

May 2021
ISSUE 29

FRIENDS *of* VILLA GRANDE NEWSLETTER

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OUR MISSION

- ❖ RESTORE AND MAINTAIN PATTERSON POINT AS A RIPARIAN PRESERVE FOR LIMITED PUBLIC RECREATION USE
- ❖ PRESERVE THE HISTORIC AND UNIQUE CHARACTER OF VILLA GRANDE
- ❖ ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE GREATER VILLA GRANDE COMMUNITY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,
Welcome back to a place where we can begin to carefully socialize and enjoy each other again! It's a strange and brave new world. We have all had to adjust to new rules, new ways of interacting and living.

To that end, we will continue with monitoring the preserve entrance for numbers going down the path to the river. If you are interested in being a volunteer monitor, we would love to have you. The article below has more details.

Last year we had to cancel our beloved Fourth of July celebration due to Covid-19. This year, we plan to have a modified event, still with reading the Declaration of Independence, plus the parade with music. There will be singing-with-distancing, but no kazoos this year.

As ever, we'll gather in the town square at 4:00 with the kickoff scheduled for 4:30, eventually ending up at the Firehouse Plaza. Come join in.

Our annual membership meeting is on Saturday, July 10, from 10 a.m. to noon on Zoom. We will continue with a community meeting, also July 10, from 4-5:30 p.m. with the Sonoma County Transportation Director and other guests. The links are on the Calendar.

For our new members, welcome! Glad to have you join in the fun. Thank you everyone for being part of our little special community in Villa Grande.

It's a wonderful life.

With gratitude and respect,

Kyla Brooke

President, FoVG

OPEN SPACE APPROVES LIMITS ON THE PRESERVE

Our agreement with Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District specifies FoVG must operate and maintain Patterson Point Preserve for low-intensity public outdoor recreation. Unfortunately, last summer the Preserve was overrun with visitors, resulting in damage plus overcrowding on the beaches while also creating parking problems in town. At last July's Town Hall meeting, several remedies were proposed, including limiting the number of users on PPP.

We requested and Open Space subsequently approved a cap of 150 people accessing the



Irresponsible behavior by PPP visitors has forced us to fence off sensitive restoration areas.

Preserve on a first-come, first-admitted basis. On busy weekends, FoVG has set up a "monitoring" station at the entrance to enforce the 150 limit and encourage users to follow Sonoma County Covid regulations. The volunteer monitors also stress the importance of respecting the Preserve and its rules and answer any questions. If you're

available to help with the monitoring station, please contact friends@villagrande.org.

PROPANE CONTRACT UPDATE

Although our contract with Amerigas doesn't expire until the end of 2021, they have declined to continue with the propane discount program. FoVG solicited proposals from other vendors, and we are moving forward with Suburban Propane. Their pricing is very close to the current discount we have from Ameri-

gas, with an even greater discount as more members join the program.

The transition to Suburban will be from July to December. The service area includes Villa Grande, the Terraces and River Meadows. Current subscribers will be contacted; email friends@villagrande.org to sign up.

PARKING/NO PARKING PROGRESS

At last summer's Town Hall meeting, ideas were discussed for reducing parking problems in Villa Grande during busy beach days. An ad-hoc parking committee, led by Katie Gibson, went ahead with a plan to standardize parking signage, with the hope that out-of-town visitors will start paying more attention.

A key to this approach is setting the expectations of Villa Grande residents when things don't go right. In California, it is illegal to park in front of a driveway or walkway, and the CHP has suggested that we should call and report violators. On the other hand, a "No Parking" sign on the side of a fence on a wide street is not enforceable, and the authorities can't help you.

It is illegal to park within six feet of the center of a road, which obviously makes some of our narrowest streets off limits. The Sonoma County Department of Transportation has agreed that consistent signage throughout the town helps send the message that residents are paying attention, and bad parking behavior could earn a ticket.

The first batch of signs have been manufactured and Katie is taking orders for more at \$10 each. The versions offered are shown below; contact Katie at katiegibson60@aol.com if you're interested in purchasing one or more.



Violators are subject to ticketing, according to California Vehicle Code 22500.



To be used only for property off the right-of-way



A "courtesy" sign, but not enforceable in Villa Grande.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT GRANT

FoVG has submitted an application to Sonoma County for funds from PG&E targeted to vegetation management and fire hazard reduction. The grant would be used to reduce debris in the swale adjacent to Moscow Road, creating a fire break and also to remove bamboo in the Town Square. The proposal received support from both Fire Chief Steve Baxman and the Director of Transportation

and Public Works Johannes Hoevertsz.

