

September 2022
ISSUE 32

FRIENDS *of* VILLA GRANDE NEWSLETTER

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**New Time and Date:
FoVG Board Meetings
Over Zoom**
**2nd Wednesday of the
Month**
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.
**For Zoom link, email
friends@villagrande.org**

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,

Change of season, change of operations. After five years of amazing volunteer service as the Patterson Point Preserve Manager, Leah Norwood is stepping down and will now train her replacement, Kaya Halpern. Kaya is familiar with Patterson Point, having been a paid steward doing weeding and watering over the past year.



She will now coordinate the activities specified in the 2022-23 Plan of Restoration Action, and guide the FoVG Restoration Committee in formulating the budget and plan for next season.

Kaya's former position of Preserve Steward will be filled by Louyah Niall, who until re-

cently lived in Villa Grande. Our other Steward is Vickie Sneed, who has been helping in the Preserve for many years.

A heartfelt "thank you" to Leah for her dedicated service, helping to make the Preserve such a special place. Leah was one of the original FoVG board members, and she has also written two books about our Preserve, *We Inherited an Ivy Jungle* and *52 Birds*.

Patterson Point Preserve and Friends of Villa Grande thrive on volunteers and on your financial support. If you would like to volunteer please contact me at:

kbroke3@me.com

Thank you for your continued membership in Friends of Villa Grande and for being a part of our little community.

With Gratitude and Respect,

Kyla Brooke
President, Friends of Villa Grande

PROGRESS IN THE PRESERVE: PAST AND FUTURE

This past work season (September-February) included planting red alders, hazelnut trees and beautiful native plants near the main path split. Ironically we had to do some cleanup after the October atmospheric river (rain) event, though we're in a drought.

The osprey tree tumbled into the river in November, but they found a new home on the power pole platform across from the sandy beach. They successfully nested and raised two chicks there. The dead fir tree in the Preserve - visible from Russian River Avenue - is one of their favorite dining roosts.

Environmental teachers from Westminster Woods volunteered to work in the second swale, pulling ivy. Our volunteers and stewards are watering young plants and weeding invasives.

For the coming work season, we'll be planting natives where the ivy has been removed and also in the hedgerow along the east property line. A Fremont cottonwood tree is scheduled to be planted as well. STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed) will have a class come to the Preserve and infill their plantings from 2018.

We're always looking for people to volunteer for the Restoration Committee, no experience necessary, simply bring your love for the Preserve.

Guided by the Restoration Plan, committee members select plants, then plan and participate in work days for weeding and planting. For more information, contact:

friends@villagrande.org.

RIVER TWIN CABIN #2 BY BARRY NELSON

In 1910, Florence Nelson's father won a cabin on the uphill side of Mesa Grande Terrace in a poker game in San Francisco. In 1929, her husband, Henry S. Nelson, decided to build a cabin across the street along with his best friend, Jack Keating. They ended up building mirror image cabins, at 21890 and 21878, referred to as River Twins #1 (Jack) and #2 (Henry).

The two cabins have decks just 15 feet apart, facing each other, so the families could catch up without leaving their own deck. At the time they were built, today's towering redwoods were mere saplings, and Florence Nelson remembered seeing the river over the tops of the trees.

Twin #2, on the right, also called "The Shack" by Henry and Florence, is a single-walled box with windows that were allegedly salvaged from homes damaged in the 1906 earthquake and fire. Cooking was done on Florence's mother's wood and coal stove, which is still there. The flooring is salvaged Navy linoleum, and in 1945, the cabin got its biggest upgrade, a bathroom to replace the outhouse. The original icebox was replaced with a refrigerator in the 1950s.

During the summers before World War II, the Nelsons packed up the children (cleverly named Henry M. and Florence) for the

long car ride to Villa Grande, where Mom and the kids spent the summer. Before the train tracks were removed from Moscow Road in 1935, the last mile in the car was on Starrett Hill Drive. The men came up by train on their days off, after working as firemen in San Francisco.

Henry S. and Florence passed the cabin to Henry M. and Barbara Nelson, who raised their three children in the cabin on weekends and summer vacations. In the 1970s, the boys, Scott and Barry, built two collapsible plywood and canvas kayaks that still frequent the river at Patterson Point. Their love of rivers, inspired by the mighty

Russian, led Barry and sister Karen to become whitewater river guides.

Henry M. died in November of 2021 and some of the final memories he shared were of his many happy days "up at the river." Barbara Nelson still enjoys hearing about adventures in Villa Grande from the cabin's current owners, Barry Nelson and Jill Cornwell. After three generations, River Twin #2 is still a family weekend and summer refuge. It remains, as Barry calls it, his favorite place in the world or – as Jill calls it – the Nelson Family Depression-Era Theme Park.



GETTING OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Originally planned for 2019, but delayed by the fire evacuation and then Covid, the "Off the Beaten Path" event finally happened on August 28. Attendees were treated to three presentations in the yards of homes near the Preserve plus a guided walk into the Preserve "back-country".

The presentations provided context for the off-trail tours of Patterson Point Preserve. Jim Beck presented a slide show of the history of Villa Grande and the area, while Roberto Esteves talked about the birth and growth of FoVG and changes to the Preserve from 2006 to today. Leah Norwood provided a multi-media extravaganza

with a video presentation by Rich Holmer and former PPP Manager, Victoria Wikle, plus historical postcards, books and a slide show about PPP plants.



