parks visitors; parks were some of the few places people could go beyond their homes. For first-time visitors, having these resources so close was a revelation. But more people in the parks, while welcomed, brought challenges to the rangers besides a big increase in litter and traffic.



Ranger Rogelio Castaneda on the Richards Road bridge newly built during COVID.

“First timers were unfamiliar with park regulations,” Castaneda says. “We started seeing more dogs and mountain bikers (neither is allowed), people getting lost, and not being aware of closing times. Another change was the decrease in contact between park staff and the public, because of our own efforts to protect the health and safety of our staff and visitors for safety reasons.”

The COVID pandemic also affected daily park management. “Some of the largest changes were related to the day-to-day uncertainty of what to expect with County health orders and State guidelines,” Castaneda explains. “Each tier change required adjustments in openings, closures, and what’s available to visitors.”

As the State prepares to lift many COVID restrictions, Castaneda says it’s likely the parks will continue to see large numbers of visitors. Meantime, he and his crew welcome a new ambitious challenge—the Forest Health and Fuel Reduction projects (see Forest Resiliency article).

As the challenges of COVID wane, Castaneda reflects: “I want to recognize my small crew of dedicated rangers who have been flexible and willing to adapt to constant changes of evolving health regulations while keeping the parks maintained and open to the public.”

Huddart and Wunderlich enthusiasts would agree. It’s thanks to rangers like Castaneda and his team that we have safe and beautiful places to enjoy in good times and bad.



Tanoak

## OAKS AT RISK

BY SIGAL WILNAI

Beneath the quiet canopies of redwoods grows the unassuming grey-green tanoak. Millions of tanoaks have died in recent years as a result of Sudden Oak Death (SOD). The tanoak boasts ecological and cultural importance. It provides food and shelter for dozens of species. Downy woodpeckers nest in its cavities, and deer graze on its leaves and acorns. The tanoak produces an abundant crop of acorns rich in fat, complex carbohydrates, and protein, which local tribes depended on for food and medicine. Tanoaks host essential soil fungi and, because of their extensive root system and deep taproot, help prevent erosion. Dead trees increase fire danger as well. You can contribute to citizen science projects to track and combat SOD in our parks. Please visit the SOD Blitz project for more information at:

<https://nature.berkeley.edu/matteolab>.

## WEED WARRIORS

BY AMY CARLOW

Friends is recruiting volunteers to remove non-native invasive species from our parks. Our new Weed Warrior program meets on the 4th Wednesday of every month and we have ad hoc options too.

These plants do not provide food for our native animals and crowd out native plants. Some plants are a fire hazard or interfere with the ground water cycle.

Removal will be a long term effort requiring a lot of hard work. Please email [fhwp2961@gmail.com](mailto:fhwp2961@gmail.com). We hope you’ll join us to make happier trails in our parks!

# FOREST RESILENCY

BY KYM TEPPPO & SMC PARKS STAFF

Bay Area residents are fortunate to have so many places to enjoy the great outdoors. Our parks provide beauty, recreation, and adventure. But our forests face many threats. Wildfire, drought, invasive non-native weeds, and disease all wreak havoc in our beloved parks.

San Mateo County Parks has partnered with the SMC Resource Conservation District through a grant from Cal FIRE and the Carbon Cycle Institute and created a plan to combat some of the most pervasive problems. The stated goals of the Forest Health and Fuel Reduction projects is to reduce hazardous and diseased vegetation, create a healthier and more vigorous forest, enhance forest resiliency, reduce wildfire risk, and sequester greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

Sudden Oak Death is a disease caused by Phytophthora ramorum, a water borne pathogen - an infected tree cannot get nutrients or water and becomes susceptible to slow decay, pests, and other diseases. An infected tree dies slowly, creating a risk for falling limbs and standing fuel for fires.

Wildfire is a pressing concern for land managers. Last fall, the devastating CZU Lightning Complex tore through our local open spaces, including Pescadero County Park and Big Basin State Park. An important goal of the Forest Health initiative is to reduce the potential for wildfire in Huddart & Wunderlich Parks and the surrounding area, which is heavily populated.

Balancing ecological protection,  
land management, and forest  
health and safety is a big task.

By reducing understory vegetation density, in the event that a wildfire does occur within the park, it is less likely that the fire would spread to the forest canopy, and instead the conditions would be more favorable for a low and slow ground fire resource managers agree.

Beginning this summer, crews will conduct forest management work by removing understory vegetation and trees up to eight inches in diameter, including dead, dying, and diseased trees, invasive species, and live trees serving as ladder fuels. Environmental reviews will be conducted and protocols followed to protect animal and plant species of ecological concern.

Balancing ecological protection, land management, and forest health and safety is a big task, but one that SMC Parks and land managers hope to tackle and use as a model of forest management for the Bay Area and beyond. More information and updates on this project available at: <https://parks.smcgov.org/press-release/projects-improve-forest-health-reduce-fire-risks-planned-two-county-parks>



## MUSEUM MUSINGS

BY FRED THIEMANN

Do you know this brief history of Wunderlich Park?

- 1769** First contact of Spanish explorers with the Ohlone, here 10,000 years prior
- 1849** California Gold Rush ushers in logging craze in Woodside and the Santa Cruz Mountains
- 1872** Simon Jones purchases 1500 acre “Hazelwood Farm” in Woodside
- 1902** James Folger II of Folgers Coffee purchases the land
- 1904** Arthur Brown Jr (future designer of Coit Tower, Hoover Tower, SF City Hall & Opera House) designs home and stable for the Folger family
- 1905** The grand Folger’s Stable is completed
- 1974** Martin Wunderlich donates 940 acres of Folgers land and stable which becomes Wunderlich Park
- 2010** Folger’s Stable is refurbished back to original grandeur
- 2021** Folger Stable Museum reopens after worldwide pandemic forces closure for almost one year

Nature lovers are pleased now that the Folger Stable Carriage Room Museum has reopened, with safety protocols in place, to relax after a hike while learning about history. Drop by the stable on weekends between 12 PM and 3 PM. Would you make a good museum volunteer? Email [fhwp2961@gmail.com](mailto:fhwp2961@gmail.com)

# Cheers

TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!



Lorna Basso • Laura Bevilacqua • Kathy Boone • Nina Brooks  
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## Mission

The Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks are park enthusiasts and stewards who provide a wide range of programs and events in two historic redwood parks in the heart of the Bay Area. Our mission is to promote the positive health and community benefits provided by these parks and to support equitable and inclusive access for all park users. We lead hikes, provide environmental education, showcase local history, and celebrate the unique horse heritage of San Mateo County.



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