

April 2023  
ISSUE 33

# 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,

We did it! We survived one of the wettest winters on record, with plenty of flooding, falling trees and road cave-in drama. For their help with the ongoing Moscow Road issues, I would like to thank Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, Director of Public Infrastructure Johannes Hoevertsz, Sweetwater Springs General Manager Eric Schanz and all of the community members who helped.

Friends of Villa Grande has had a remarkable journey and I'm proud to have been part of it since its incorporation in 2007. Along with FoVG Board past president Rich Holmer and Executive Director Roberto Esteves, we established and continue to maintain Patterson Point Preserve, keeping it open to the community and public.

We have also raised money to improve the town's roads, built a stage for the firehouse

and purchased cameras to catch an arsonist. We have sponsored parties to raise funds for worthy causes as well as parties just for fun.

It is with mixed emotions that I step down as president of the FoVG board this July. I plan to continue as a board member working on disaster preparedness and recreation events for our wonderful little community. I am so grateful to so many of you for your support and care.

Friends of Villa Grande continues to be an amazing group of people who think outside the box and make miracles come true. As our rainy winter comes to an end, please enjoy a sun-filled summer.

With Gratitude and Respect,

Kyla Brooke  
President, Friends of Villa Grande

## TREES, TREES AND OLD TREES

Between debris from recent storms and our PPP stewards pruning bay suckers, we accumulated a ton of tree stuff. In late March, volunteers, guided by Preserve Manager Kaya Halpern, rented a chipper and shredded the debris, which we'll spread on the main path later. Other volunteers took advantage of the damp soil to weed grasses along the trails.

We hired Empire Tree to remove limbs overhanging the electrical lines at the Firehouse. They also trimmed redwood limbs encroaching on neighbors' yards along the edge of the Preserve.

Mike Jones, a Forestry Advisor from UC Cooperative Extension, provided on-site training to Restoration Committee members in April for evaluating the health of the Preserve's redwoods. Walking the Preserve, he noted PPP's alluvial (flood plain) habitat

was unusual, as redwoods usually grow in colluvial soil (rocks, sand and soil at the base of a slope).



Mike Jones measuring.  
Photo: Kaya Halpern

The flood and wind environment of Patterson Point has made the redwoods slow-growing giving them "character." Jones defines character as having unique features, such as double tree forking, shallow roots, candelabra branches (growing horizontally then upward), and wind-sheared canopies. These features made them unattractive to the loggers, preserving them for our enjoyment.

Mike will return to tag each of the trees, measure their diameter (at 54" above ground) and record base-line data. The Committee will then monitor tree health over time. Mike took a core sample of one of our redwoods and discovered that it was between **500-600 years old!**

# THE SHIREY HOUSE - 21956 RUSSIAN RIVER AVENUE

BY PAUL SHIREY AND MYRA RADLOW

The large blue house at the end of Russian River Avenue (at Willow Way) was built in 1912 in the California Craftsman style popular during the early 20th Century. It was built and occupied by the Andersons in 1912 after first constructing a little cabin. A small garage in front of the cabin was added in the 20s or 30s.

Marie Torvik Gelan (1887-1973), who was born in Norway, and her husband Charles (1874-1958) purchased the home in the 1920s for their vacation home. They lived in Berkeley where Charles was a caterer for large events. In the '30s, they enclosed part of the back porch, turning it into a kitchen and the old kitchen became the dining room.

When Charles died, Marie continued to live in the house alone until she passed away at the age of 85. Her niece, Marjorie Thorvick Shirey (Paul's mother), inherited the house at this time. As a child, Marjorie had visited her aunt in Villa Grande in 1930 while on a vacation, traveling from Minnesota. After she

inherited the house, Marjorie rented it out until the 1980s after which it was used exclusively by family.

Marjorie's other son, Mark, with his partner Jeffrey, lived in the house for a couple of years in the early 1990s. Mark was an engineer and a minister, and established the Ecumenical Catholic Church of Villa Grande, holding Sunday services in the little cabin. The congregation was non-exclusive, but catered primarily to gay people. Jeffrey also was known for reaching out and helping people in need in the area. In 1993, Jeffrey died of AIDS while they were living in Monte Rio; Mark left the Russian River area soon afterward and passed away in 2014.

The house then went to Marjorie's husband Kenneth in 2006, and later to their son Paul. With his wife, Myra Radlow, Paul is restoring the yard to how it appeared in the 1960s. Their daughter is looking forward to being the fourth generation taking care of the house!



