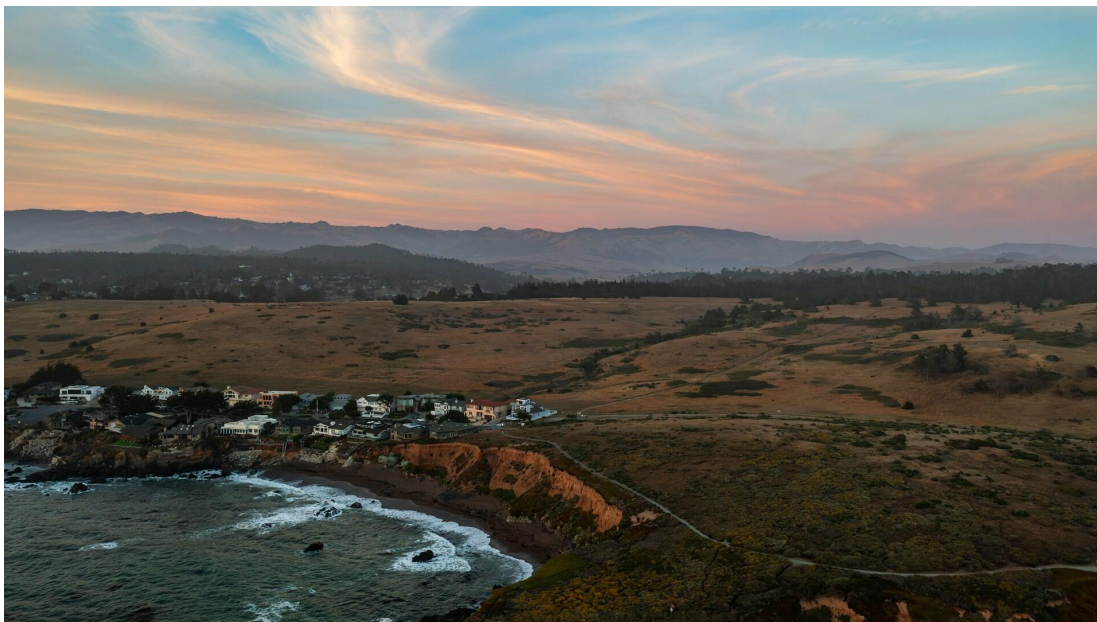


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News from the Ranch: Fall 2026



You Can See the Changes Across the
Ranch

If you've walked the Ranch this summer, you may have noticed some changes in the forest. Look closely at the pines, and you'll see the signs of a forest under stress, including dozens of dead trees throughout the preserve.

Protecting the forest means acting now. The 62 acres surrounding those trees are being treated to protect the surrounding forest and reduce the risk of more trees failing. After 23 years, the Ranch's newly updated management plan is now guiding this work, providing a clearer path toward a healthier, more resilient forest.

And there's good news waiting in the nursery. Hundreds of seedlings are ready to return to the ground this fall, most grown from seed collected right here on the Ranch. Each one represents another small step toward the future forest you'll walk beneath for years to come.

Keeping the Ranch healthy takes more than good stewardship. It takes resources, too. Increasingly, Cambria Community Services District — the owner of the preserve — is looking to Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve for help with management costs, and those costs continue to rise. Weed control, fire mitigation, the nursery's water bill: these needs don't wait for donations.

Your support helps make sure they don't have to wait.

If you've had a good year in your portfolio, a gift of appreciated stock can reduce your taxes while helping keep this work moving into next spring. A check or online gift is equally welcome. And if you've included Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve in your will, please let us know. We'd be grateful for the opportunity to thank you.

The future of this land ultimately rests with the people who value it — people like you, who choose, year after year, to keep the Ranch protected.

Thank you,

— *Kitty*

Kitty Connolly, Executive Director, FFRP

Donate Stock

Gift in Your Will

Donate Today



Ranch's Updated Management Plan Officially Adopted

On July 9, the Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) Board adopted the updated Management Plan for Fiscalini Ranch Preserve. This is the document that guides how we care for the Ranch and keep it open to the public, so I don't take it lightly when

it changes.

A local TV reporter, Valentina Saldaña from **KSBY**, asked me about it on camera. **New Times** wrote about the plan too. I was glad to talk about it because the plan reaffirms something simple: keep the Ranch wild, keep it open, keep it healthy. That's what this community has asked of us since we saved the Ranch 26 years ago, and it's what this update protects.

The plan also gives CCSD and Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve clearer direction on some practical questions. CCSD's board is now turning to one of those: how we manage the Ranch's ongoing expenses.

