

May 2019
ISSUE 25

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

We've survived atmospheric rivers of rain and two winter floods. I for one, am looking forward to *more sun* and *less rain*. This newsletter reviews the many rain and flood-related issues that we encountered this winter and looks forward to a spring, summer and fall of renewed energy and community bonding.

The floods were another call to review our emergency preparations. As our community was isolated by landslides and power outages, the need for a rapid and flexible response became evident once again. Several community members have taken the lead in this work. It's important to remember that we ARE a community. We all exist to support each other through living in and

around Villa Grande. Your support and participation matter!

I invite any members interested in serving on the Board of Directors to contact me, or any Board member. The election will be on Saturday, July 6, at the FoVG membership meeting. Visit VillaGrande.org/board for a list of current board members.

Thank you for your support and participation. Together, we make a difference and a community.

With gratitude and respect,

Kyla Brooke
President FoVG

VILLA GRANDE AS AN (UNPREPARED) ISLAND

The recent bad weather reminded us how quickly Villa Grande can become vulnerable and isolated from the outside world. One lane of Moscow Road has completely washed out near Casini Ranch, closing all traffic towards Duncans Mills until further notice. A slide off Starrett Hill deposited trees and mud onto Moscow Road (photo), closing traffic there for several hours. Fortunately, Starrett Hill Road remained open, so drivers did have a roundabout alternative for getting to Villa Grande.

Adding to the isolation, both communication and power were interrupted by the storms. Electricity was out for 36 hours, and even cell phone service was unavailable for

awhile. This became especially acute as owners and residents who didn't happen to be in Villa Grande at the time tried to find out about the condition of their property.

Kyla Brooke, Roberto Esteves, and Kyra Wink stepped up as information agents, visiting properties, assessing and photographing damage and responding to requests. This was challenging during the power outage as they were fielding multiple cell calls without reliable ways to charge their phones. This all just illustrates the need to have a more structured process in place for dealing with information requests using all available communication platforms.



Katie Gibson, Jon Box, Roberto Esteves, Kyla Brooke, Sharon Lazell and Brandon Thompson survey the slide.

Friends of Villa Grande is now active on Instagram @friends_of_villa_grande. We will be posting community updates and photos of our beautiful neighborhood and Preserve. Please follow and tag us in any photos to share.

STRAW SWOOPS INTO PPP

As reported in Newsletter #24, FoVG is receiving help from Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW) to deal with some of PPP's most challenging restoration issues. STRAW's funding for our project comes from the Sonoma County Water Agency, and is supporting work in four areas of the Preserve for a period of five years. For more information, a video on STRAW's work is here: www.tinyurl.com/VGstraw.

To kick off the project, 80 students from Windsor High School, along with their teacher, came to the Preserve over two days in April to implement the first phase. Eight STRAW interns had already been prepping the students about restoration, and surveyed conditions on the Preserve in advance of the work days.



A team of FoVG volunteers also spent time clearing out dangerous limbs and brush before the students' arrival.



Four separate projects were undertaken in the two days of work. The students filled two 4-yard debris bins with invasives (mostly ivy) and planted dozens of natives in the cleared areas. To make sure the new plants are successful, STRAW interns will be tending them over the next five years until they are established. The four projects are:

Potato vine: The huge potato vine along a neighbor's fence is no more. While it previously resisted our efforts at controlling it, the students and interns managed to completely remove it and replant the area with natives.

Old parking lot: This open area along the west side of the path - where cars parked in the 1960s - was replanted with eight native plant species, listed below. The interns first demonstrated the planting technique, and then used colored flags to keep tabs and mark which plants went where. Each plant was then watered and mulched.

Above the gravel beach: The students were given a quick introduction to plant identification, specifically ivy versus native plants. Then they were set loose to remove the ivy patch above the gravel beach and carry it up to the bins on Russian River Avenue. Next, they replanted natives and then formed a bucket relay to bring mulch down to the area. The new plants got a dousing of river water to get them started, and the interns will be responsible for watering from now on.