Tools purchased through the grant would allow residents to remove dead trees (chain saw) and eliminate high weeds (industrial mower) to create defensible spaces around homes. Zoom into the Town Hall meeting on July 10 at 4:00 for the status update on the grant.

PIPEVINE SWALLOWTAIL BABY PHOTOS



Natalie and Sukey Robb-Wilder have been growing Dutchman's Pipevine, the preferred habitat of the Pipeline Swallowtail butterfly, *Battus philenor*, in their front yard.

The left photo, taken on April 10 by Jim Beck shows the butterfly eggs. The surface of the eggs are bumpy, from excretions the female deposits after laying the eggs. Once the larva hatches, it eats its eggshell and the nourishing bumps.

At the right, photo taken on May 14 by Natalie Robb-Wilder, the caterpillars have emerged from the nursery and are making a run for their new life. The distinctive red spots are thought to serve as a warning to predators, since the larva have accumulated acid from the plant that makes them distasteful. Fifteen minutes after this photo, these larva had all dispersed, looking for new pipevine leaves to devour.



PATTERSON POINT PRESERVE REPORT

Now that 2020 is behind us, so is the seasonal restoration effort on Patterson Point Preserve. Under the leadership of Leah Norwood and the Restoration Committee, weeding of ivy and other invasive plants continued, with some special projects as well.

A swath of ferns was planted under the "Keep It Tidy" redwood, the adjacent neighbors' fence lines were weeded and ivy was

removed above the sandy beach. We also attempted to slow the erosion on the path down to the sandy beach, in hopes the beach would build back with winter floods. It appears we're going to have to wait at least one more year for that to happen.

We will soon be installing a bench along the main trail for those needing a rest while hiking back up the trail.

FIREHOUSE PLAZA PLATFORM

The firehouse plaza has been used for community meetings and talent shows for years. With help from Susan and Greg Sampson, a temporary platform was set up as a stage for these events. The

Firehouse Committee is now exploring a long-term replacement stage that would address fire safety, maintenance issues as well as the historical and environmental context of a design.

TRAINS TO THE RIVER - THE GAUGES MERGE

With the narrow gauge North Pacific Coast Railroad (N.P.C.) set to start hauling lumber from the lower Russian River to San Francisco in 1877 (Newsletter #28), mill owners in Guerneville were still using ox teams for moving their timber. George Guerne and the Korbel brothers negotiated with San Francisco & North Pacific Railroad to build a standard gauge line (4'8½") from Fulton to Stumptown (Guerneville) to stay competitive.

Disagreements between the mill owners and the railroad halted the construction at Korbel's, 2¾ miles short, and the mill owners had to pay for the extension into town themselves. The line, by then called the Fulton & Guerneville Railroad, carried freight and passengers during the week, but also ran a round-trip excursion train on Sundays to Guerneville.

The next year the line was extended to Rio Campo (now Northwood) and it crossed the river near the Bohemian Grove, running west on Railroad Avenue into Monte Rio.

At the other end of the line, the standard gauge terminated in Petaluma, until it was extended to San Rafael in 1879.

Passengers heading to San Francisco would then transfer to an N.P.C. train for the short ride to the ferry at San Quentin. It wasn't until 1884 that the line was extended to Tiburon, allowing a "no-transfer" trip all the way to Monte Rio.

The standard gauge line, with its name changed back to the San Francisco & North Pacific, was profitable, but the forests were being depleted so the focus started shifting to passengers. The Bohemian Grove opened in 1893 and had its own extension off the main line. Excursion trains ran more often, with stops at all the vacation spots along the river.

The narrow gauge N.P.C., by contrast, fell victim to accidents and Mother Nature, with floods and the earthquake of 1906 inflicting major damage.

The two smaller railroads became the focus of a battle between Southern Pacific and Santa Fe over a potential San Francisco-to-Eureka route. Realizing that parallel lines would not be profitable, in 1907 the railroad giants formed the Northwestern Pacific Railroad, which merged the narrow and standard gauge companies.

Redwood was still being harvested closer to the coast, so the decision was made to extend the standard gauge line to Duncans Mills by adding a third rail to the existing narrow gauge rail bed. On November 15, 1909, the first standard gauge train left Monte Rio and arrived at Duncans Mills over the dual gauge tracks down what is now Moscow Road.



Florence Macon Nelson, great grandmother of FoVG member Barry Nelson, ca 1920

There were four stations on this stretch, starting at Monte Rio where three hotels vied for passengers arriving from the south or east. Halfway between Monte Rio and Mesa (Villa) Grande, at the little waterfall, was the Cascades station. A building there (21268 Moscow Road) served as way-side lodging for railroad staff. From the Cascade station, it was a short trip to

Russian River Avenue, where a spur was set up for loading wood from the local mill.

