

UC Santa Barbara

Newsletters

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UC SANTA BARBARA

North Campus Open Space Restoration Project

NCOS NEWS

March 2019



Aerial photo looking north over Devereux Slough and NCOS on January 20 - note the waves and high tide flowing into the slough mouth at the left side of the photo.

UPDATES & EVENTS

NCOS User Survey

More than 170 people have taken the NCOS user survey that was sent out with last month's newsletter. There is still time to anonymously share your thoughts, feelings and ideas about the project by [completing the survey](#). Your input means a lot to us and will help guide our planning. Thank you!

Tidal Flows Enrich Habitat on NCOS

Much of the wrack along the shoreline of NCOS has been brought in from the ocean during the king tides this past month. These tides bring a pulse of nutrients and organic matter into the upper estuary, providing hiding places and food opportunities for foraging shorebirds.



Wrack comprised of driftwood, kelp and other pieces of dead vegetation now line the shores of NCOS thanks to the recent king tides.

Trail Substrate

We recognize that portions of the trail are loose and sharp. While another trail substrate known as DG (decomposed granite) is "softer" on the foot, it is also so soft that rain easily forms puddles in depressions, and bikes and vehicles leave ruts and ridges that harden and can create hazards for cyclists, runners and walkers (see photo below). The NCOS Marsh trail is constructed of class II road base, which is mixed sizes of gravel and fines. 95% of the trail has been accessible through all the rainy weather we've been having, and the trail is compacting well where it gets a lot of use. We are continuing to work towards compacting the less used and looser areas, and trying to crush the larger gravel with a long-term vision of a comfortable, all-season trail. Support for the long-term maintenance of the trail is

needed to complete this work.



The flooded and rutted DG (decomposed granite) trail at West Campus Bluffs.



Community members walking along a section of the NCOS Marsh trail.

As Spring Arrives, so does the Breeding Season

Birds and wildlife are moving from winter mode into springtime breeding mode, which means many birds will be making their way north to their traditional breeding habitats - species of ducks, geese, many shorebirds, and even the Burrowing Owls. The song sparrows, phoebes, and herons should stick around. We will be watching closely for breeding and nesting on NCOS, especially by special status species such

as the Western Snowy Plover and Belding's Savannah Sparrow.



Geese flying in formation over NCOS.

FEATURE STORY

Spring Planting and Weeding Plans at NCOS



Spring is on our doorstep, and with the NCOS restoration project well into its second year, we're taking stock of the planting progress and plans for the coming months. [Read more \(continued on page 12\)](#) about how we're working to control invasive weeds in order to give native plants an opportunity to establish.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



"Second Saturdays" at NCOS

This month: March 9, 9:30 - 12:00

Upcoming dates: April 13

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

March 9 (this Saturday!)



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.

PHOTOS & VIDEO

Spring is in the air! The NCOS Marsh Trail is becoming more colorful as plants begin to flower and birds are displaying breeding plumage.



A small, inconspicuous flower cluster of California Saltbush (*Extriplex californica*).



Contrary to its name, Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*) has purple flowers and is a member of the Iris family (Iridaceae).



A pair of migrating hooded mergansers stop off in Whittier Pond on their way to breeding grounds



Bonus photo: a loggerhead shrike scanning for prey from a fence. Photo by Mark Bright.

Have a plant, wildlife, or other photo of NCOS you'd like to share? We welcome submissions of photos of the project site and/or the adjacent Ellwood-Devereux area to share with NCOS News readers. Please email a photo you would like to share along with a brief description to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.

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



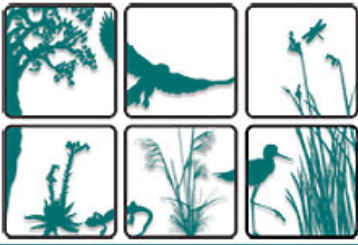
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SPRING PLANTING AND WEEDING PLANS AT NCOS

Spring is on our doorstep, and with the North Campus Open Space restoration project well into its second year, we're taking stock of the planting progress and plans for the coming months. We now have more than 61 acres planted. This includes all of the saltmarsh (about 19 acres) and grassland (17.5 acres), and most of the Transitional Saltmarsh and Peripheral Uplands. There are about 17 acres remaining to plant. This is primarily the 12 acres of Coastal Sage Scrub and Chaparral on the north-facing slopes of the Mesa. Restoration work in the spring will focus on planting this area and on controlling this year's rain-stimulated germination of weeds from the soil seed bank across the whole site.

