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Contacts
Bill Leahy, BSLT, (831) 241-8456
Rafael Payan, MPRPD, (831) 718-7581
Mat Fuzie, CDPR, (831) 649-2836
Augie Louis, PLF, (831) 624-2288

Park Agencies and Non-Profits Join Together
In Shared Vision of Next Great Parks and Conservation Landscape
“Lobos-Corona Parklands Project” seeks to enhance land stewardship, people’s connection to the land

Carmel, Calif. — The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, California State Parks, Monterey District, Big Sur Land Trust and Point Lobos Foundation announced today their formal agreement to work together as part of an integrated multi-agency effort for the benefit of the public and the preservation of parklands and open space in the region between Carmel and Garrapata State Park. The four entities signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to advance their joint working relationship identified with the working title Lobos-Corona Parklands Project. The group envisions the area to be among the next great parks and conservation landscapes in California, akin to the Golden Gate National Recreation area near San Francisco. The overarching aim of the effort is to significantly enhance public recreation, outdoor education and stewardship opportunities.

“‘It does not take much effort to recognize that humans, typically rather than nature, have created boundaries that detrimentally fragment our magnificent landscape. Our multi-jurisdictional collaborative effort understands this, thus we are working together to provide a seamless experience for the public while integrating our land and natural resource management practices,’’ said Rafael Payan, General Manager for the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. ‘‘This will serve as a model, reinforcing the fact that the public does not so much care about who is managing what, rather that we manage their lands responsibly while providing high quality experiences.’’

Years of planning, land acquisition and parks preparation, as well as millions in public and private dollars have been invested in the Lobos-Corona Parklands Project area. The project area encompasses nearly 10,000 acres and includes Palo Corona Regional Park, the former Whisler Wilson Ranch, and High Meadows Open Space (Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District); Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, the former A.M. Allan Ranch, Carmel River State Beach, Hatton Canyon and Garrapata State Park (California State Parks); and the Coast Ranch and South Bank Trail (Big Sur Land Trust). These lands host some of California’s most spectacular coastal areas and vistas, abundant wildlife, diverse habitats and profound historical and cultural resources.

“For more than 20 years the Land Trust and our partners been working to conserve these exceptional lands with the ultimate goal of providing healthy parks for people and nature,” said Bill Leahy, Executive Director of the Big Sur Land Trust. “We are excited to join with our partners to build on this extraordinary legacy of land conservation and create safe pathways for people to more fully experience these magnificent parklands that are so vital to the health of our communities. This work mirrors our own journey as an organization, from one focused on land acquisition to one with a broader mission of inspiring love and stewardship of the land.”

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The two park agencies and two private conservation groups are collaborating to build upon and leverage the work that has been done in recent years to put the pieces in place that will help integrate these properties into a larger parklands landscape. For example, the Big Sur Land Trust’s South Bank Trail, completed in 2011, serves as a wheel-chair accessible eastern entrance to the Park District’s Palo Corona Regional Park. The former Whisler Wilson Ranch was acquired by the Land Trust in 2010 to help knit together Regional Park District lands and state parklands at the former A.M. Allan Ranch and Point Lobos State Natural Reserve. Improved visitor serving trails have been completed at Point Lobos with the assistance of the Point Lobos Foundation. The Regional Park District, with assistance from the Land Trust, constructed new and improved trails at the front of Palo Corona Regional Park in 2011 that, along with signage funded by the Land Trust, greatly enhance the park visitor experience. The Land Trust has secured state and federal funding and is currently working with Monterey County and other agency partners to plan and permit a large-scale floodplain restoration project on the lower Carmel River that, once completed, will result in significant environmental, flood reduction and public access benefits. And there is more to come.

“California State Parks is excited about this new partnership. This is the way we should be managing contiguous parklands that provide a seamless experience and combined stewardship for the people of California,” said Mat Fuzie, Monterey District Superintendent for California State Parks.

While the four entities have a history of working together, formalizing their relationship with an MOU is an important touchstone, communicating their commitment to purposeful, proactive collaboration and cooperation for the benefit of the public and preservation of the Lobos-Corona Parklands. The groups have been meeting regularly since 2013, and have developed a shared long term vision that will guide their work together. They are collaborating on an online, interactive map that will be used for planning purposes and to ensure that individual projects on the landscape are well aligned. And over the next 6-12 months the groups intend to implement additional projects to help connect people with the land and ultimately increase the region’s prominence as a world-class visitor destination.

"These public lands have been largely unexplored or even closed to the public while Point Lobos is setting record attendance. This working group can offer so many new and different experiences for the public by opening some of these parklands—from secluded redwood groves to incredible views—it’s a very exciting project,” said Augie Louis, President of the Point Lobos Foundation.

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The mission of the **Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District** mission is to preserve, conserve and restore the Central Coast's magnificent landscapes. These include critical habitat found in redwood and Monterey Pine forests, native grasslands, coastal dunes, and along our riparian and wildlife corridors. Our responsibilities also include the protection of prominent view-sheds and our cultural legacy ranging from prehistoric and historic sites, to contemporary ranches and farmland. Our objective is to avail natural open space to the public for the purposes of recreation, environmental education and scientific research. The District strives to develop and sustain positive, productive and collaborative relationships with the region's incorporated and unincorporated communities, their respective residents and visitors, and our governmental and non-governmental counterparts in the Salinas Valley and Monterey Peninsula. Together, we shall leave a landscape that is enjoyed and cherished by current and future generations. For more information visit [www.mprpd.org](http://www.mprpd.org)

Celebrating its 35th Anniversary, the mission of **Big Sur Land Trust** is to inspire love of the land and conservation of our treasured landscapes. In collaboration with partners and the community, the Land Trust has protected more than 38,000 acres of land since its inception. The Land Trust is committed to

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pursuing land and water conservation work that strengthens our communities and inspires a stewardship ethic so that Monterey County can maintain its unique and special place in the world. The goal and commitment of the Land Trust is to pursue resource conservation that supports the well-being of land and people and sustains our region’s unique quality of life for us all. For more information visit www.bigsurlandtrust.org

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state’s extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. The Monterey District consists of 33 park units with coastal parks from Limekiln SP north to Zmudowski SB including Big Sur parks. The popular Point Lobos State Natural Reserve and the nearby former A.M. Allan Ranch have a shared history. Hatton Canyon and Garrapata SP are great places to hike. Carmel River SB offers great views of the mouth of the Carmel River including the lagoon. Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds and Monterey State Historic Park protect significant historic buildings. Our inland parks include our largest in the district, Henry W. Coe State Park, San Juan Bautista State Historic Park, and Fremont Peak with a spectacular 360-degree daytime view and a nighttime visual feast for stargazers. For more information visit www.parks.ca.gov

Long considered the “crown jewel” of the California State Park system, Point Lobos State Natural Reserve is a magnet for nature lovers the world around. From its breathtaking beauty to its fascinating wildlife to its friendly and knowledgeable volunteers, Point Lobos is a place where one can escape to the serenity of nature at its best. While California State Parks is striving to find creative ways to sustain our parks, Point Lobos is flourishing due to the support of the Point Lobos Foundation. The Foundation is the sole source of funding for Point Lobos’ model volunteer program, protects the Reserve’s environmental health and plans for the future, ensures a great visitor experience and makes infrastructure improvements, and funds important education programs allowing schoolchildren and people with disabilities to experience nature. For more information visit www.pointlobos.org