I know a management plan isn't as exciting as a ribbon cutting but every trail we repair and every plant we put in the ground happens inside the lines this plan draws. Getting it right is how we keep the Ranch protected for the next 25 years.

[Read the Plan](#)





Forest Health Work is Underway

I stood in a stand of overcrowded pines this week and counted the ones that wouldn't make it.

Nine of them, in about a hundred feet, crowded so close their roots are fighting each other for the same water and their branches for the same sunlight. That's what more than 100 years of a forest growing without fire or thinning looks like, and it's why, starting September 1, we've got crews out on 62 acres of the Ranch doing something about it.

This work is happening because of a **CAL FIRE forest health grant** awarded to the **San Luis Obispo Fire Safe Council** — which means it's costing FFRP and the Cambria Community Services District nothing. The **Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District** is managing the project, with **Auten Resource Consulting** guiding the science. The project will run until mid-October, wrapping up before the fall rain starts. We spent two years in planning meetings to get here.

The work itself is careful, not a clear-cut: removing dead, dying, and overcrowded pines while leaving islands of shrubs, and standing dead trees and downed logs where wildlife needs them. Biologists have marked rare plants to avoid and coordinated with the Xerces Society to protect the monarch overwintering habitat in our pine groves. Where natural regeneration is thin, we'll plant 15 acres of new pines by hand in the coming years.

This is the same team that's done this work on Covell Ranch, Hearst Ranch, and Strawberry Canyon so I trust the hands on the saws.

I'll keep you posted as the weeks go by. If you're walking the forest trails this fall and see equipment or crews, that's what you're looking at: work that keeps this forest here for the next hundred years.



The Restoration Nursery is Back

Last issue, I told you the flood of March 2023 destroyed our restoration nursery, and that we'd found a new home for it at Pocahontas Park through a partnership with Greenspace Cambria. This summer, we finished the job.

Brian Morgan led the rebuilding, with Walt Andrus (not pictured above), Tom Loganbill, Russ Kolander doing much of the work. Mark Meeks, Marvin Josephson, Jeff Wilson, Thom Lacie, and Nancy Lacie did their part, as did David Aguirre and Keith Seydel. Thank you!

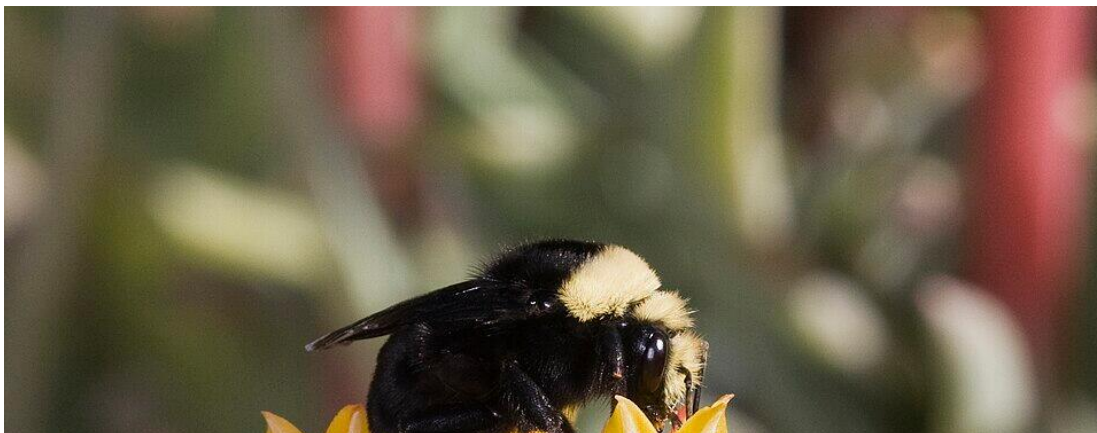
On July 16, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden delivered hundreds of native plants to fill the nursery. More are coming from the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District's Willow Creek Conservancy, and from volunteers' own yards. A storage shed we're sharing with Greenspace makes the space even more functional.

Every plant that grows in the nursery has a job waiting on the Ranch: replacing ice plant on the bluffs, filling gaps left by fire or forest work, restoring coastal prairie. None of it happens without Greenspace Cambria, and without Brian, Walt, Tom, and Russ giving their time to rebuild this thing right.

I'm grateful to Karin Argano and the Greenspace board for this partnership. And I'm grateful to everyone who stuck with us through three years of getting the nursery back on its feet, especially CCSD who stored the nursery structure and Keith Seydel who provided a temporary space (for two years!).

Want to help keep the nursery growing? A Tree Dedication in honor of someone you love supports native plant growing and habitat restoration across the Ranch.