The second hummock: One of the largest remaining patches of ivy, in the second hummock near the center of the Preserve, has now been removed. Students pulled the ivy out, bundled it up in tarps and carried it up to the bins. The area was then replanted with natives and mulched.



The students will not be doing further work on the preserve, but the interns will be looking after the new plants from now on. We thank the STRAW project, interns Lara White and Leia Giambastiani as well as all of the Windsor High students who came to help preserve our beautiful Preserve.

These are the natives that were planted by STRAW:

- California blackberry, *Rubus ursinus*
- California wild grape, *Vitis californicus*
- California wild rose, *Rosa californica*
- Cow parsnip, *Heracleum lanatum*
- Spicebush, *Calycanthus occidentalis*
- Snowberry, *Symphoricarpos albus*
- Twinberry, *Lonicera involucrata*
- Western sword fern, *Polystichum munitum*

Including the Friends of Villa Grande in your estate planning is a great way to support FoVG's mission into the future. If interested, please contact FoVG Treasurer Tim Cahn at trcahn@gmail.com.

FAIRY TALES DEFINITELY CAME TRUE

More than 80 party-goers came out for our most successful fundraiser ever, "Fairy Tales Come True" at the Monte Rio Community Center on April 27. We honored local legend Christina, who has donated her home, talent and enthusiasm to FoVG since the beginning. Thank you Christina!

Also thanks to the 16 donors for their silent auction items, Lisa Wallen of Floribunda for the flowers and Hensley Event Rentals for the linens and decor.

The wonderful furniture and fire pits came from Shelter-Co, cour-



Kelsey Sheofsky and Craig Snider pose at the photo booth.

tesy of their CEO and FoVG board member, Kelsey Sheofsky, who also brought along her gourmet caterer, Componere Fine Catering, which donated the terrific food.

The event happened thanks to the "Fairy" Committee of Nancy Lopes, Jim Beck, Andrea Buffa, Kyla Brooke, Roberto Esteves and Kelsey Sheofsky.

Special thanks to John Berens for the lighting, Kristy Bella for her bartending, and the team that handled logistics. FoVG cleared over \$5000! Thanks to all!

BOAT ANCHORAGE AGAIN THIS SUMMER

The floods created steep trails to the river's edge, so we anticipate an increased interest for our boat anchorage program. We will install a new chain, and expect to have space for at least sixteen boats. We permit only one anchorage per household, but will release additional slots if

they are available.

Tie-ups are from May 28 to October 15, and a donation of \$150 is requested. If you were an FoVG member before April 15, you can apply for a space by the sign-up deadline, May 25, by emailing friends@villagrande.org.

FIREHOUSE USE LICENSE EXTENDED

Sonoma County is pleased with our community effort over the past 5 years to rehabilitate the VGFD (firehouse) building, and has renewed the license to FoVG for another 5 years.

During our initial license, FoVG improvements included a new metal roof, "fire-engine" red paint, electric service for climate control and lighting, pest abatement and the repair of foundation dry rot. The new license extension allows

FoVG use of not just the building but the surrounding land, with the requirement that we remove the ivy.

FoVG has created a standing Firehouse Committee, chaired by Ruben Garcia, to oversee the use and upkeep of the property, and is looking for volunteer members. If you would like to participate, contact friends@villagrande.org.

TOWN HALL: TOPICS THAT MATTER IN VILLA GRANDE

The annual Villa Grande Town Hall will be held Sunday, July 13 at 10:30 in the Firehouse Plaza. Come to hear and discuss issues that matter.

Parking The committee that has been exploring parking alternatives will report on their May 18 meeting. New ideas always welcome too!

Emergency Preparedness Since the last Town

hall, Villa Grande has had both fires and floods to contend with. Lessons learned will be discussed along with reports from community meetings on the topic. We have invited Fire Chief Steve Baxman to talk on the subject.

Septic Update The proposed state and county septic standards will be discussed.

FOVG ANNUAL MEETING - SATURDAY, JULY 6 - 10:30 A.M.
KATIE & KYRA'S: 21852 EAST STREET

COME ONE, COME ALL! COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE!

