

# PARKS UPDATE ❤️ YOUR PARKS!



Friends of Santa Cruz  
State Parks  
That'sMyPark.org  
f t i p i



## Parks & Beaches Supported

- Año Nuevo State Park
- Bean Hollow State Beach
- Big Basin Redwoods State Park
- Burleigh Murray Ranch State Park
- Butano State Park
- Castle Rock State Park
- Castro Adobe State Historic Park
- Coast Dairies State Park
- Fall Creek State Park
- Gazos Creek State Beach
- Half Moon Bay State Beach
- Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park
- Lighthouse Field State Beach
- Manresa State Beach
- Manresa Uplands State Beach
- Montara State Beach
- Natural Bridges State Beach
- New Brighton State Beach
- Palm State Beach
- Pebble State Beach
- Pescadero State Beach
- Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park
- Pomponio State Beach
- Portola Redwoods State Park
- Rancho del Oso
- Rio Del Mar State Beach
- San Gregorio State Beach
- Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park
- Seabright State Beach
- Seacliff State Beach
- Sunset State Beach
- The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park
- Twin Lakes State Beach
- Wilder Ranch State Park



# DEAR PARK LOVER,



Thank you for supporting our 34 wonderful local state parks and beaches!

As we started the new year, our Friends and State Parks team was continuing recovery work from the CZU Fire when our community was dealt a fresh challenge by a series of atmospheric rivers that closed parks and caused heartbreaking damage at Seacliff State Beach.

The community stepped up, as it always does. By donating generously to the Friends Seacliff Recovery Fund, you enabled key repairs to happen quickly. An astonishing number of you turned out for a touching goodbye-to-the-pier event and beach cleanup. And thanks to an extraordinary partnership between local contractors and park staff, access was quickly restored in time for Memorial Day weekend.

Amidst that disruption, we made progress this year on important projects and programs: public access to Big Basin increased; a years-long neighborhood collaborative project to highlight the history of Castle Beach was completed; exciting interpretive exhibits are being fabricated for the Castro Adobe; and our Kids2Parks field trip equity program continues to expand.

As a park operating partner, we carry our nimbleness, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit to work every day, creating new programs and completing projects. We bring the community's passion for parks to the table so we can care for the people and the places that make our area so special.

The love and care you show by visiting, paying your entry fees, volunteering, donating, becoming a Friends member, and shopping in our ParkStores, help us ensure our parks and beaches are thriving and available to all.

See you in the parks!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bonny Hawley".

Bonny Hawley, Executive Director  
Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks





# SEACLIFF & THE ATMOSPHERIC RIVER STORMS

2023 began with a series of historic storms that caused catastrophic damage to our coastline and community. Seacliff State Beach was hard hit when a large ocean swell, combined with high tides, caused the wooden pier to crumble and consumed large portions of the sea wall, walking path, and campground. Day use areas were severely damaged, and the park remained closed for an extended period. After exploring all possibilities, State Parks made the difficult decision to remove the damaged pier in the interest of public safety.

Friends quickly stepped in to create the Seacliff Recovery Fund to support State Parks in their clean-up response. To date the fund has raised more than \$120,000 from across the country to provide immediate short-term support, followed by investments in long-term recovery work to ensure public access and environmental protection at the park. In addition to generous individuals, Friends worked with community partners such as Marianne's Ice Cream, Scrumptious Fish & Chips, Locals 4 Santa Cruz Beaches, and the Aptos Chamber of Commerce & History Museum to raise funds and awareness. And Community Printers donated the printing of a commemorative deck of Seacliff playing cards.





The Moosehead Trail, which provides critical coastal access, was heavily damaged in the storm. Community Foundation Santa Cruz County worked with a generous donor to contribute the necessary funds that enabled Friends to partner with Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship to complete the repairs in record time.

In addition, Friends provided funding for fencing to keep the public safe, informational signage and support for the many crews who worked countless hours to restore public access.

Several other parks were impacted by the storms, closing intermittently throughout the winter months. Nisene Marks was closed for several weeks due to landslides, and Big Basin remained closed during January and February while State Parks worked to clear the trails and restore access. The backcountry at Wilder Ranch was also closed for several months while extensive repairs were made. Kudos to the crews who worked so hard to restore public access!

## Beach Clean Up

The public turned out in droves for a beach clean-up day and to say goodbye to the storm-damaged Seacliff pier before it was removed. It was an opportunity for community members of all ages to share their #SeacliffMemories of the pier and ship, and to take one last photo. The event was co-hosted by Friends, State Parks and Save Our Shores.

# CASTRO ADOBE

This year, we celebrated the preservation and restoration of the two-story adobe at the Castro Adobe State Historic Park, the result of a joint 20-year effort between Friends, State Parks and our dedicated community.

In April, we were deeply honored to accept the California Preservation Foundation's award for Preservation Design. Friends staff and State Parks continued our collaboration throughout the year.

Friends has been working diligently with the interpretive planning firm The Sibbet Group and fabricators Gizmo Art Production, Inc., on interpretive elements for the Castro Adobe house museum. The theme "If These Walls Could Talk" will be represented in interpretive signage, multi-media presentations, historically accurate furnishings, and touchable items such as spurs, horse tack and a handcrafted Californio saddle.

