

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

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UC SANTA BARBARA

North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

May 2019



View from a future overlook where benches will be installed. This could be named after you!

UPDATES & EVENTS

New Grants Fund Education, Research, Sustainability and more at NCOS

We are excited to announce and acknowledge sponsors of grants recently awarded for various projects at NCOS:

Sustainability and Carbon Sequestration Research



Thanks to the students of UCSB through [The Green Initiative Fund \(TGIF\)](#), CCBER has been awarded two grants: one that will help make NCOS operations sustainable by funding \$50,000 of the \$75,000 needed to install solar panels on the roof of the new "Gator Barn". These will provide 24.8 KW of renewable energy for recharging the electric gator vehicles and potentially supporting the long-term maintenance of NCOS through funds generated from excess renewable energy credits.

The second TGIF grant supports student opportunities to research how adding compost and biochar to soil can help sequester carbon and support plant growth and soil health.

Speaking of the Gator Barn, except for electricity, it is ready for us to move in! And we're working on a new, nature-themed name for the building: the ROOST (Restoration, Outreach and Open Space Toolshed).



The completed "Gator Barn", or ROOST (Restoration, Outreach and Open Space Toolshed) at NCOS.

Wildflower Restoration Research



We thank [The Garden Club of Santa Barbara](#) who awarded CCBER with a \$4,980 grant that will support student research on enhancing native grassland restoration with wildflower species in order to preserve and enhance local species diversity in a plant community that has been heavily impacted by development and invasive plants. Tiny seedlings of wildflowers are germinating in our initial grassland wildflower seeding experiment, and with this grant we will be able to expand this project with a goal of integrating 20 different flowering species into the grassland being restored on the Mesa.



An *Acmispon wrangelianus* seedling begins flowering in the restored native grassland on the NCOS Mesa.



This native grassland with abundant wildflowers at the nearby South Parcel restoration site is an example of the goal for the NCOS Mesa.

Education, Equipment, and more



We thank SoCalGas for two timely grants: one for \$5,000 towards the purchase of an electric gator vehicle, and \$2,500 in support of the Kids in Nature K-12 outdoor education programs at NCOS.

Multiple private donors from the community have also contributed to CCBER's restoration work, helping to fund the purchasing of equipment, student research, staff training and more. Thank you!

Riparian Wetland Thriving

The Coast Live Oak, Sycamore, Cottonwood, Alder, Sandbar and Arroyo Willows planted last year (over 100 total!) by Your Children's Trees along Whittier Channel are thriving and the riparian wetland has been supporting secretive birds like the Sora and Marsh Wren.



Sycamores, Willows and other riparian trees planted along the Whittier Channel are thriving.

FEATURE STORY

Community Perceptions and Use of NCOS Revealed



This winter, CCBER conducted surveys to get a better understanding of the community's perceptions and use of the North Campus Open Space project. [This feature story is continued on page 9.](#)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

"Second Saturdays" at NCOS

This month: May 11, 9:30 - 12:00



Help us restore and create NCOS with plants and more! Meet at 6975 Whittier Drive at 9:30 am. Bring water, sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes and shoes suitable for garden work. Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu

Saturday Tree Plantings

Next date: June 1st

You can help Your Children's Trees plant oaks and other saplings at NCOS! Please contact [Your Children's Trees](#) for more information and to RSVP.



Thursdays - CCBER Greenhouse Associates

Come help transplant seedlings of native plants with the CCBER team from 9:00 - 12:00. To join, please send an email to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



Group Volunteer Opportunities

We gladly welcome local business, non-profit, school and other community groups to come out to NCOS to help with planting and other activities. For more information, please send an email to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



COMMUNITY FORUM & PHOTOS

A non-venomous Gopher Snake was recently observed on site but not captured on film. We are interested in any observations of additional wildlife activity on NCOS, such as the recently observed Long-tailed Weasel and Peregrine Falcon taking an American Coot. Please send your observations, with or without photos, to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu. Thanks!



A Blue-winged Teal at the marsh pond in the northeast corner of NCOS.

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**For more information on the
North Campus Open Space Restoration Project, [Click here](#), or email ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu**



