

Connecting with Nature on Fiscalini Ranch Preserve: Mutt Mitts on the Ranch



By KITTY CONNOLLY, Executive Director, Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve (fiscaliniranchpreserve.org)

In a surprising change of policy, last month the board of Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve (FFRP) voted unanimously that everyone on the Ranch must be accompanied by a dog.

April Fools!

Sometimes it can feel that way, though, especially when you consider the data. Although no one can definitively say how many dogs visit Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, indirect information can be telling.

Take Mutt Mitts, for example. Over the course of the last seven years, donations to FFRP have purchased \$28,375 in Mutt Mitts. That's at least **604,000** doggie waste bags! Astonishing.

Working backward, we find that if each dog was walked twice a day – presumably using one Mutt Mitt per walk – that comes to more than 115 dogs each day on the Ranch. And that's just the average. Judging only by Mutt Mitt use, daily dog visits have more than doubled from 77 in 2014 to **192 in 2020**.

Now, not all those Mutt Mitts are being used where they are meant to be: on the Ranch. Some people seem to believe the supplies are provided by the Cambria Community Services District (CCSD), so they take them to use elsewhere. I've heard many stories of people seen hopping out of their cars to grab a handful of Mutt Mitts, then driving quickly away. I've seen it myself.



In fact, Mutt Mitts on the Ranch are not paid for with public funds, but with private donations. The same holds true for the doggie bags at the Cambria Dog Park. Dog Park members pay dues to buy them. Honor the intent of these donors to support programs on the Ranch, and better yet, donate yourself to continue making dogs welcome.

In addition, doggie bag stations are monitored and refilled by a devoted corps of ten FFRP volunteers who spend an impressive amount of time at their task. In 2020, we estimate that these volunteers spent more than 100 hours checking and refilling the dispensers.

So, if you walk with a dog on the Ranch, use a Mutt Mitt, and take it with you or dispose of it in the trash cans supplied by CCSD. (The most common form of litter on the Ranch is abandoned dog poop bags.) Let's keep Fiscalini Ranch Preserve friendly for dogs and all other visitors.