



## President's Letter



Marianne Gawain

**THIS ISSUE  
OF THE  
VOICE IS  
DEDICATED  
TO RICK  
MANNING**

With heavy heart I share the news that CVA's beloved vice-president, Rick Manning, passed away on April 16th. The CVA board and members extend deepest condolences to Rick's wife, Ruthie.

Rick was a remarkable person. While he may have been our "vice" president, Rick embodied virtue: he was warm-hearted, generous, unfailingly good-humored, joyful, reflective, amusing, and a gifted scholar-athlete, as passionate about the classics as he was about tennis and hiking. Rick was truly the heart and soul of CVA over the past decade. No doubt you've run into Rick around our valley, often serving as master of ceremonies at a CVA picnic or serving balls as a tennis pro. I affectionately called him "Ambassador Manning" because he was a one-man community outreach department for CVA, soliciting input from Valley residents and sharing CVA's perspective with elected officials. The hackneyed phrase "he will be missed" cannot begin to convey the void we feel at the center of our organization. Former CVA President Pris Walton, who worked



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## FIREWISE READY TO HELP PROTECT YOUR HOME

by Carolyn Rice

Sharon O'Connor-Clarke and Chip Clarke had just moved into their newly purchased Carmel Valley home and were ready to unpack boxes when the official fire orders came. "You have 20 minutes to evacuate."

"We just stared at each other and questioned what we had done," Sharon recalled.

Their house survived the 2020 Carmel Fire which destroyed some Carmel Valley homes. After that eye-opening experience Sharon decided, "I don't want to be a victim" and plunged into volunteer work with the Monterey County Firewise organization. Now she and her husband, Chip, both are certified defensible space assessors for Firewise, a national organization that promotes voluntary measures homeowners can take to improve their home's resilience to fire. Along with other Carmel Valley volunteers, they have been trained to meet with homeowners to recommend changes on their property to improve defensible space.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by projects; becoming fire wise is worth the effort. In addition to making your home safer in a fire, a Firewise recognized community is more likely to be defended by firefighters than one which is less defensible, Sharon noted.

Homeowners can't change everything all at once, but Sharon points out ways to make a property more defensible in a positive and encouraging way. "If you allow yourself to be overwhelmed, you don't do anything. So tackle one project at a time."



New California wildland/urban interface laws went into effect January 1, 2025. One important law now on the books calls for

[carmelvalleyassociation.org](http://carmelvalleyassociation.org)

a five-foot hardscape surface to surround homes. For older homes with established landscaping, this may require removing many plants and trees.

The next zone of five to 30 feet calls for a "lean and green" area with distancing and limbing up or removal of trees and bushes.

Other guidelines apply to the next area 30 to 100 feet from homes. Older homes being sold and new homes being built must comply with these new laws aimed at reducing the damage of wildfires.

Luis Perez, of the CalFire staff, serves as liaison with the Monterey Firewise. CalFire has been working on a list of recommended trees and plants for each fire safety zone, which he said should be available soon.

Sherie Dodsworth chairs the 21 Carmel Valley Firewise groups whose leaders meet to share information. She organized a meeting at Tularcitos School in mid-January when awareness of wildland/urban fire risk was heightened due to the Los Angeles fires. More than 250 people came to hear community and state officials talk about how they can prepare their homes, know when to evacuate, and retain their home insurance.

Some insurance companies no longer offer home insurance in California, and each company has its own guidelines for which homes and neighborhoods it will insure. In recent years a number of Carmel Valley residents' policies have been cancelled, and they now rely on the costly California Fair Plan for coverage. In many cases, homes in Firewise-certified communities have seen a significant reduction in fire insurance rates, a tangible reflection of the value of home hardening.

Pam Peck, director of Monterey Firewise, said she is available to assist people who would like to organize a neighborhood group or put them in touch with their Firewise leader to learn whether the group has a certified defensible space assessor.

Like other officials, Peck notes that when residents make their home safer, their

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# HIDDEN VALLEY MUSIC SEMINARS



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President's Letter, continued from Pg. 1

with Rick at CVA over many years, paid this tribute, expressing sentiments shared by the entire CVA board: "Ever a beautiful soul in a beautiful setting, bringing kindness, thoughtfulness, dignity and intelligence to all he did. I will miss him terribly."

In recent organizational business, the slate of directors proposed for election by the board was, in accordance with our bylaws, automatically approved as there were no additional nominations. All are continuing directors. The incoming board met briefly in March to elect its officers: President--Marianne Gawain; Vice President--Rick Manning; Secretary – Sandy Schachter; Treasurer—Andy Sudol.