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## WINTER(S) OF OUR DISCONTENT

### THE MOSCOW ROAD CONTINUING SAGA

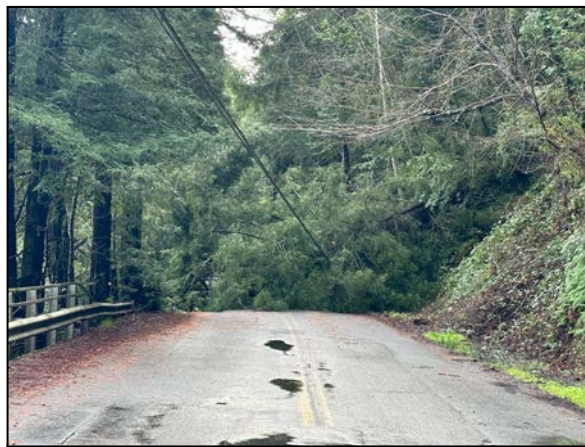
The past four years have been tough on Moscow road, with a pavement washout and mudslide in 2019, a downed tree last year and the latest, on January 8, a fallen tree-pavement washout combo on the way to Monte Rio. Repair of the 2019 washout near Casini Ranch has been stalled as the County waited for FEMA to make good on promised support. Then, with funds secured, permits and permissions in place, the contract was ready for bidding when the second washout happened. Not only did it take out 55' of roadway (photo), reducing access to Villa Grande to one lane, but it broke the 8" water main running under the pavement. Sweetwater Springs has installed 2" lines to continue supplying Villa Grande, the Terraces and Freezeout Road until their repairs are complete, promised for June.

With both roads to Villa Grande reduced to one lane, Johannes Hoevertsz, Director of the County Department of Public Infrastructure and our 5<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor, Lynda Hopkins, recognized the urgency. At a MAC meeting in February and later at the FoVG-sponsored community meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup> in Monte Rio, they presented a plan for combining the two projects which would be funded with a loan

from another County account, while waiting for FEMA reimbursement. The loan required approval of at least 4 of the 5 the Supervisors, so a letter writing campaign was mounted by community members - supported by FoVG and Friends of Monte Rio - to make the case. Sukey Robb-Wilder arranged for articles in the Press Democrat, which included a front-pager with photos on March 1. The impact of hundreds of emails and letters was acknowledged by several Supervisors at their meeting on March 14, and the unique funding process was adopted unanimously by them while yet another atmospheric river raged outside.

Johannes' team is now well into the design and bidding process for repairing both road failures. At the FoVG town hall on June 24, we will get an update on the project.

For helping things move forward, and especially the letter writing mobilization, thanks to Andrea Bufa, Kyla Brooke, Anna Cabrera, Ruben Garcia, Nick and Patty Thayer, Sukey and Natalie Robb-Wilder plus many others, and of course all who wrote to the Supervisors urging action. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Press Democrat Senior Reporter Martin Espinoza for taking up our cause.



Fallen redwood across Moscow Road. Photo: Roberto Esteves

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## ASSEMBLE: 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY 2023, 4:30 SHARP!

Come one, come all to the Villa Grande 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration. In addition to the usual declaration of independence (from Monte Rio), we'll continue to have the Kids' Kazoo Khorus on the steps of the old hotel. Additionally, we'll have a band playing at the Firehouse Plaza with sangria, beer and hotdogs available for purchase.



## MARDI GRAS 2023

Despite a torrential rainstorm, Villa Granders of all ages came out to “laissez les bons temps rouler” and enjoyed the Second Annual Villa Grande Mardi Gras on Saturday, February 25th. With lively New Orleans jazz provided by the Hubbub Club, a parade including a second line of revelers wove through town and indulged in traditional “Hurricanes”, King cake and beignets. Kiddos (and kids at heart) danced, waved ribbon banners and shook off the wintry blues. Many thanks to Jon Box and Kyla Brooke for graciously welcoming the Mardi Gras celebration into their home.



Grant Kalinawki, Chris Wong, Jeff Everingham and Peter Nguyen

## PROGRESSIVE PARTY ON THE CALENDAR

The next Villa Grande Progressive Garden Party for members and their guests will be Saturday, July 22. The event will feature food and hosted drinks plus a silent auction, all for a suggested donation of \$25. We will start at Bonnie and Curt’s fabulous new home at 3rd Street and Russian River Avenue for hot dogs and a potluck chili contest! Let us know if you’ll be bringing a pot of your favorite secret recipe.