If you've been out walking on the trail lately, you may have noticed small flags and plugs of salt grass (*Distichlis spicata*) in the bare, muddy zone right next to the trail edge. CCBER staff and volunteers have been planting these areas over the past three months, working on a vision of a trail edge that is stabilized with this low-growing, rhizomatous salt grass. This will help reduce weed colonization along the trail edge, provide a safe place for people to stand aside for vehicles or bikes to pass, and stabilize the trail against erosion. To help this vision become reality, we ask users to kindly stay on the trail substrate while the salt grass cover gets established.



Left: Recent plantings of salt grass along the trail edge. Right: established cover of salt grass along the trail edge.

One of the primary goals of the NCOS project is to re-establish populations of locally sourced genotypes of native plants. To achieve this goal successfully, it is vital to control invasive plants that can outcompete these newly planted seedlings. By making a concerted and focused effort on controlling invasive plants on the newly disturbed and exposed soil in these first few years of the project, we can create a window of opportunity for the native plants to become established and essentially shade out and limit weed germination and growth.

With the current combination of the disturbed soils and the grant resources to help achieve this goal, we are using all of the tools in the tool box to control invasive species now so that, in the long run, we can have a more stable, native-dominated landscape that will not require a high level of maintenance. Once an area has been planted with natives, weed-whacking and solarizing with black plastic are less viable tools. We then use a combination of hand-weeding, salt spreading to control salt intolerant non-natives in zones where salt-tolerant natives are planted, and herbicide. We are very judicious in balancing our use of these tools as we consider both the budget and the environment. The benefit of herbicides are that a larger area can be covered efficiently, and that the soil is not disturbed during the application. When weeds are pulled the soils are disturbed, which in turn leads to germination of more weeds. CCBER has a California State certified Qualified Applicator who knows all of the requirements for safe handling and use of herbicides, and conducts regular training of staff. By focusing on controlling the weeds now, we can greatly reduce the need for herbicide as a tool into the future. We understand the concerns that some NCOS users have regarding this and we are doing our best to limit our use to the minimum necessary to achieve the long-term vision of a healthy, diverse, native dominated ecosystem that supports the

full complement of native organisms. Once the natives have become established they will stabilize the soil, shade out weeds and be able to fill the seed bank with native seeds.

In some areas of NCOS there is a high diversity of weed species germinating, particularly along the trail edges, while in other areas, where subsoils with a smaller seed bank were brought to the surface, such as on the mesa, the seed bank is much reduced. We are conducting a study to document the density and diversity of natives and, most importantly, non-native species that sprout in the soil seed bank from several key areas of NCOS and, for comparison, from the less-managed and more weed-dominated Del Sol and Camino Corto open space in Isla Vista. Recently collected data indicate that the soil seed bank at Del Sol and Camino Corto holds 23 non-native species and 759 non-native plants germinating per meter square, while the seed bank of the newly planted grassland on the NCOS Mesa has just 11 non-native species and only 59 non-native germinants per square meter. These lower numbers on NCOS are encouraging for our effort to control the invasive species and create the vital window of opportunity for unique native plants to get established.



A monkey flower shrub in bloom at NCOS - one of the species that will soon be planted on the slopes of the Mesa.

Looking toward the future, we have at least 17 acres left to plant as well as additional acres of perennial grassland to enhance with wildflowers in the coming years. We will be focusing on the coastal sage scrub, grassland and chaparral communities on the Mesa slopes as well as completing the trail edge and filling in areas of the saltmarsh and riparian habitats over the next year. As you look toward the slopes of the Mesa, envision patches of orange-flowering monkey flower, red and grey California fuschia, and bright yellow golden yarrow standing out from grey-green patches of coastal sage scrub and taller oak chaparral plantings of coast live oaks, lemonadeberry, coffeeberry, and elderberry. The layout of the planting palette was done with consideration for the views from the future Mesa Trail, soil moisture and texture, and the needs of the insects and wildlife that will use the site. We look forward to your help with planting any day of the week and especially on community planting days on the second Saturday of the month. March 9th is our next community volunteer day - contact us at ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu to RSVP or inquire about volunteering any other day!



Coast live oaks recently planted on the northern slopes of the NCOS Mesa.

Date:
Wednesday, March 6, 2019 - 09:15

[Contact Us](#)

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