CVA's annual membership meeting, held at Hidden Valley, was a well-attended success, thanks to our speakers, 5th District Supervisor Kate Daniels and Jeff Ohlson of the Carmel Valley Historical Society.

On April 17th the CVA board held a retreat at beautiful Rana Creek Preserve. This extended meeting enabled us to explore opportunities for strengthening our board operations and membership outreach. We also reviewed our priorities, which include our newly constituted Wildfire Resilience Subcommittee (see related articles by Charlie Wahle and Carolyn Rice). At the retreat, the board elected Charlie Wahle to serve as vice president.

An ongoing focus for CVA is the short-term rental ordinance, which became subject to enforcement on April 16, 2025, six months after its approval by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors. A commercial rental group has filed suit against the County in relation to the ordinance; CVA is monitoring the status of the suit and will keep you informed. Note that enforcement is proceeding while the suit is pending. Also in our sights is the slow progression of the County's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) toward final state approval. Until that approval is complete, we remain vulnerable to the "builder's remedy," which hobbles local planning control over development.

Unsurprisingly, one conclusion of the retreat is that we have plenty on our plate! If you might have time or talent to share with CVA—whether for stuffing envelopes or re-envisioning websites—please drop me a line and let's talk! [president@carmelvalleyassociation.org](mailto:president@carmelvalleyassociation.org).

## CVA TACKLES FIRE

*By Charlie Wahle, Chair of CVA Natural and Cultural Heritage Committee*

The Carmel Valley Association is dedicated to fostering our community: its roots, its nature, its values, and its hopes for the future. While Valley residents may debate about what that future should be, we all know that fire is its greatest threat. The recent catastrophic inferno in Los Angeles, following on the heels of our own area's devastating fires over the past decade, have seared concerns about fire into everyone's consciousness. Now is the time to turn that concern into actions to safeguard our Valley's future.

CVA's newest foray into serving our community relates to wildfire safety and resilience. In recent months, CVA has heard from many Valley residents asking what we are doing to help reduce fire risks. CVA leadership felt the time was right for our Natural & Cultural Heritage Committee to convene a fire-related subcommittee dedicated to working with existing groups to enhance Carmel Valley's resilience to wildfire through strategically targeted information, collaboration, and engagement.

Fortunately, we found the right team lead in Kim Forrest, an experienced National Wildlife Refuge manager who joined CVA's board last year. Kim guided CVA's new Wildfire Resilience Subcommittee (WRS) through an initial exercise to identify what unique, value-added roles CVA might play in helping Valley residents and businesses deal with wildfire danger. With that guiding principle, the new sub-committee will focus its initial efforts on two priority areas:

**Emergency Evacuation** — Carmel Valley residents have expressed growing confusion and frustration about how, when, and to where they would evacuate safely in the face of imminent fire. Consequently, CVA's Wildfire Resilience Subcommittee will work with CalFire, Monterey County's Regional Fire Protection District, the county's Office of Emergency Services, and the sheriff's office to help residents better understand how an evacuation would actually work, including what we can expect regarding official notifications, alerts, orders, routes, transportation, assistance, safety, and eventual return once the emergency is over. The subcommittee's work will involve a combination of disseminating

Fire, continued from Pg. 2

official evacuation plans and information to the community through CVA's weekly bulletin and website and helping to convene public town halls with the organizations responsible for evacuations. These efforts have the dual goals of supporting effective evacuations during fires and other emergencies, while also providing greater peace of mind to residents about their safety during a fire emergency.

**Residential Risk Reduction** — There is no shortage of high-quality, actionable guidance on legal requirements for preparing our homes for wildfire. Navigating those diverse information sources and keeping current with new developments can be challenging. CVA will use its outreach vehicles to share these best practices with the community and point our residents to the authoritative sources. Another bright spot on the horizon is the nationwide Firewise Community program, which takes a voluntary, grass-roots approach to enhancing fire resilience and preparedness at the neighborhood and residence levels. The subcommittee will work closely with the Monterey County Firewise leaders to help spread the word about this very effective community-driven program.

**It Takes a Valley to Resist Wildfire** — Wildfire is truly an existential threat to our way of life in Carmel Valley. But increasingly, we have the tools, information, and institutional support to reduce that risk, thanks in large part to the dedication and professionalism of CalFire and local public safety agencies. Through its new Wildfire Resilience Subcommittee, CVA seeks to contribute what we do best – inform, connect, coordinate – toward this goal that unites us all. You can help by volunteering. Just send an email to Kim Forrest, at kim\_forrest@comcast.net and see how you might contribute.

