

PRESS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Divisions of Boating and Waterways, Historic Preservation and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation

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Restoration of Living Shoreline Planned for Rio Del Mar State Beach

A portion of the beach will be closed April 16-19 while work occurs

Aptos, Calif.—California State Parks, in partnership with Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, today announced a portion of Rio Del Mar State Beach will close in mid-April to continue restoration work on historic sand dunes near the Rio Esplanade, a project that will reduce sand erosion, improve coastal resiliency, and restore dune habitat.

State Parks began the project following 2021 storm activity and will reinforce the dunes with driftwood that has been collected at Rio Del Mar and the surrounding Seacliff State Beach area from this winter's storms. The driftwood will be buried in an interlocking manner and covered in beach sand. Later phases will involve the restoration of native dune vegetation to further improve coastal resiliency and benefit native biodiversity.

Work will occur from Tuesday to Friday, April 16-19. The beach will be closed from Aptos Creek to the east edge of the restroom during dune construction. Public access will be available at the eastern edge of the beach. Follow construction progress on social media ([Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)).

In recent years, Rio Del Mar State Beach has seen serious back beach sand erosion and loss of native vegetation due to strong winter storms, including atmospheric river events. These events led State Parks staff to conduct emergency operations to limit erosion that threatened public facilities and sensitive plant species but were unable to mitigate the loss of plant habitats. A long-term plan was created in partnership with local experts and the California Coastal Commission.

There is evidence the site of present-day Rio Del Mar State Beach was a wetland and dune habitat, featuring a vegetation-rich floodplain, in the 1920s and 1930s, before the Rio Del Mar Esplanade area was developed. This evidence helped inspire the dune restoration.

The project will create a two-dune system, underpinned by stacked driftwood logs sourced from surrounding Seacliff State Beach, and the planting of native plant communities atop these dunes. The dunes will span approximately a half-acre of the “back beach,” away from the average tideline, and vary in width from 40 to 100 feet. The dunes will be about 5 feet tall and planted with native seeds collected locally.

The historic storms that impacted California’s communities during recent winters and damaged this area of Rio Del Mar State Beach, as well as adjacent Seacliff and New Brighton state beaches, are evidence of a new reality the state’s shoreline faces because of climate change. As State Parks develops plans to restore services and amenities for visitors, providing climate-resilient facilities will be a critical consideration.

The recovery process is supported by Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks. Through their unique position as operating partners with State Parks, the nonprofit has established the Seacliff State Beach Recovery Fund (ThatsMyPark.org/SeacliffRecoveryFund). The fund provides short-term support, followed by investments in long-term recovery work to ensure public access and environmental protection at Seacliff State Beach. Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks also provides State Parks with public outreach services and park operational support.

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California State Parks and the recreational programs supported by its divisions of Boating and Waterways, Historic Preservation and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation provide the opportunity for families, friends, and communities to connect. Off-highway motor vehicle recreation, boating activities, horseback riding, cycling, hiking, camping, rock climbing, tours, hikes, school group enrichment, and special events are just some of the activities enjoyed in 279 park units organized into 21 field districts throughout the state. Learn more at www.parks.ca.gov.

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About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

Established in 1976, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) 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’ innovative and collaborative community partnership provides support and investment for education, equity and inclusion, conservation, facilities improvements, historic preservation and cultural events. Friends currently operates a robust online ParkStore offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. Friends also operates ParkStores at Natural Bridges, New Brighton, Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff and Wilder Ranch. Learn more at www.ThatsMyPark.org or via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#) and [YouTube](#).