The historic graffiti walls will be well lit and protected by glass, and a few of the unrepaired walls will remain as "truth walls," showing changes over time. Students visiting the fandango room will find a video teaching them how to dance. Another video will explore the difficult subject of the Californios' loss of land in the Mexican Rancho period. The entire building will come alive with ambient sounds as well as creative visuals, helping the visitor imagine what life was like for the Castro family.

During the planning process, particular attention was given to revealing the stories of women and native people, two groups generally overlooked in the historic record, encouraging visitors to experience all facets of life on a Mexican Rancho.

We hope to see you in 2024 for the big reveal!



## Edna Kimbro Archive - Center for Early California History

In 2022, Friends formed the Edna Kimbro Archive - Center for Early California History Working Group, comprised of community members and experts who will plan and organize this new archive. The archive includes Edna Kimbro's library and collection of research materials, which were amassed during her lifetime and work as an historian. Items collected and donated to the archive since her passing in 2005 include the Fred Webster Structural Archive, the Villa de Branciforte Preservation Society Collection, the Branciforte Adobe Collection from the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, and the Helen Collins Collection.

In October 2023, the Edna Kimbro Archive was formally transferred to Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks from its long-time custodian, historian Charlene Duval. Friends is proud to be the owner of this important collection and we plan to open the archive to more researchers in the future at the Castro Adobe Historic Park.



# EQUITY & ACCESS

## Kids2Parks

Thanks to a generous community, we're welcoming more students than ever before to the parks through our popular Kids2Parks (K2P) field trip equity program. K2P funds transportation for kids from Title 1 schools so they can enjoy a field trip to a state park or beach. Title 1 is a designation by the federal government that indicates a high percentage of students from low-income families.

This past school year 2,711 students attended 55 in-person field trips and 2,172 attended 45 virtual field trips.

The K2P program has become well known outside our area. Recently our Program Director, Jo Kenny, met with a group from another state hoping to begin a similar program there.

You can support Kids2Parks: [ThatsMyPark.org/donate-k2p](https://ThatsMyPark.org/donate-k2p)



## Equity Fellowship Program

Our first Friends Equity Fellowship program was a big success. Three fellows worked as interpretive staff at the Castro Adobe State Historic Park, Castle Rock State Park and Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, receiving mentorship from park staff. The program was a collaboration with State Parks, Mountain Parks Foundation and the Portola & Castle Rock Foundation. We're proud of our fellows and hope they go on to great things after their year with Friends!



Carlos Campos



## Native Peoples

A project to create the Mission Virtual Bell Exhibit at Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park was completed. The exhibit is designed to address the controversy of California's mission bells and promote a greater understanding of the bell as a contested symbol. The exhibit was built using reclaimed redwood from fire-damaged trees at Big Basin. The project was funded by a grant from the Santa Cruz History Forum at the Museum of Art & History.

Friends also provided support for a State Parks event at Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park to debut the documentary, "It Needs to be Told: Native Californian Perspectives on the Missions." The film will be available for visitors to view in the park's museum.

## Park Access

Throughout 2023, Friends continued to help promote programs that provide park access for youth and low-income Californians, including the California State Park Adventure Pass for fourth graders and free Golden Bear passes that allow CalWORKS families to receive free park entry. We also supported the Watsonville Library Learning Program, which provided programming and park access to area families.

We continued our commitment to make our parks and beaches accessible to all, supporting State Parks' beach wheelchair program, and proudly continued to support Shared Adventures' Day on the Beach event. We're also in the planning stages for a new trail and beach accessibility program. Stay tuned!



# PUBLIC OUTREACH

Friends engaged with our community in many ways this year. We supported public events in the parks such as:

- Welcome Back Monarchs Day and the Migration Festival at Natural Bridges State Beach
- Old Fashioned Independence Day, Heritage Harvest Festival and State Parks Week at Wilder Ranch State Park
- Movie Night at Seacliff State Beach
- Open Houses at the Castro Adobe State Historic Park

Friends staff presentations included:

- Aptos Chamber of Commerce
- Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History
- Museum of Art and History
- Rotary Clubs in Santa Cruz, San Lorenzo Valley and Freedom
- Rio del Mar Improvement Association
- Cabrillo College and local high schools
- Numerous job fairs

And we engaged with community members at the Santa Cruz County History Fair, Santa Cruz Downtown Fridays, Watsonville Farmer's Market, Watsonville Strawberry Festival, Monterey Bay Birding Festival and many other events.

## Grand Marshals

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks was chosen as Grand Marshal for the Aptos 4th of July parade, an honor we were thrilled to receive. We took some time away from our annual Feed the Force event for a wonderful morning at the parade before going back to providing food, drinks, and support for the local and visiting law enforcement who keep our parks and beaches safe during the Independence Day celebrations.