Roberto Esteves is coordinating a community-wide garage sale at his house, 21865 Russian River Ave. for neighbors and flood victims. He welcomes any resident to set up a table and

bring items to sell, give away or donate to FoVG for sale. The event is from 9 to 1 on Saturday, May 25, and all are welcome. Any unclaimed items go back with you at the end of the sale.

TIME TO CLEAN UP THE TOWN SQUARE

Join your neighbors to help clear the Villa Grande plaza of encroaching plants. Last year, a crew of seven volunteers cleared spaces for parking on the plaza and weeded the park

around the redwood stump. We'll be gathering at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, June 28 to make things nice in time for our 4th of July celebration. Wear your gloves and bring your green recycle bins!

CALENDAR

Community Parking Meeting
General Store, 21860 East Street
Saturday, May 18, 10:00 a.m.

Community Garage Sale
Roberto's House
21865 Russian River Avenue
Saturday, May 25
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Boat Anchorage
Sign-up deadline: May 25
First tie-up day: May 28

Town Square Cleanup
Villa Grande
June 28, 10:00 a.m. - Noon

Independence Day
Celebration & Parade
Thursday, July 4, 4:30 p.m.

FoVG Annual Meeting
Kyra & Katie's House
21852 East Street
Saturday, July 6, 10:30 a.m.

Villa Grande Town Hall
Firehouse Plaza
Sunday, July 13
10:30 a.m.

Villa Grande Talent Show
Firehouse Plaza
Saturday, August 31
7:00 p.m.

Full Moon Beach Party
21865 Russian River Avenue
Saturday, September 14
6:00-10:00 p.m.

PPP Educational Tours & Cocktails
Saturday, October 26
3:00 p.m.

Online at:
villagrande.org/calendar

ON THE WEB AT
VILLAGRANDE.ORG

BLACK TWINBERRY

A member of the honeysuckle family, Twinberry is distinguished by the small spherical berries that grow in pairs surrounded by bracts. It is a native to coastal and wetland environments, and was planted on Patterson Point Preserve last month as part of the STRAW restoration project. The plant is an attractive shrub that can grow to 15', and the berries are eaten by several bird species on the Preserve.



photo ©Seven Oaks Native Nursery

MEMBERS APPRECIATION BEACH PARTY

Once again FoVG is hosting an end-of-summer full moon, barbecue and sing-along party. On Saturday, September 14, members are invited to a celebration on the gravel beach starting at 6:00 p.m. Food and drink will be provided, but if you'd like to bring a side dish to share, thank you.

COME LEARN ABOUT YOUR PRESERVE

The Restoration Committee is hosting an event featuring "backstage" tours of Patterson Point Preserve plus presentations covering technical and historical perspectives. Small groups will walk through PPP and return to the presenters' homes for discussion, ending with a wine and cheese social.

The event is October 26, at 3:00 p.m., and participation is limited. The cost is \$15, so reserve for the Preserve now at friends@villagrande.org.



**PATTERSON
POINT PRESERVE**

MEMBERSHIP FORM

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

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

The Floods of 2019 at Patterson Point Preserve

Two significant floods on the Russian River this February had major impact on the Preserve. The February 27 peak, measuring over 45 feet at the Guerneville bridge (compared to the 1986 high of 49.5'), brought the river right up to the Preserve entrance. Fortunately, damage to signs, tools and displays was minor.

As usual, when the river rises, it "gifted" us plenty of detritus from our upstream neighbors, and it took away logs lining the pathway to the river. More concerning is the erosion from the flood, at the entrance to the sandy beach as well as erosion exposing the roots of a bay tree along the main path.

A call for volunteers brought forth fifteen FoVG members as a "Flood Recovery SWAT Team" on March 23 to address the most pressing damage. Another team convened on April 21 for additional cleanup, which included removing high debris from the trees.

TRAILS: Most of the logs lining the main trail were carried away by the power of the flood waters. We had trimmed bay trees along the neighbors' fences, with plans to use their branches to replace any lost path logs, but the high water floated those away as well. The work crew was able to find enough flood-deposited limbs and logs to reline most of the paths.