Two docents, Rich Holmer and Linda Fisher led small groups of attendees through the far back sections of the Preserve and explained the progress of the restoration work. The grand finale was a cocktail party in the garden of Sukey and Natalie Robb-Wilder, where participants had the opportunity to talk to each other about their experiences, acknowledge Leah's great organizing skills, and to welcome Kaya Halpern (left), PPP's new manager and PPP's new steward Louyah Niall.

REPAVING VILLA GRANDE ROADS TAKES A STEP

Schaaf & Wheeler, a civil engineering firm, is currently working on a study of Villa Grande streets to identify drainage issues. They will recommend steps to improve drainage and reduce ponding prior to the repaving of Villa Grande's roads. The project is still in the data collection and early engineering phase and preliminary results were presented to the public on September 13 at an online community forum.

Ten people from Villa Grande clicked in to the meeting and were presented maps, drawings and photos showing possible

remedies. Several of the participants asked questions and added details, even pointing out one drainage inlet that didn't show up on their map!

Before the presentation got to the "next steps" slide a 4.4 magnitude earthquake shook the area, especially the presenters near the epicenter in Santa Rosa, ending the meeting. The county is taking our public comments back to Schaaf & Wheeler for their response. We expect there will be another community forum; stay tuned!

THE FUN IS BACK, BABY!

Covid put a damper on social activities the past two years, but the FoVG Recreation Committee got serious about having fun in 2022, with a focus on outdoor happenings. **Mardi Gras** in February broke the seal, with music, costumes, dancing, food and drink with 100 attendees. Just as in The Big Easy, Hurricane cocktails were de rigeur. Still, the event was kid friendly, and even included baby goats!



In May, a **Welcoming Reception** for new Villa Grande neighbors - where “new” stretched back

3 years - was held in the back yard of Roberto Esteves. The warm afternoon drew about 20 for nibbles and sips, which was the first FoVG event for many.

Carrying on a tradition of over 50 years, the town’s **Fourth of July** celebration featured costumes, the Children’s Chorus, speeches and marching, led by our perennial favorite, the Hubbub Club band. As the patriotism and the sun receded, the Fargo Brothers provided tunes at the Villa Grande firehouse for dancing into the night.



The merriment continued on July 30, with a **Triple Progressive Party** in the Terraces. Nancy and Rick Lopes kicked it off in their aerie garden where a groaning board of starters whetted appetites for the feast awaiting the hiking band of almost 50 Terristas (Terraces dwellers).

Bryan Hughes and Tom Bagby hosted the second party in their stunning ranch on the hill with pulled pork sliders and a variety of warm and cold side dishes. The party reached its pinnacle with a taco feast on the treetop deck of Dee and Jen Lyson-Soza.



Next year’s progressive party will be in the Villa Grande flats, and we’re looking for hosts and houses - maybe yours?

The **Off the Beaten Path** event on August 28 (article on facing page) was a production of the Restoration Committee, and may become an annual event.



Friends of Villa Grande hardly has a lock on fun, however. Townspeople came together for the annual **Talent Show** on September 3, showcasing talent of all ages, and this year ending with Disco Mania. Start honing your talent now for next year’s show!

A nod to the past was a **Pop-up Baseball** game in the town square on the following Sunday morning. Multiple generations played, but the little ones were clearly the winners.



Plans are coming together for a variety of fun event possibilities over the next months. There’s even a rumor of a Karaoke fundraiser for FoVG! The Recreation Committee is always looking for help, so go ahead and let Kyla know at: kbrooke3@me.com

TOWN SQUARE CLEANUP

Every year the community gets together to tidy our public spaces, pulling weeds and clearing trash. What we call the “Town Square” includes the area around the central dead redwood tree, then north to the parking area where abandoned boats used to reside.

Sixteen neighbors came together in April, com-



Sukey Robb-Wilder, Chris Resler, Jon Box & Photobombers



Bonnie Peterson finds lost bowling ball!

pletely filing a large dumpster with weeds, ivy and debris.

A neighbor along West Street also removed much of the bamboo and ivy across from the Town Square. Next year we’ll be back at it and we hope you can join us!

RIVER CARPETED IN AZOLLA



For a few days in September, the river was covered next to the rocky beach with azolla, also called duckweed fern. With the river mouth open, the invasive is slowly being swept out to sea.



ON THE WEB AT
VILLAGRANDE.ORG

NEW WAYSIDE BENCH

Designed by Jim Beck, constructed by M4 Specialties in Guerneville and installed with the help of Andrew Ahn on July 5, the fabulous "Wayside Bench" is on the Patterson Point Preserve path across from the fallen redwood tree. The bench is redwood, made from a tree sourced near Cazadero. Your FoVG dues covered the cost, thank you!



WILD GINGER (ASARUM CAUDATUM)

Also along the main path in the Preserve, you'll see one of the most prolific native plants, wild ginger. A perennial with dark green heart-shaped leaves, indigenous people used the roots for tea. Rubbing the leaves releases a ginger aroma, though it is not related to ginger spice. It propagates with seeds dispersed by ants or via rhizomes, and it is deer resistant!



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/members