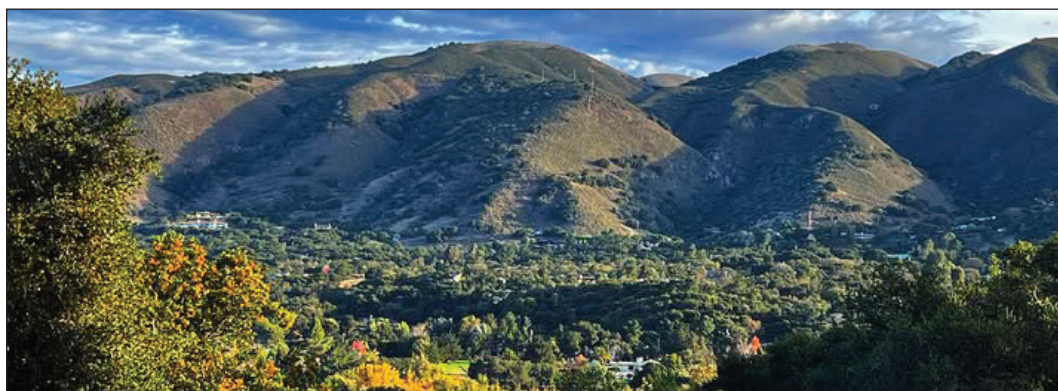


**Would you enjoy meeting other CVA members, participating in one of our committees, or volunteering with us for a few hours? CVA would love to hear from you. Email your interest to [president@carmelvalleyassociation.org](mailto:president@carmelvalleyassociation.org).**



# Does Carmel Valley Need a New Master Plan?

by Mibs McCarthy



Looking across Carmel Valley, courtesy of Warren "Pete" Poitras

In Monterey County, our constitution is the 2010 General Plan. It controls our planning and policies with a Supplemental Plan for Carmel Valley (the Carmel Valley Master Plan). Our CV Master Plan contains our policy goals and objectives.

The county general plan is the link between the expressed values and vision of a community and the resulting public process and decision-making that affect the physical, social, environmental and economic character of the community.

In 1971, the state of California amended its Government Code to make general plans mandatory for every city and county in the state, and further, and more significantly, required all local land use approvals to be consistent with the jurisdiction's general plan. California law requires general plans to address seven mandatory elements: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety.

In 1990, the California Supreme Court firmly established the general plan as the pre-eminent statement of local planning policy governing future growth and development, calling it "the constitution for all future development." This means that all zoning and ordinances must be consistent with the plan. Once a general plan is approved there is much work to do to implement the specific plans and policies

The Monterey County General Plan is a living document, meaning it's not static and can be updated and amended over time to reflect changing conditions and community needs. CVA recently participated in the Housing Element Update for 2023-2031 to meet state requirements for housing. Our 2010 plan was intended to serve our needs until 2030. That date will be here before we know it. But do we need a new plan?

County Supervisor Kate Daniels points out the value of retaining the institutional knowledge from old plans. She explains that our coastal communities are under the authority of the

1982 Coastal Zone General Plan. She doubts a new coastal plan would maintain many of the protections we have in this old plan. By keeping the current Carmel Valley Master Plan, we maintain the improvements we have fought for – like how we measure traffic so the measurement doesn't encourage more development; where we want development and where we don't; 50% affordable housing in new developments; and affordable housing overlays at the mouth of the valley, in mid-valley, and in Carmel Valley Village. "The Carmel Valley Master Plan identifies and protects what makes Carmel Valley special. It articulates the esthetic of the valley," says Supervisor Daniels. For example, it helps answer questions about whether traffic lights or a different traffic calming measures may be more effective for both public safety and maintaining the rural character of the Valley. Supervisor Daniels encourages fully implementing the plans and policies in the 2010 General Plan rather than thinking about a new plan at this time.

What good is a plan that has no "teeth" or enforcement provisions? CVA recently celebrated the approval of a new short-term rental ordinance banning commercial rentals in residential areas of Carmel Valley. Funding has also been approved for hiring new personnel to enforce this ordinance. It will still require vigilance by Valley residents to report problems or infractions.

Do you know of a Carmel Valley General Plan policy that needs to be implemented or an ordinance that needs enforcement? You can draft an ordinance, and you can demand enforcement. No one cares for Carmel Valley the way we do. Let us hear from you.