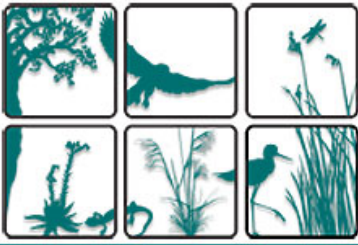
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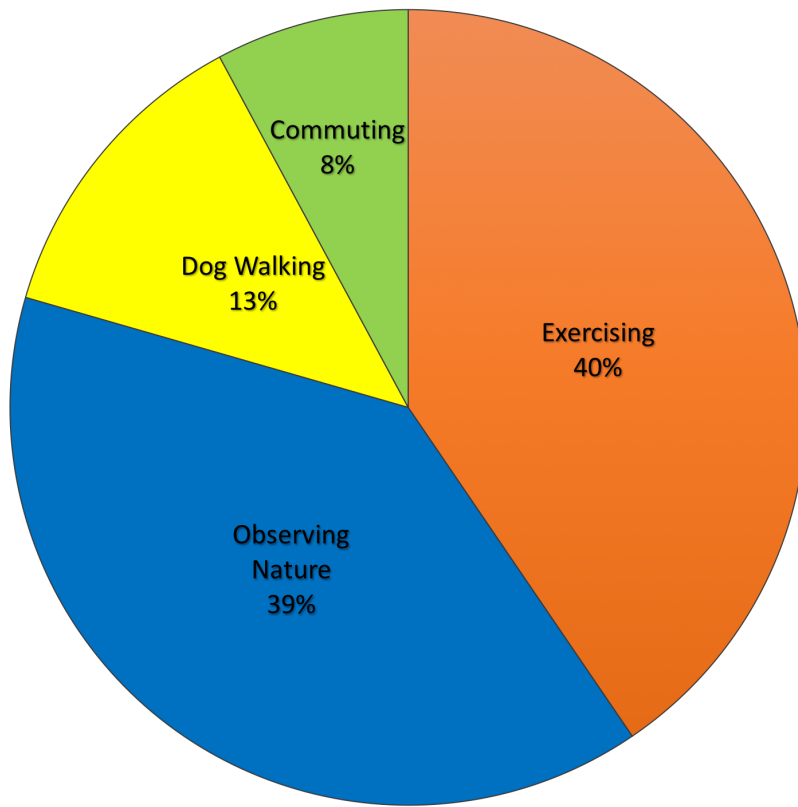
COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS AND USE OF NCOS REVEALED



Community members exploring NCOS during the Marsh Trail opening event in October 2018.

This winter, CCBER conducted surveys to get a better understanding of the community's perceptions and use of the North Campus Open Space project. These surveys included in-depth interviews of people with a variety of perspectives, an on-line survey that received nearly 200 responses, and observational surveys stratified by time-of-day and days of the week over the month of February. More than 50% of the responses to the on-line survey were from neighbors living within the immediate vicinity of the project, with 20% from people living within a mile of the project site and the remaining 25% of responses from people living between 1 and 15 miles away. About 75% of responses were from people who have an affiliation with UCSB (student, staff, faculty, alumni).

Anyone walking on the site would probably agree with the observational and on-line survey results: the majority of NCOS users are either exercising or doing a nature walk looking at birds (35% each) with secondary uses including dog walking and traveling through the site to commute to schools or elsewhere. The observational survey documented use by 600 individuals over 25 hours, with an average of 25 people accessing the site each hour and the greatest number of visitors on sunny weekend days.



Pie chart of the main activities/uses of visitors at NCOS from an observational study and community survey in February 2019.

Highlights of the survey results include: more than 94% of respondents were supportive of the project and valued the ecological goals, the open space and public access it provides. More than 80% of respondents understood the primary goals of the project and more than 50% could name six key goals. These goals include: restoring wetland habitat for threatened and endangered species, restoring the hydrology and reducing localized flooding, improving water quality, providing opportunities for passive recreation, and active education and research. Interestingly, yet not surprisingly, there was a strong positive correlation between understanding the goals of the project and supporting the project. Similarly, of the 45% of survey respondents who reported that their opinion of the project had changed, 88% now viewed the project positively. These respondents attributed this change in perception to seeing the speed and scale of the transformation first hand, gaining access to the restored open space, and appreciating the native aesthetics more than they anticipated.

The majority of people surveyed have primarily been informed about the project by the NCOS e-newsletter and word of mouth. Signs, tours and local news have played a minor role as sources of information. While 75% of respondents felt adequately informed about the project, there was a contingent who would benefit from more local radio (e.g. NPR/KCLU) or newspaper/magazine coverage (e.g. Independent, Edhat, Noozhawk), and social media coverage of the project.

Of course, nothing is perfect, and we all want to know what people think can be improved. One of the primary concerns expressed in the surveys was off-leash dogs, with 33% of respondents desiring that owners keep dogs on leash to allow people and wildlife to enjoy the open space and nature viewing opportunities un-disturbed. Another frequently mentioned concern is that the size and looseness of the gravel on the trail is uncomfortable. While a "natural surface" of soil would be smoother, it would be essentially inaccessible - sticky and slippery during the rains because of the high clay content in the soils. The compacted and smooth trail surface we anticipated is currently present only in areas that are frequently driven on, while other parts of the trail are still loose and uncomfortable. We are currently developing plans to add more fines and re-compact the loose areas, which we hope to implement once we find the funds to do it properly.

It is our goal to support the ecological and hydrological goals of the project in order to provide a seasonally changing setting that inspires a sense of wonder, provides easily accessible opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, and connects people to each other. We thank you for your feedback, and please do reach out to us with any ideas, comments or concerns at ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



NCOS visitors on the long bridge across the eastern arm of the wetland.

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