# PARK SUPPORT SUCCESSES

## Volunteers

- Friends provided funding for volunteer and staff training, supplies and support services.
- Our Friends volunteer board members and committee members keep our organization moving forward. They have our ongoing appreciation and thanks; we couldn't do this without them.

## Staff

- Friends employed 95 Friends Visitor Service Aides and 10 Senior Visitor Service Aides, who are vital members of our park operations team.
- We funded 37 State Park Interpreter positions to provide field trips and educational programs.
- We funded two State Park facilities maintenance staff at Castle Rock State Park.
- We provided 17 Friends program staff and consultants to support conservation, facilities improvements, historic preservation, events, administration, public outreach and education, equity, inclusion and belonging.





## Projects & Programs

### Big Basin

Public access to Big Basin has continued to increase as the park recovers from the CZU Fire. As facilities are restored, opportunities to visit have gradually expanded through Friends' day use reservation system and limited first-come-first-served parking. Our staff in the entrance kiosk have welcomed more than 68,000 visitors since the park reopened in July 2022. We were also proud to be part of the team that brought back camping at Rancho del Oso this summer. You can make a reservation to visit and camp at [ThatsMyPark.org](https://ThatsMyPark.org).

### Castle Beach

A community-driven effort to share the history of Castle Beach, a well-known earlier name for part of Seabright State Beach, culminated with the installation of new bilingual interpretive signs and the replacement of the unique castle-shaped gate at the beach entrance. The years-long collaborative project for the beloved beach was accomplished with the Seabright Neighbors Association. Funding was provided by generous donations from neighbors, the Friends Board of Directors and supporters from as far away as Arizona, Hawaii and Oregon.

### Drinks & Snacks for the Parks

In August, Friends launched a program to sell water and snacks at Wilder Ranch, and the water sales were extended to Big Basin. Thirsty visitors can now support the parks through their purchase of water in reusable aluminum bottles from the ParkStore at Wilder Ranch and the kiosk at Big Basin. And don't miss the chocolate mushrooms at Wilder Ranch. They're delicious!





[ThatsMyPark.org/tribute-tables](https://ThatsMyPark.org/tribute-tables)



In 2023 family and friends honored Jo Ann Catania, LaNell Jensen & Tommy Manson, Brian McKenney & Hannah Muse, Sharon & Denis Ruttenberg, Sue & Andy Smith and honored the memories of Denise Bussel-Brabo, Kevin Conlon, Scotty Davis, Professor Margaret FitzSimmons, Don Genesy, Joan Jurickovich, Hanna Kirby, Dr. Harold & Donna La Font, Dianne LoForti, Milton Meyer, Marianna Eger Miller, Patch Mowery, Gloria Nieto, Forrest Pascal-List, David Ramsay, Ruth Rhoads, Glen Schaller, Mark William "Pop" Sutton, Lou Tuosto, Alisa Van Dissen, Clarence & Katherine Wells and the Yapp and Shrank Families.

Friends was honored by a generous bequest from the estate of Sarah A. Witham.

# YOUR SUPPORT MADE THE DIFFERENCE IN 2023

## Shop

In 2023, your shopping for a cause helped us raise more money than ever for our local state parks and beaches. Popular purchases included iconic Michael Schwab park illustrations on apparel, jewelry made by local artists, maps, nature guides, local history books and educational toys. Friends operates ParkStores at Seac Cliff, Natural Bridges, Wilder Ranch, New Brighton and Santa Cruz Mission, as well as the always-open ParkStore Online: [ThatsMyPark.org/collections](https://ThatsMyPark.org/collections).

- Tribute Tables are a great way to honor or memorialize loved ones with a new picnic table place in a local state park
- Name Friends as a beneficiary in your will, living trust, insurance account or other accounts or policies, or donate appreciated stock and qualified charitable gifts
- Shop at Wild Roots Market in Felton and Boulder Creek and support Friends through the Community Roots Program

## Donate

- Memberships are a great way to support our parks and beaches - become a Friend and consider donating monthly
- Support a special project or program such as Kids2Parks, the Wilder Ranch Farm Animal Program, the Castro Adobe, the Seac Cliff Recovery Fund, Big Basin Fire Recovery and more
- Donate your unwanted car, truck, boat, RV or even an airplane through Friends' CARS donation program

Friends thanks the following great community supporters that have donated their time and money through their special talents in 2023:

- » Kitayama Brothers KB Farms hosted another wildly successful Gerbera-N-Go Festival to benefit Kids2Parks
- » Discretion Brewery brewed Castle Beach Extra Pale Ale and hosted a fundraiser, with a portion of proceeds benefiting the Castle Beach project
- » Santa Clara Youth Probation Department's James Ranch partnered with Friends to build Tribute Tables

To give today, visit us online at [ThatsMyPark.org/donate](https://ThatsMyPark.org/donate), scan the QR code, mail to 1543 Pacific Ave, Suite 206, Santa Cruz, CA 95060, or call 831-429-1840.

All donated funds stay local and are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Tax ID# 51-0183410.





ThatsMyPark.org



Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks is a vital partner with California State Parks, creatively working to ensure our cherished local parks and beaches are thriving and available to all.

**Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks**

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