## References:

**Monterey County General Plan 2010**

<https://shorturl.at/cQylv>

**CV Master Plan (Amended 2013)**

<https://shorturl.at/x5nsl>

**Regulations in the CV Master Plan Area**

<https://shorturl.at/fbB0d>

# GENERAL PLAN POLICIES PROHIBIT DESTRUCTION OF WILDLIFE HABITAT

Story and photos by Paola Berthoin

The natural habitat of Carmel Valley is an important aspect of its beauty and is essential to the native plants and animals that live here. Unfortunately, the widespread removal of sage scrub habitat down to bare earth – known as ‘mastication’ – is destroying countless acres of habitat (photo). There is a whole community of plants in this habitat, not just “brush.” Rare or threatened plants may also be in this habitat. It is necessary to walk through carefully at the right time of year to find them.

Reducing fire risk requires reduction of brush near structures, but doing that the right way, and at the right time, is critical for reducing negative impacts to our natural ecosystems. With care, we can find the right balance between fuel reduction and protection of critical habitat; fortunately, policies from the Carmel Valley Master Plan and the Monterey County General Plan provide guidance for protection of habitat and nesting birds.

The following Carmel Valley Master Plan policy CV-3.10 says that:

- a. Existing native vegetation should be maintained as much as possible throughout the valley.
- b. Valley oaks should be incorporated on floodplain terraces.
- c. Weedy species such as pampas grass and genista shall not be planted in the Valley.
- d. Eradication plans for weedy species shall be incorporated (in development plans).
- e. The chaparral community shall be maintained in its natural state to the maximum extent feasible in order to preserve soil stability and wildlife habitat and also be consistent with fire safety standards

Policies from the Monterey County General Plan provide additional guidance:

OS-5.5 Landowners and developers shall be encouraged to preserve the integrity of existing terrain and native vegetation in visually sensitive areas such as hillsides, ridges, and watersheds.

OS-5.11 Conservation of large, continuous expanses of native trees and vegetation shall be promoted as the most suitable habitat for maintaining abundant and diverse wildlife.

Wherever clearing is done throughout Carmel Valley and the Monterey Peninsula, weedy species such as annual grasses, poison hemlock, mustard, genista, pampas grass, Italian thistle, and other invasive



plants colonize the masticated areas. This completely negates any protection of the habitat or protection from fire. The land that has been cleared previously, adjacent to what you see in the photos above, already has large sections that have been invaded by flammable annual grass, mustard and poison hemlock. Flammable genista is sure to follow. During spring, look to the hills and many other locations throughout the valley and the Monterey Peninsula. Anywhere you see abundant bright yellow, that is genista taking over what was once valuable habitat.

Thinning, trimming, and leaving islands of habitat are the ways to achieve fire standards. To learn more, CVA has a Conservation Fuel Management booklet

(available on the CVA website's home page) and as hard copies, in English and Spanish, showing how to do these best management practices.

Additionally, why is mastication happening during bird nesting season? There is no way to see nesting birds or other small wildlife when riding a mower, and, thus, they are ground up by the machine. It is a CA code violation to kill or injure migratory birds, or any bird nests or eggs.

What is the point of plan policies if they are not adhered to?

Let's change how we are tending the land as we are losing so much habitat to such destructive practices. We all depend on the health of the land.

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# Wildlands Conservancy Preserve, Message from the Manager

by Kat Hardisty-Cranstone, Manager

While we've been part of the Carmel Valley community for a while now, I wonder if I've ever stopped to tell you about the history of our organization. The Wildlands Conservancy is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1995 by two people: a visionary conservationist and a generous individual whose mission was to build up his wealth and then donate his life's earnings to a worthy cause. In our early years, these two individuals gradually put together a team of passionate people to advocate for threatened landscapes in the Southern California desert.

Now, we are the fastest growing nonprofit nature preserve system in the American West, growing 10 times faster than the rate of California State Parks in the last 25 years. Currently we steward 25 one-of-a-kind preserves, each worthy of being designated as a state or national park. These preserves encompass over 200,000 acres of rivers, mountains, deserts, and coastlines. And because we acquire land in fee title, we commit to stewarding them in perpetuity.

The mission of our organization is to preserve the beauty and biodiversity of the earth and to provide programs so that children may know the wonder and joy of nature. 2025 is our 30th anniversary, and we are just getting started.



