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San Mateo County Approves Purchase of Tunitas Creek Beach from Peninsula Open Space Trust

San Mateo County Parks initiates improvement project this month

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. (Mar 10, 2020) - In a unanimous vote today, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors approved the purchase of the 58-acre property known as Tunitas Creek Beach from [Peninsula Open Space Trust](#) (POST) for \$3.2 million. The property will continue to be managed by San Mateo County Parks (SMCP), which will begin to engage the public through a series of community engagement activities to create a new public beach and park. Throughout 2020, there will be several more opportunities for the public to engage in planning for the new park, including through on-line surveys. To learn more and to sign up for project updates, visit TunitasCreekBeach.org. This will be the first new San Mateo County park since 2013.



Located near the intersection of Highway 1 and Tunitas Creek Road, the Tunitas Creek Beach property was acquired and permanently protected in November 2017 by POST, after the County and other local organizations brought it to their attention. With its dramatic cliffside location and unique position at the mouth of Tunitas Creek, the site has been popular among local beach recreationalists for decades. However, in recent years, unmanaged access increased and resulted in careless

Photo: Matt Dolkas/POST

use and damage to the property's unique natural resources.

"We are so happy that the ambitious vision we laid out for Tunitas Creek Beach more than two years ago has been embraced by the community and is now moving towards reality," said **Noelle Thurlow**, senior director of land programs and transactions at POST. "Now that the property is fully under the County's stewardship, we look forward to the day when Tunitas Creek Beach is open for everyone to enjoy — to be refreshed by its beauty and amazing natural resources, while knowing that all of the creatures that rely on the creek and beach to survive are able to thrive alongside us."

The Tunitas Creek Beach site was used for centuries as an Ohlone seasonal village and was a stopping point on the Spanish Portolá Expedition. The entire property was in private ownership for more than 100 years. In the past decade, environmental degradation and unsanitary conditions generated by unsafe and unmanaged use had damaged the beach and sensitive bluffs. SMCP will evaluate these conditions and develop a restoration plan. The planning process will also consider the opportunity this property offers to close a gap in the California Coastal Trail.

“With the beach now in county ownership and managed by SMCP, we are excited to partner with the public to create a safe and sustainable coastal park,” said San Mateo County Parks Director **Nicholas Calderon**. “We have a lot of work ahead of us to realize our goal of offering a new public beach that San Mateo County residents and visitors will embrace and enjoy. Now is the time to participate in this important dialogue to identify what is desired for this new beach park and to align that with what is feasible.”

“It’s rare to have the opportunity to transform an abandoned private coastal property into a public park that will meet the interests of San Mateo County residents and visitors,” noted San Mateo County Supervisor **Don Horsley**, who led the effort to bring county support behind the preservation and creation of the new park. “Tunitas Creek Beach is a jewel. It is home to the protected snowy plover; known well by long-time recreationalists for beachgoing, surfing and even licensed fishing; and offers over a mile of scenic Northern California beach. It’s rewarding to know that the hard work of so many in the community to protect this location will bring about the preservation of Tunitas Creek Beach forever, benefiting the environment and our entire community.”

Access to Tunitas Creek Beach will continue to be limited, per current county ordinances. The property currently has no facilities and is home to the federally protected snowy plover and many other species. The ordinances in place at Tunitas Creek Beach are being enforced by San Mateo County Park rangers.

To date, POST and the County have raised more than \$13 million from the community, including from the [California State Coastal Conservancy](#) and the [Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation](#), to fund the property purchase and initial environmental restoration efforts. These funds will also help to cover the design and construction of safe public trails, parking, restrooms and possibly a ranger station. San Mateo County Parks, working in close coordination with POST, estimates the improvement process will be completed and the property open to the public in roughly three years. Protection and management of the property is expected to cost the County roughly \$1 million dollars per year. San Mateo County Parks and POST will continue to work together to raise funds to support this effort, as needed.

Note to media: High-resolution images and b-roll available for download [here](#).

About Peninsula Open Space Trust

POST protects open space on the Peninsula and in the South Bay for the benefit of all. As a private nonprofit land trust, POST has been responsible for saving more than 79,000 acres since 1977. POST works with private landowners and public agencies to connect people and nature. Visit openspacetrust.org for more information.

About the San Mateo County Parks

San Mateo County Parks manages parks, preserves, trails and historic sites to preserve public lands and provide opportunities for education and recreation. The Department’s 23 sites are located throughout San Mateo County and encompasses more than 16,000 acres that represent the region’s wondrously diverse natural settings. Learn more about San Mateo County Parks at smcoparks.org.