

May 2022  
ISSUE 31

# 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 another season of fun in Villa Grande.

It is exciting to be returning to normal activities! Our traditional Fourth of July festivities will resume at 4:00 p.m., when we gather in the town square. The Declaration of Independence will once again be read, followed by a parade with the Hubbub Club. Remember to bring your kazoos to join the Kid's Kazoo Khorus of patriotic songs. We will end up at the Firehouse Plaza for dancing to the Fargo Brothers. Come join in!

We will host the Villa Grande Town Hall Meeting at the Firehouse Plaza on Saturday July 2, from 10-11:00 a.m. with guest speakers Johannes Hoevertsz, Sonoma's Interim Director of General Services, and Sara Paul of Watch Duty Sonoma. Come listen and bring your questions.

Immediately after the Town Hall, we'll hold our annual FoVG membership meeting, from

11:00-noon, also at the Firehouse Plaza. We'll review our 2021 activities with an update on FoVG Plans for the upcoming year. Current members will be able to vote for candidates for the FoVG Board of Directors.

Two Board members, Ruben Garcia and Renata Foucre, have decided to not run for re-election this July. Thank you, Renata and Ruben for your service. Running for re-election are Tim Cahn, Sukey Robb-Wilder, and Kelsey Sheofsky. If you would like to consider joining our amazing board, please contact me at [housematters@kbrooke.biz](mailto:housematters@kbrooke.biz) or call me at (707) 481-0098

Thank you everyone for being part of our little special community in Villa Grande. We are so lucky!

With Gratitude and Respect,

Kyla Brooke  
President, Friends of Villa Grande

## PATTERSON POINT PRESERVE DOCENTS NEEDED!

As we plan for summer visitors to the Preserve, there will be extra challenges related to low flow of the river and the expected blooms of toxic blue-green algae. To educate beachgoers and control the numbers - limited to 150 by our agreement with Open Space - we are asking for community volunteers to sit at the "Docent Desk" at the entrance during high use days.



Our local Blue Heron

Additionally, FoVG is seeking to hire a person to coordinate and train volunteers and provide coverage during the hours of 11:00 to 3:00 on weekends.

Whether you can give just a few hours or would like to apply for the paid coordinator position, please let us know at: [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org)

## BOAT ANCHORAGE 2022

Anchors aweigh...or would you perhaps prefer to anchor your boat on FoVG's chain on the gravel beach? The FoVG Boat Anchorage program for 2022 launches on May 14. Members as of April 15 are entitled to one boat slot per household, on a first come, first served basis.

A liability waiver must be signed and a label to identify your boat will be required, no exceptions. So if you are interested in renting anchorage for your kayak, canoe or paddle-board for \$150 until October 15, please email to: [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org)

## ROAD REPORTS - HIGH, LOW AND ACROSS

**HIGH: Moscow Road.** Several residents responded to the call for letters to our US Representative Jared Huffman in support of the County's effort to release FEMA funds to repair Moscow Road. The funds had been previously authorized, but were suspended due to mounting pressure on FEMA from other natural disasters. Fortunately, the lobbying campaign worked, and FEMA has restarted the project to build a permanent bridge across the gap in Moscow Road. The Environmental Impact Study is now underway which will clear the way for construction. Unfortunately, there is no timeframe for the Study.

**LOW: Villa Grande Drainage and Repaving.** It's been a bumpy road, but the repaving of the streets of Villa Grande is back on track. On April 6, the Sonoma Board of Supervisors approved a professional services agreement with Schaaf & Wheeler Civil Engineers. For the next three months they will be working with

the County's project manager, Yoash Tilles, who will help with the initial information gathering and assist with arranging community input. The Hydraulics and Hydrology Study (aka Drainage Survey) should begin in approximately three months.

**ACROSS: New Monte Rio Bridge.** The draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Monte Rio bridge is now available for review here: [tinyurl.com/MRbridgeEIR](https://www.tinyurl.com/MRbridgeEIR). If you would like to comment on the EIR, email to:

Jackson.Ford@sonoma-county.org before 5:00 p.m on May 18.