Passenger trains then stopped at the Mesa Grande station on Moscow Road in front of the (now) Villa Grande firehouse. The station was adjacent to the tracks but extended over the swale, with steps leading down to the current firehouse plaza.

A passenger waiting area was located across Willow Street in the fairy ring in front of the general store (21908 Willow). Rumor has it that the firehouse was originally (ca 1915) the baggage area for the train station and was later converted into storage for a hand-drawn water pump after the trains stopped running.

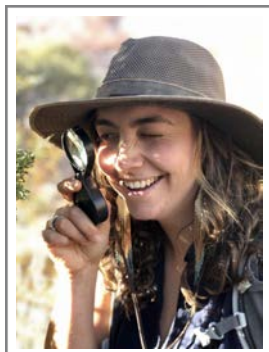
The fourth train station on Moscow Road was Sheridan near the Octagon House.

Next time: taking the "Triangle Trip" excursion.

INTRODUCING KAYA HALPERN

We would like to welcome our newest steward for Patterson Point Preserve, Kaya Halpern. After volunteering in the Preserve last year with STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed) to restore the area above the boat anchorage, Kaya offered FoVG her services.

She lives in Occidental and studied Conservation and Natural Resource Management at UC Berkeley. In



April, Kaya, along with our lead steward, Vickie Sneed-Rodriguez, weeded the Town Square parklet as well as the nearby bamboo-infested area.

Kaya also helped clear out the Firehouse swale along with FoVG volunteers Rich Holmer, Jim and Marcy Beck and Roberto Esteves. She is looking forward to spending more time in Villa Grande.

CALENDAR

FoVG Zoom Board Meetings
First Saturday of the Month
10:00 a.m. - Noon
To attend, email
friends@villagrande.org

Fourth of July

Speeches & Parade
Town Square
Sunday, July 4
4:30 p.m.

FoVG Annual Membership Meeting

Saturday, July 10
10:00 a.m. - Noon
tinyurl.com/FOVGmeet21

Villa Grande Town Hall

Saturday, July 10
4:00 - 5:30 p.m.
tinyurl.com/VGtownhall21

Online at:

villagrande.org/calendar

ON THE WEB AT
VILLAGRANDE.ORG

EMERGENCY EVACUATION TAGS

When emergency evacuation orders are issued, first responders go door-to-door to ensure residents are getting out safely. To do their job more effectively, they are providing hang tags for your front door as you evacuate. The tags are free and can be picked up from the fire department or on the front porch of the Old Hotel, 21849 East Street.



FOVG ANNUAL MEETING: 7 / 10 AT 10

Members of Friends of Villa Grande are invited to our annual meeting and board elections on Saturday, July 10 from 10 to noon. The meeting will be conducted on Zoom, and you may register at tinyurl.com/FoVGmeet21. Committee reports will cover septic and wastewater issues, recreation and restoration plans for 2021 as well as FoVG's financial state. Also presented will be details of our new discounted propane service program.

Board elections will be held, with incumbent candidates (for two-year terms) Kyla Brooke, Roberto Esteves, Richard Holmer, and Kyra Wink, plus two new candidates, Shelley Russell and Renata Foucre.

VILLA GRANDE TOWN HALL: 7 / 10 AT 4

Everyone's invited to our annual Town Hall to hear and discuss issues important in Villa Grande. The meeting will be on Zoom, but you need to register beforehand at tinyurl.com/VGtownhall21.

If you would prefer to attend in person and are fully vaccinated, email friends@villagrande.org for the particulars. The agenda includes reports on the Moscow Road repair, parking and signage, updates on the drainage survey and proposals for a platform at the firehouse to be used for community events. See you at the Town Hall!

BOAT ANCHORAGES STILL AVAILABLE

There are still a few open slots for anchoring your kayak, canoe or standup paddle board on the gravel beach for the summer. Contact friends@villagrande.org for details.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

Renewal New

Circle one member category below:

BENEFACTOR	\$1,000	2 TICKETS TO FOVG EVENTS; UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS
PATRON	\$500	1 TICKET TO FOVG EVENTS UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS
HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP	\$100	UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS; LIST NAMES BELOW
CONTRIBUTING MEMBER	\$50	SINGLE MEMBERSHIP
LOW INCOME	\$25	LOW INCOME

ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ _____

TOTAL PAID: Cash/Ck/PayPal: \$ _____

Last/First Name of member/household members: _____

Mail Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Local Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Propane Discount: (circle) Yes No

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Please send check and form to:

FoVG, PO Box 28, Villa Grande, CA 95486

or online through Paypal at:

villagrande.org/Membership