[Dedicate a Tree](#)





Science on the Ranch

The Ranch isn't just a place to walk. Right now, it's also a place to study. This year, four different research projects are underway here, and I want you to know about all of them.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife is running a study on our mule deer. Their team walks a set line across the Ranch collecting fresh deer droppings for genetic testing. The goal is to learn how our deer move between areas.

Volunteers with the Xerces Society did a bumblebee survey on the Ranch this summer. Bumblebees are in trouble across the country, so knowing which species we have, and how they're doing, matters more than it might sound. The image above is of a yellow faced bumble bee on a native succulent.

Dr. Kane Keller from California State University at Bakersfield is studying our rare succulents. I don't know all the details yet, but I know it's the kind of research that helps us protect plants we might otherwise overlook.

And this fall, after our forest health work wraps up, researchers from Dr. Sarah Bisbing's lab, University of Nevada, Reno, plan to come back and take samples again, to see what has changed.

The Ranch is also a resource for Cal Poly students. Tovia Keeley's year-long Landscape Architecture senior project on restoring rare coastal prairie will form the basis of upcoming restoration efforts. Other students from Landscape Architecture and the Forestry Departments are learning about our work during field trips.

None of this research happens without a healthy, protected piece of land to do it on. That's the part I keep coming back to: the same work you support every year, clearing invasive plants, keeping trails open, protecting habitat, is what makes the Ranch worth studying in the first place.

I'll share results as I get them.

FFRP Marched in the Pinedoro Days Parade on September 5



Fiscalini Ranch Preserve Pinedorado Parade Team of more than 20 folks, led by Mother Nature and her Woodland Nymphs, wowed the watchers with laughter, smiles, energy, Nature Necklaces, and Butterfly Wands. The Cast of Characters and Ranch Stewards did their thing while the Butterfly Brigade danced to their own music, energizing folks young and old! What an amazing morning.

Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve's Free Outreach Events & Docent Walks

Exploring the Santa Rosa Creek
Docent walk with Joanne Freemire

September 12, 10 am – 12 pm

Get your feet wet as you explore fascinating riparian flora and fauna.

Learn more and register here.

Creeks to Coast Cleanup

Outreach Event with Jose Luis Sanchez

September 19, 9 am – 12 pm

Meet at Bluff Trail South entrance from Windsor Blvd.

Join this state-wide community action day to protect our waterways.

Learn more and register here.

What a Change of Seasons Brings to our Forest

Docent walk with Brian Morgan

Saturday, Sept 26, 10 am – 12 pm

With September comes late summer warmth, following several months of marine layer and moisture providing fog. What changes will we see as we stroll the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve Forest Trails?

Learn more and register here.



Autumn Bird Walk

Docent Walk with Jim Royer

Saturday, Oct 10, 8:30 am until done

Take a walk with an expert birder - this is a prime date for unusual fall migrants!

Learn more and register here.

Autumn Walk on the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve Bluff

Docent Walk with Duffy Burns

Saturday, Oct 24, 10 am – 12 pm

What could be more delightful than an Autumn walk on the Bluff Trail, led by an experienced naturalist guide?

Learn more and register here.



Thanksgiving Weekend Tree (and more!) Planting

Community Workday

Saturday, Nov 28, 9 – 11 am (weather permitting)

Don't miss this delightful, family-friendly chance to give back to the Ranch. We'll be planting Monterey pine, monkey flower, even

native grasses!

Meet near the Dolphin Bench on the Ridge Trail off Huntington --
look for the truck.

A Holiday Escape Into Nature's Magic

Docent Walk with Joanne Freemire

Saturday, Dec 19, 10 am – 12 pm

A winter walk through the forest of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve
offers a serene, naturally festive escape.

Learn more and register here.

SAVE THE DATE: Songs for the Season

Saturday, Dec 5, 2-4 pm

Be sure to put this date into your calendar: You won't want to miss
this annual kick-off of the holiday season!

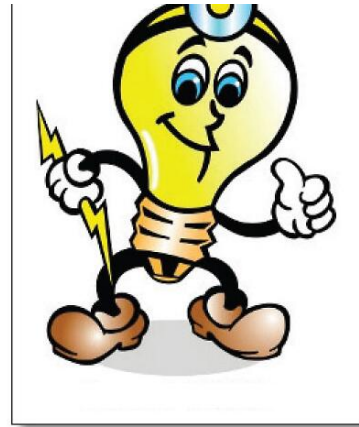
Location: The Barn at Fog's End

More details to come.

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Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve

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