I know the question on everyone's mind when they hear about Rana Creek Preserve is when we will open to the public. While the gates are not open daily at this time, we host two volunteer days a month as well as provide guided hikes in the spring and fall. Volunteer days focus on invasive species removal, particularly French broom. Eventually, other projects will be a target, including restoration days. The guided hikes are great for families and anyone who enjoys learning about the flora and fauna of the area. The calendar of events is on our website, [wildlandsconservancy.org](http://wildlandsconservancy.org), including instructions to sign up. If you can't find it, or have any questions, I always enjoy an email or phone inquiry, [kat.h@wildlandsconservancy.org](mailto:kat.h@wildlandsconservancy.org). We also provide limited access for groups as we are able to accommodate.

An exciting announcement to share with you all is the launch of our docent program! We are looking for long-term volunteers who work independently and alongside staff to help us achieve our goals of public outreach, engagement, and land stewardship. They are Wildlands ambassadors, with a key role in sharing our organization's mission with others. Those volunteer days and guided hikes are made possible by docents! To be a docent, please apply through our website. You will also see us at community events when we have the capacity to attend, like the MeEarth Day at Palo Corona Regional Park on May 3rd.

That being said, it will be a few years before the gates are fully open - time we are using to deepen our co-stewardship with the Esselen Tribe, fund infrastructure improvements, and generally get to know the land.

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Page 1— March rainbow blankets  
Valley hills by Lorraine Surprenant

### FIREWISE, continued from Pg. 1

neighbors will also be safer. Fire is a growing concern to everyone in Carmel Valley and we are truly in this together.

Firewise suggestions that may increase home survivability: hardscape a five-foot area around the house; keep roofs and gutters free of leaf litter and pine needles; trim back tree limbs that overhang the roof, and limb up trees; replace wood chips in yards with decomposed granite or other hardscape material; create a five-foot fire break on property lot lines.

For many additional measures please refer to "Reducing Wildfire Risks in the Home Ignition Zone" (online information created by Firewise and the National Fire Protection Association} and [readyforwildfire.org](http://readyforwildfire.org) (CalFire online information)

Firewise defensible space assessment is free for Carmel Valley residents by emailing Sharon O'Connor-Clarke and Chip Clarke at [clarcm@att.net](mailto:clarcm@att.net).

Pam Peck will help CV residents form a neighborhood Firewise group: Pam Peck, [pspeck@sonic.net](mailto:pspeck@sonic.net).

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## Garland Park Wildflower Show to Bloom in June

Story and photo by Carolyn Rice

Wildflowers show up unpredictably. Some years spectacular colors splash forth in the meadows, along rivers, and on the hillsides, triggered by a perfect timing and combination of rain, temperatures, and seed germination. Other years bring a sparser bloom.

Mary Gale, a Carmel Valley resident who has frequently hiked Monterey Peninsula Regional Parks and Preserves, knows where to spot the wildflowers which usually appear in the same general areas. For years she has helped gather specimens for the annual Summer Wildflower Show, which is coming to Garland Ranch Regional Park Visitor Center on June 14 and 15 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

She said show volunteers range from serious botanists to people who just love wildflowers, which is how she describes herself. She calls California poppies her favorite as they are so bright and cheerful and easy to see but then goes on to say she likes Chinese houses as they are so interesting and baby blue eyes for their stunning color. Then she talks about shooting stars and bulb lilies, before admitting, "I guess I have about 10 or 20 favorites."

The Garland Park show began in 2000 when Gordon Williams and co-volunteer Mary Saylor displayed a few flowers at the visitor center. Starting in May, Gordon scouted the nearly 50 miles of Garland Park hiking trails and noted where various wildflowers were found. Just before the show, volunteers would head for the locations to collect flowers. His notes still assist the show volunteers with collecting and displaying the wildflowers.

In 2011 volunteer naturalist Michael Mitchell took over the show organization. His passion was identifying and photographing wildflowers, and in 2016 he co-authored with Rod Yeager *Monterey County Wildflowers - a Field Guide*. This book was an expansion

of his 2011 book that focused on Garland Park wildflowers. In the beginning the show featured Garland Park wildflowers, but when Mitchell took over, he expanded the collection sites to include the Frog Pond, Marina Dunes Preserve, and Palo Corona Regional Park, all parts of the park district.

Since 2019 the Monterey Peninsula Regional Parks District staff and volunteers, the California Native Plant Society, and the Monterey Bay Master Gardeners have carried out this colorful free event. Debbie Wyatt, the district park staff member who coordinates the event, credits the dedication and determination of the volunteers for this successful annual event.



CALIFORNIA  
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Chinese house wildflower photographed beside the Garland Park trail last year