Additionally, there will be a virtual public hearing on May 17 where you may comment "live". Login details for that meeting will be available here: [tinyurl.com/SoCoCalendar](https://www.tinyurl.com/SoCoCalendar). You may also request a print or flash drive copy of the EIR, provided at cost, by contacting Jackson Ford at (707) 565-8356.

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## FUNDING FOREST FIRE CAMERAS & WATCH DUTY

A spate of troubling fires in the local forests over the past months raised concerns that there may be an arsonist on the loose. At the request of Monte Rio Firehouse Volunteer Sara Paul, Friends of Villa Grande coordinated a fund-raising campaign to purchase wireless trail cameras. The funds raised allowed Sara and Monte Rio Fire Board member Kari Morrissey (in photo) to buy and install approximately 50 cameras throughout the adjacent hills.

Since the cameras went up, the fires have stopped and Chief Baxman and the Cal Fire arson team are reviewing video to identify possible suspects. Thanks to all our donors for such an amazing response!



An organization Sara is associated with has developed a phone app, called Watch Duty, that reports real-time information about nearby fires and firefighting efforts. The app provides updates for Sonoma, Lake, Napa and Mendocino counties. Watch Duty is available to download free for both Apple and Android phones.

To hear more details regarding Sara's work with fire safety, come to the Villa Grande Town Hall meeting on July 2 at 10:00 a.m. at the Firehouse Plaza. Sara will be making a presentation regarding the Watch Duty program and more details on emergency services.

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## PROGRESS IN PATTERSON POINT PRESERVE

The spring rains have the Preserve bursting with blooms, even though the drought is far from over. During the winter, we added several native plants, including 4 red alders, 2 hazelnuts along the main path, a flowering currant, a blue elderberry at the Preserve entrance and a batch of natives at the path's "T". These included California blackberry, bee plant, snowberries, fringe cups and western sword ferns. These new plants will be hand watered throughout the summer to ensure a healthy start.

The dead Douglas fir that was topped by the osprey nest across the river from the gravel beach fell with a splash back in November. It was riddled with holes by acorn woodpeckers using it as a granary and other birds making nests. Since early spring, we've had a pair of ospreys nesting across from the sandy beach in a PG&E pole-top box. There's a chance it's the same pair from the fir nest, so keep an eye out for chicks.

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## RUSSIAN RIVER WATER QUALITY

With the drought and low river flow, we expect water quality will worsen over the summer. The County will monitor the water quality weekly and update the sign at the top of the path, or you can see the latest tests here: [tinyurl.com/VGalgae](https://www.tinyurl.com/VGalgae).

In the past, the testing found low levels of anatoxin-a at Patterson Point. This toxin comes from blue green algae and is highly poisonous to dogs. It also causes problems for infants and persons with compromised immune systems. Recommendations:

- Stay away from algae in the river and on the ground.
- Do not drink or cook with river water.
- Do not let pets drink the water, or lick scum at the shoreline.
- For any fish caught, throw away guts and clean fillets with tap or bottled water before cooking.
- Shower after river play, especially children and pets. If dogs lick their fur after swimming, they could ingest the toxin.

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## WEEDING PARTY THANK YOU!

We thank our Preservation Steward, Kaya Halpern and four Westminster Woods staff members who volunteered to pull ivy in the Preserve for several hours on Monday, April 25.

The work party of Kaya, Casey Stachelskit, Lil Karl Corey Kaye and Rebecca (aka Grey Whale) did a great job. Feel free to come back anytime!

## PETER O'SULLIVAN 1930-2021

Farewell to our friend Peter O'Sullivan who passed away on Dec 18. Born in Limerick, Ireland, Peter came to the US in 1956. He met his future wife Serena at a church dance in 1959, getting married a year later. In the 70's they bought Innishfree, the little green cottage at the curve of Russian River Avenue.

Peter loved Villa Grande, never missing an opportunity to chat on his walks and bicycle rides through town. We will miss Peter's charm and lilting voice, but are grateful that his family will continue to have their vacation home in Villa Grande and continue to be part of the community.



