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ISSUE 26

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

On the tenth anniversary of acquiring Patterson Point Preserve, I thank everyone who has helped in achieving FoVG's goals. The Members' Appreciation Party at the river on September 21 featured this amazing cake, thanks to its creator, Jeff Groshe. Players from the Hubbub Club Marching Band led the singing, and thanks to them as well.

With the arrival of fall, volunteers will be working in the Preserve again starting September 21, gathering at 10:00 a.m. at the Third Street entrance. Please come to help if you can - there's plenty of work left to do!



Also with the season's changes, we should be aware of the increased threats from flood and fire. In this newsletter, catch up with what some FoVG members are doing to help prepare, and please consider joining the effort by contacting the individuals or sending email to: EmergencyVG@gmail.com. It's never too early to be prepared.

With gratitude and respect,
Kyla Brooke
President, FoVG

LISA HUG JOINS THE RESTORATION EFFORT

FoVG welcomes Lisa Hug who will be our contractor working in the Preserve this season. She is currently an ornithology instructor at College of Marin, Petaluma Adult School, and Point Reyes Field Institute.

Her background includes degrees in biology and science education and she is a volunteer coordinator for the Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas. In her spare time, Lisa volunteers as an eBird Reviewer for Sonoma County. Lisa's past experience includes Field Supervisor for the Bay Trail

Project and Supervising Surveyor for Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.



Last May, Lisa conducted a plant survey at the Preserve, providing insight beyond the original survey done almost ten years ago. Her report to the Restoration Committee confirmed that we are on the right path in our work. This season, Lisa will lead the Committee on tours of the Preserve to help with both identification and training on the removal of our pesky weeds, and provide guidance for our planting plan.

A BUMPY RIDE IN VG

For years we've been hearing community complaints about the ruts, potholes, winter street ponds and the narrowing of Villa Grande roads from wild vegetation. The deep ruts on the 3rd Street access to Patterson Point Preserve during the winter are also a problem, along with the redwood widow makers hanging over the area.

We called the County about installing gravel on 3rd Street, and to our surprise, the Director of Transportation and Public Works, Johannes Hoevertsz showed up in Villa Grande to check out the situation! The County has responded already by trimming vegetation on the town square, and we are in discussions with them about other improvements.

THE JANSSEN/VAIL HOUSE

Perched at the end of Russian River Ave where it meets Willow Way is the green Vail home, which Gladys Vail's grandmother, Anna Janssen purchased in 1920 from the Busse-maker family, a year before Gladys was born. The house was built by Bill Paterson, after whom Patterson Point Preserve was named, though FoVG inadvertently added another "t" to the name.

The house has hosted six generations of the Janssen and Vail families. As was common at the time, "Nana" Anna would stay in Villa Grande from April to October, while her grandchildren, Gladys, Barbara and Howard would come for most of the summer. Gladys' father would ferry the family in their old Model T Ford to Sausalito from San Francisco and drive them up to Villa Grande via Starrett Hill Drive, since Moscow Road was a train track. Until the train stopped running in 1935, a vendor would come though Villa Grande with a horse cart to sell vegetables, and a man in an auto filled with ice would arrive once a week to sell meat.

The post office was located in a little store across from the train station in what is now the "Beulah Belle" cabin on Willow Way.

Gladys remembered spending every summer playing horseshoes, baseball (the town was filled with boys and girls), going to the beach at the end of 5th Street and canoeing on the river. But when the noon train arrived at the Villa Grande station and sounded its whistle, all the kids would be expected to head home for lunch.



Gladys on the front steps of Vail House

Built on an elevated framework of redwood lumber over a hundred years ago, the Vail house has never had water inside. The flood of '86 came within 6 inches, but not inside! Many original features still grace the house, such as old-time lighting fixtures, a "San-Francisco icebox" with access to cool outside air, a wood-burning stove, a wall-mounted crank phone, a linoleum "rug" and a sleeping porch.

For 97 years, Gladys Janssen Vail was a part of the Villa Grande summer community. We are saddened by her passing this past January, and wish to honor her years in Villa Grande and acknowledge her generous support of the Friends of Villa Grande since its beginning. Thanks, Gladys, we won't forget you.