REDWOOD TREE: The huge redwood that toppled in 2017 was floated by the flood and shifted a few feet north, towards the river. Lance Russell and Leah Norwood added mulch to fill the uncovered depression near the base. The flood also exposed the stump of a tree in the middle of the path that we removed last year. After lots of sawing, digging and chipping, the stump is no longer a tripping hazard.



DEBRIS: The collection of junk left on the Preserve from floods is always interesting and rarely valuable. This time we removed cabinets, volley balls, a raft and all sorts of plastic that Sonoma County then hauled away. Rich Holmer and Eric Busto are shown here with one of the larger pieces.



SANDY BEACH: Normally, as floodwaters slowly recede, the eddy current on the downstream beach deposits sand, building it back up. This year, the raging waters caused major erosion, and the flood levels dropped too quickly to rebuild the huge amount of sand lost. The result is that there is now a cliff above the beach that has exposed tree roots and made access difficult. For safety, we have put a sign in the path to warn beachgoers of the risk, and another sign is at the water's edge with the same message.



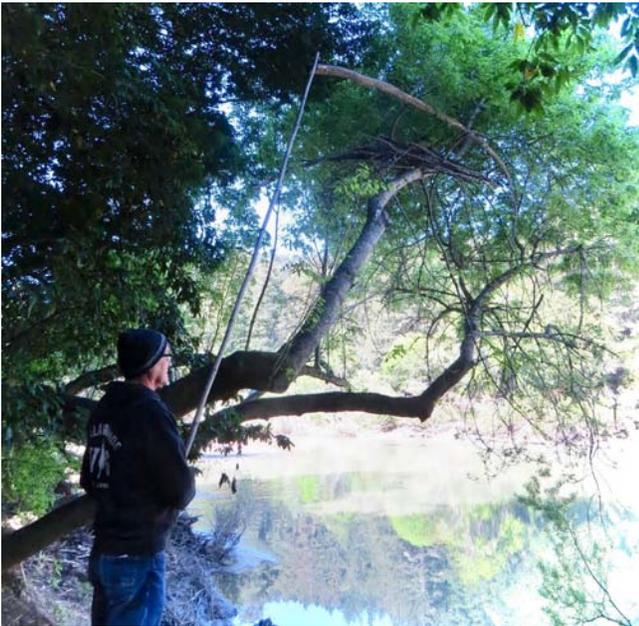
MULCH REPLACEMENT: The flood carried away the mulch we placed last year from the path and around plants. Thanks to Fine Tree Care, we received three truckloads of local redwood chips in early March, and on the 23rd, the team (Rock Ross shown) moved uncounted wheelbarrows of chips down to the path. The mulch was also used to fill holes and protect some of the more vulnerable native plants.



GRAVEL BEACH: Floodwaters canted or completely toppled many of the willows, and the entrance to the gravel beach has been seriously re-sculpted. We now have swales on the beach and the path down to it was turned into a sandy roller coaster ride. Volunteers trimmed back brush and graded the path to improve access, but the final slope down remains significantly steeper than before.



TREE FLOTSAM: The photo below indicates the height of the flood, as Ron Bosch knocks some of the deposited branches out of the ash tree overhanging the sandy beach.



PORTABLE TOILET: The flood floated the Preserve toilet and leaned it over, but the surrounding “folly” of branches and stakes we constructed prevented it from being swept away. What was originally a visual concealment project also has a practical benefit!



Patterson Point Preserve was 100% underwater!

Thanks to all who helped with the cleanup: Bruce Bowen, Chavi Chulasawan, Eric Busto, Jim Beck, Junona Jonas, Lance Russell, Leah Norwood, Linda Fisher, Marcy Beck, Natalie Robb-Wilder, Rich Holmer, Rick Maisel, Rock Ross, Ron Bosch, Roberto Esteves and Sukey Robb-Wilder. Thanks also to Linda Fisher and Leah Norwood for the photos.

For additional information, or to volunteer with ongoing restoration efforts at Patterson Point Preserve, please contact Leah Norwood at LGNorwood@aol.com

