

Connecting with Nature on Fiscalini Ranch Preserve: Storm Recovery = Fire Safety on the Ranch



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

In January, a devastating 100-year storm hit Cambria: Santa Rosa Creek overflowed, the West Village and East Ranch flooded, and an untold number of trees fell. Major recovery from the deluge was remarkably fast, with Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) reopening all Ranch trails within days. On the slope between the Victoria Way and Marlborough Lane entrances, though, damage to the forest was especially intense. More than 30 downed trees and as many standing dead trees remain, posing a fire hazard.

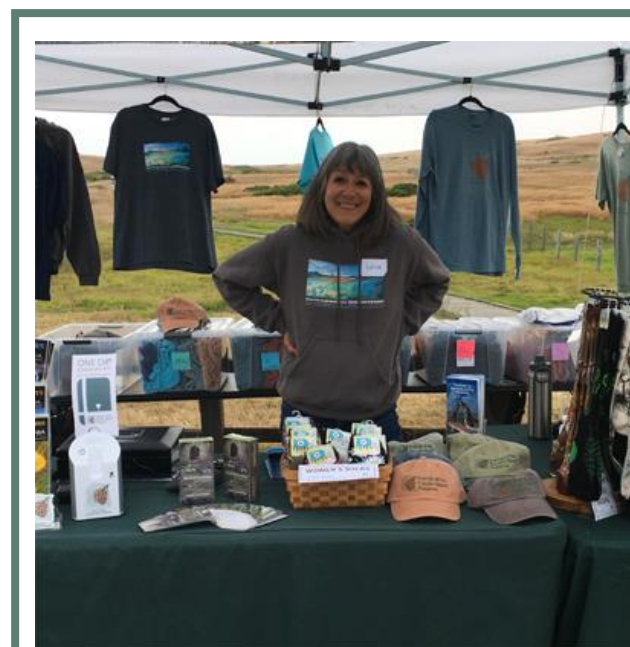
As part of an ongoing collaboration between Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve (FFRP), CCSD, and San Luis Obispo Fire Safe Council, a crew will be conducting a project in that area to reduce the fire danger. The crew will drop the dead trees and chip as much as possible. Larger logs that are too big to chip will be dropped to the ground so they can decompose faster. All the work will be done by hand crews using a track chipper. No heavy machinery will be used, no understory vegetation will be removed, and no live trees will be thinned.

As always, we will have biological surveys for nesting birds, dens, and mammals conducted before the work begins. Since this area is very close to – and even overlaps – an historical monarch butterfly overwintering site, Xerces Society is providing FFRP and CCSD with the services of a plant biologist who will provide guidance so that the project minimizes impacts to monarchs.

We are planning two additional projects in the Ranch forest. These projects will follow the same protocols and have expenses covered by FFRP.

One project completes storm recovery to the heavily damaged area near the intersection of the Forest Loop and Trenton trails. The last project is purely for forest health. This summer's study of forest understory revealed a section of the forest where the Monterey pines (*Pinus radiata*) are heavily infected with gall rust. From mature trees to saplings, every pine was infected. To prevent the spread of this deadly disease, infected trees will be cut, chipped, and remain on site.

Temporary trail closures may be necessary to ensure public safety, so please be prepared to take alternate routes. Closure signs will be posted at trail heads. The work should take less than one week.



Save the Date: Pop-up Sale!

Saturday, Sept 4, 9 AM to 1 PM

South entrance to the Bluff Trail, near Windsor Boulevard and Wedgewood Street. Street parking is available.

New items: tea towels, bike bells, and aprons!