- Phyllis Brewer & Roberto Esteves

OFF THE BEATEN PATH: BACKCOUNTRY EVENT IN PPP

On September 9, 2009, Friends of Villa Grande obtained title to Patterson Point Preserve, and has since spent thousands of dollars and hundreds of volunteer hours restoring the Preserve, making it more welcoming. For the first time, we are inviting FoVG members and the public to a behind-the-scenes walking tour of the Preserve, plus three short background presentations, all followed by a hosted cocktail party.

One presentation covers Villa Grande's history and the formation of FoVG; at another, you will be introduced to the restoration efforts, including future plans. The third stop presents an interactive experience with slide shows, historical materials and a video presentation about the Preserve. Docents will lead you through the Preserve

"backcountry" for the fourth experience of the day. Sturdy walking shoes are advised.

This is a unique opportunity for you to understand the stewardship policies driving the restoration, and then see the changes to the land on the tour. Participants will receive a special gift, the newly published book "We bought An Ivy Jungle" by Restoration Committee chair, Leah Norwood.

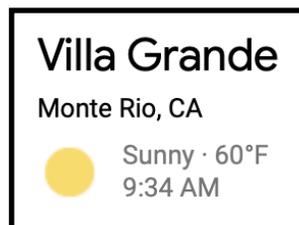
The event is Saturday, October 26, and begins at 2:45 p.m, ending at 6:00. The event is limited to 32 people, and tickets are going fast. Cost is \$15.00 per person. To reserve your space, email:

friends@villagrande.org

FINDING VILLA GRANDE

Sonoma County doesn't recognize Villa Grande as a distinct community, which is at least partly why Google maps lists us as "Monte Rio, CA." Since we share several street names, emergency responders have been misdirected to Monte Rio, and in some cases, service and delivery providers have refused to come at all!

Kyra Wink and Rich Holmer sent surveys to 267 households in Villa Grande to find out their views on



the issue. With a 40% return rate, over ninety percent of the responders were supportive of pursuing formal County recognition.

Kyra and Rich are working on a proposal with the County to define Villa Grande based on the historic parcel maps of Mesa Grande. All potential impacts (positive and negative) will be brought back to the Villa Grande community for discussion before any changes would be finalized.

HOLIDAY & BIRTHDAY GIFTING

It's never too early to start thinking about your next gift-giving opportunity. Fortunately, we have suggestions.

We Bought an Ivy Jungle A new and colorful photographic essay detailing the acquisition and restoration of the Patterson Point Preserve. Delight and enlighten your friends and family with this book, and show them why you support the Friends of Villa Grande. \$15

Our white-on-black VG sweatshirts make perfect California winter gifts, and are just the right weight for wearing around the house until the fireplace heats up. Specify: S, M, L, XL or XXL. \$25.00

To order, send a check plus \$5 for tax, shipping and handling, to FoVG at POB 18, Villa Grande, 95486. Or call Roberto to arrange for payment and pickup at 415-282-1800 to save some bucks.

FIREHOUSE PLAZA CLEANUP GETS UNDERWAY

A condition of FoVG's five year extension from Sonoma County to continue using the Villa Grande firehouse is that the ivy and blackberries in the surrounding area be removed. It's hoped this improves drainage during storms, diverting water from the street into the natural swale behind the firehouse.



Marcy Beck, Ruben Garcia, Tom Cocuzzi and Jim Beck. Not shown: Roberto Esteves

A crew of five volunteers launched the first attack on August 31, filling five green cans with the plants. Additional work days are planned, and all volunteers are welcomed. If you are able to help, contact friends@villagrande.org.

PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

Recent floods and fires have amped up the concern about emergency preparedness in Villa Grande. Efforts to organize over the past two years have included house meetings, committee formations, grab-and-go bag demonstrations and even pertinent advice from the Fire Chief. The current plan, led by Jim Beck, has identified full-time residents who are graciously taking on the responsibility of thinking through and acting on specific issues before disaster strikes.

Evacuation Planning Rich Holmer is reviewing various evacuation scenarios, working with the local fire department and communications team. This could include preprinted maps, one way road signs and handouts of where to go in an emergency.

Medical Issues Kyra Wink and Katie Gibson, both medical professionals, will coordinate our local emergency response along with any neighbors with medical training. They will also make sure sufficient supplies for short-term care are available in Villa Grande.