We will then amble over to one of the oldest buildings in town, Greg and Susan’s General Store where we’ll enjoy an ice cream social. The historic soda fountain will feature root beer floats, ice cream sundaes, coffee, tea and Kahlúa. Feel free to bid on the fabulous auction items. To register, and especially if you would like to compete in the chili potluck, contact friends@villagrande.org

## BOAT ANCHORAGE AVAILABLE



Yes, it’s time to reserve a spot for your boat on the FoVG-sponsored anchorage chain on the gravel beach. The storms have carved a cliff to the beach, so leaving your craft down there for the whole summer is even more attractive. Current members are eligible to request one slot per household, until they’re gone. A signed liability waiver is required as well as a label affixed to your boat. The cost is \$150 from May 15 until October 15. Email to [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org) to sign up.

## A NEW SIGN OF SPRING

FoVG recently received a communication from Leslye Choate, manager of the Sonoma County Environmental Health Program, informing us of their intent to place a new sign at the entrance to the Preserve, next to the algae sign. This sign gives advice on safe consumption levels of fish taken from the Russian River.

Neighbors have expressed concerns about more signage at the 3rd Street entrance and have suggested alternatives such as educational brochures. Leslye says there is a public health concern over mercury and PCB levels in the local fish, and that the sign is required by the State. Similar signs will be posted at Lake Sonoma, Laguna De Santa Rosa, San Pablo Bay and throughout the state.

More information is available at the website ([oehha.ca.gov](http://oehha.ca.gov)) and the sign is available online at:

[tinyurl.com/RRfishposter](https://tinyurl.com/RRfishposter).



## TOWN SQUARE(S) ANNUAL CLEANUP

It’s spring - time for the community to clean up our public areas. This includes the town square around the big redwood stump, the firehouse plaza and the 3rd and 4th Street parking areas. On Saturday, April 22, we’re asking volunteers to assemble at 10 a.m. for weed-whacking, clearing debris and pulling ivy. Aside from cosmetic improvement, we’ll be removing potential fire fuel. Wear work gloves, sunscreen, and be prepared to spend an hour or two spiffing up the byways of Villa Grande. Hope to see you there!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**FoVG Board Meetings**  
2nd Wednesday each Month  
4:00-6:00 p.m.  
For Zoom link, contact  
[friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org)

**Annual Town Square Cleanup**  
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Saturday, April 22

**Boat Anchorage for the summer**  
Begins May 15

**Villa Grande Town Hall Firehouse Plaza**  
Saturday, June 24  
10:00-11:00 a.m.

**FoVG Members Meeting**  
Firehouse Plaza  
Saturday, June 24  
11:00 a.m. - Noon

**Independence Day Celebration**  
Town Square  
Monday, July 4  
Assemble at 4:00 p.m.

**Progressive Garden Party**  
Saturday, July 22  
1:00-5:00 p.m.

Online at:  
[villagrande.org/calendar](http://villagrande.org/calendar)

ON THE WEB AT  
**VILLAGRANDE.ORG**

**SATURDAY JUNE 24 MEETINGS**

The annual Villa Grande Town Hall will be held from 10:00-11:00. Agenda includes Moscow Road updates and the situation on Villa Grande street repairs.

Our Friends of Villa Grande Membership Meeting will immediately follow at 11:00. This annual meeting will include election of FoVG Board members. Up for re-election are Kyla Brooke, Roberto Esteves, Richard Holmer and Shelley Russell. There are open slots, so if you're inclined to throw your hat in the ring, please contact friends@villagrande.org.

The Restoration, Recreation and Firehouse committees will bring us up to date, and we'll get a report on river quality (septic) issues.

**MUGWORT (ARTEMISIA DOUGLASIANA)**

A perennial herb often used in restoration projects for erosion control, mugwort also has medicinal and ceremonial uses. Mugwort tea can induce vivid dreams. It is native in the western United States, with small white flowers, and can spread by seeds or more commonly by rhizomes. The seeds are popular with birds and the plant hosts some butterflies. It's species name honors David Douglas, for whom the Douglas fir is named.



Photo: Roberto Esteves

**ROCK & ROLL PARTY POSTPONED**

We've had to move the "Rock and Roll is Here to Stay" party from May to the fall. Stay tuned for the deets and please keep your Rock Star outfit handy.

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

RENEWAL

NEW

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_