Peter demonstrates the proper way to prune a tree.

## EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PREPARATION

As part of their emergency response planning, several communities have been looking into using two-way radios to communicate when other means fail. Renata Foucre and Jim Beck are representing Villa Grande in this effort. Two handheld walkie-talkie radio types - GMRS (licensed) and and FRS (unlicensed) - are being considered for emergency use.



We'll be testing to determine the range across Villa Grande and the terraces, and we'll also schedule an exercise (this summer) inviting neighbors to use their own radios to get acquainted with the process.

Details will be announced in an upcoming electronic newsletter. Stay tuned and keep in touch!

## RETURNING TO "OFF THE BEATEN PATH" IN PPP

The personalized tours of Patterson Point Preserve that were scheduled for October 26, 2019 - the day of the fire evacuation - are back on the calendar, only 1037 days later! The event, which will include presentations and cocktails, is a docent-led "backcountry" walking tour of PPP, showing off the restoration results from the past 13 years of work.

The new date is August 28, and it will start at 2:45 p.m. Space is limited, but those who signed up for the original event will have priority. There is also a wait list for others interested in attending.

Contact [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org) for more information.

## DIA DE LOS MUERTOS 2022

Our first ever Dia de los Muertos was held on October 31 last year in true Villa Grande style. Despite rain, we built an ofrenda, had photos, stories and remembrances for those loved and lost, including ancestors, animals, friends, family and all our relations.



The turnout was great, and we expect to add this to the list of our own Villa Grande traditions.

Kyra, Katie, Gloria and Roberto (no last names, please!) dress to show appropriate respect for the occasion.

## TOWN SQUARE ANNUAL CLEANUP

The Villa Grande town square - with the big redwood stump - is in need of some TLC. On Saturday, May 14, we're asking for volunteers to assemble at 10:00 a.m. to tidy the space, clearing out fallen branches, pulling ivy and removing weeds.

Aside from making the area look nicer, we'll be removing potential fire fuel. Wear your work gloves, sunscreen and be prepared to spend an hour or two spiffing up Villa Grande. Hope to see you there!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### FoVG Board Meetings Over Zoom

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the Month

10:00 a.m. - Noon

For Zoom link, email [friends@villagrande.org](mailto:friends@villagrande.org)

### Annual Town Square Cleanup

10:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 14

### Boat Anchorage for the summer Begins May 14

VG Town Hall  
Firehouse Plaza  
Saturday, July 2  
10:00-11:00 a.m.

FoVG Annual Meeting  
Firehouse Plaza  
Saturday, July 2  
11:00 a.m. - Noon

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

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



ON THE WEB AT  
**VILLAGRANDE.ORG**

**MILKMAIDS**

Cardamine californica, or milkmaids, is a perennial flowering plant in the family Brassicaceae, native to western North America. It is one of the earliest to flower, with its characteristic four petals showing faint darker veins running lengthwise. The flower closes its petals in late afternoon as the sun goes down and nods its pedicel before a rain, protecting the pollen. This native plant was introduced into the Preserve this year. [photo: americansouthwest.net]



**NEW MEMBER/RESIDENT RECEPTION**

FoVG's Board and Membership Committee is sweeping out the social cobwebs and inviting new community members to share a convivial afternoon in the garden of Roberto Esteves. The reception is Sunday, May 22, from noon to 3:00 p.m. If you first joined FoVG after May 2020, or have moved to Villa Grande or the terraces since then, watch for an email invitation in early May, and welcome to the community!

**JULY 2: VG TOWN HALL & FOVG MEETINGS**

Please join us for the Villa Grande Town Hall at 10:00 a.m. The President's Report has the details, including the speakers scheduled to attend. Then at 11:00 a.m., the FoVG annual members' meeting will convene, with reports on plans for the upcoming year in the town and on the Preserve. Current members are eligible to vote for candidates for the Board of Directors.

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send check and form to FoVG  
 PO Box 28, Villa Grande, CA 95486  
 or online through Paypal at  
[villagrande.org/Membership.html](http://villagrande.org/Membership.html)