Communications Kyla Brooke and Roberto Esteves are setting up a Villa Grande information phone number for collecting emergency calls and sending out bulletins. Messages left on the phone will be monitored and responded to by team members, to help everyone stay informed.

Community Preparedness/Logistics: Tom Cocuzzi and Chris Resler will address sustenance supplies: water, food, shelter and community-wide emergency needs. This could include purchases by FoVG for sharing and group buys of items such as water barrels or fire extinguishers.

Individual Preparedness Jim Beck has prepared a list for your grab-and-go bag, available online at tinyurl.com/VGgrabgo. No reason to wait - download the list, dig that old backpack out of the closet and get started!

Emergency Contact List Aside from emergency preparedness, we are also gearing up for an "emergency response" situation. That could include going door to door if evacuation is imminent, checking for property damage after a windstorm or handing out flashlights during a power outage.

To support this effort, we are building a (voluntary) database that includes emergency contact information as well as any special needs or special skills. If you would like to be included, please download and fill out the Contact Information form at tinyurl.com/VGcontact. Return the form to Roberto Esteves, PO Box 18, Villa Grande 95486 or email the form to:

EmergencyVG@gmail.com.

Thanks for getting prepared!

SUMMER PARKING IN VILLA GRANDE

On Saturday, May 18, Andrea Buffa chaired a town hall meeting focused on parking issues. Over the past year, community members have been tabulating weekend Preserve visitors and cars parked in Villa Grande on weekends, and a lively discussion ensued. There was consensus to pursue these ideas:

- ◆ Clear ivy and blackberries from the roadsides where parking can be accommodated. Sonoma County has now started to address the issue with a recent weed-whacking, but the job is far from complete.

- ◆ Put up signs directing drivers to parking areas on 3rd and 4th Street. This has been implemented

on busy weekends.

- ◆ Install bike parking. Cycling enthusiast Phil Schnayerson has made recommendations about which bike rack to install; the location, size and cost are still to be determined.

- ◆ Consider making Russian River Avenue one way between 3rd and 4th street for pedestrian safety. Since the meeting, affected neighbors have weighed in, expressing little support for the idea.

The weekend parking survey will continue, and no doubt there are more community meetings in our future on the topic.

CALENDAR

Restoration Work Party
Patterson Point Preserve
Volunteers Welcome
Bring Your Work Gloves
Saturday, September 21
10:00 a.m. - Noon

Fire Safety Workshop
Monte Rio Community Center
Saturday, September 21
3:00 p.m.

Wonderland Radio Hour
Villa Grande & Monte Rio
KRCB radio 91.1 FM
Sunday, October 20
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Off the Beaten Path
Celebrating PPP with Talks,
Tours & Cocktails
Saturday, October 26
2:45 - 6:00 p.m.
RSVP: friends@villagrande.org

FoVG Board Meetings
First Saturday of the Month
Old Hotel, 21849 East Street
10:00 a.m. - Noon

Online at:
villagrande.org/calendar

ON THE WEB AT
VILLAGRANDE.ORG

STINGING NETTLE

The Preserve has a healthy stand of *Urtica dioica*, subspecies *gracilis*, also known as American Stinging Nettle. It is a perennial that grows to 4-6' in the summer and dies back to the ground in winter. When touched, tiny hairs on the leaf inject histamines and other chemicals that cause a painful rash.

The plant has been used for centuries for food and drink, since the sting is removed by soaking or heating. The stems have been used in textiles, as a replacement for cotton.



FIRE SAFETY TIPS

- Keep roofs clean
 - Top off or remove dead trees
 - Have visible address #
 - Clear around propane tank
 - Trim trees overlapping roofs
 - No burnables against house
- Inspections of property are being conducted in Villa Grande by the Monte Rio Fire Department. You will be notified if any issues are found. Stay safe!

MONITORING AIR QUALITY

A web-based monitoring network called PurpleAir uses private and public monitors to track air pollution. There is a monitor in Villa Grande, another in Rio Nido and a third near Camp Thayer on the Cazadero Highway. If you click on the sensor, the graph of the previous week's readings is displayed. Two different pollution standards are tracked (PM2.5 and PM10), along with humidity and temperature. PurpleAir.com is the website, or use the shortcut tinyurl.com/VGair to go directly to the map of our local area.

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