



WINTER 2011

# The Bagpiper

INVERNESS ASSOCIATION

## Joint Operation Plan Saves Tomales Bay State Park

**T**OMALES BAY STATE PARK is no longer on the closure list of California State Parks thanks to an operating agreement with the National Park Service. The formal closure date for the parks was July 1, 2012, but a cooperative agreement with the Point Reyes National Seashore will allow the three parks that comprise Tomales Bay State Park to stay open four days a week with maintenance and patrolling assistance provided by the Point Reyes National Seashore staff. Entrance fees at Heart's Desire will fund the only full-time staff worker, Roberto Barajas, who has been employed in the local state parks for 17 years.

Meanwhile, gates at Millerton, Shell Beach and Heart's Desire are closed Tuesday-Thursday and open Friday-Monday. Closed gates at the Shell Beach parking lot and the Millerton parking area have not in the past detracted visitors from parking outside the gates and walking in. In fact, many locals, including Inverness Association Board members, question the point of closing these gates at all.

An admittedly bare-bones plan, this agreement does not address any support for capital improvements or repairs. Meanwhile, Marin Assemblyman Jared Huffman's bill, AB 42, has become law. It allows partnership agreements with non-profits to share management responsibilities with the state and has opened the possibility for further assistance to the parks, particularly those scheduled for closure throughout the state. Several parks are already deemed to be off the closure list through this arrangement, notably Mono Lake State Park.

At a recent forum co-sponsored by Huffman and Marin Community Foundation President Dr. Thomas Peters key players in future cooperation gathered as the Marin Open Parks Coalition to report on the status of the park situation and solicit input from the community members. Frank Dean, general superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, described the task at hand. "The fiscal crisis has brought us together. Ecosystems do not recognize borders."

The cooperative relationship among all players in the park and open space picture has a historic foundation and a practice of meeting regularly to look at issues. Dr. Peters referred to the "tremendous platform of coordination and cooperation already in place" as "a cause for significant optimism and confidence in a solution." He added, "We are going to keep our parks open and provide a model for the state."

Nevertheless, the larger picture of park support still involves major financial investment from the only source that has the potential to offer it: the state. Huffman does not consider the budget as it stands the last word on the matter as he sees that political energy is building for revenue plans that properly finance California's legendary park system. How and where the revenue will come remains the question on the table.



*Wendy Lieberg, California State Parks Trails and Maintenance Supervisor, joined local volunteers in a day-long effort to replace the collapsing fencing along the trail to Shell Beach on November 4. Fencing materials were supplied by the park service and 400 feet of new fencing was installed.*

## Community Volunteers Repair Shell Beach Trail

43 POSTHOLES. 400 FEET OF FENCING. 25 volunteers. 2 supervisors. Lots of cookies. Add those up and you get a brand new fence in one day along the switchback trail to Shell Beach. The work party effort was the first official volunteer partnership to support Tomales Bay State Park in its time of financial need and it was deemed a grand success by all involved.

The event was co-sponsored by the Inverness Association and the Tomales Bay Watershed Council and organized by Katherine Mitchell, who put the cookies into the mix. Volunteers arrived at the trailhead at 9 a.m. to find a truckload of new pre-notched posts and rails plus assorted tools delivered by the State Park, and the work began.

One set of teams began digging holes as another workforce hefted the rails and posts to their shoulders to begin laying them out along the old dilapidated fence. Old wood went up the trail and new wood went down the trail. By the end of the day there was a spanking new fence along the trail, a job that would have taken many days if it had been a routine maintenance with the tiny staff that now exists to patch up our local parks.

Roberto Barajas, 17-year maintenance worker for the park, now the only state park worker for Shell Beach, Heart's Desire  
*(Continued on page 3)*



## *Letter from the President*

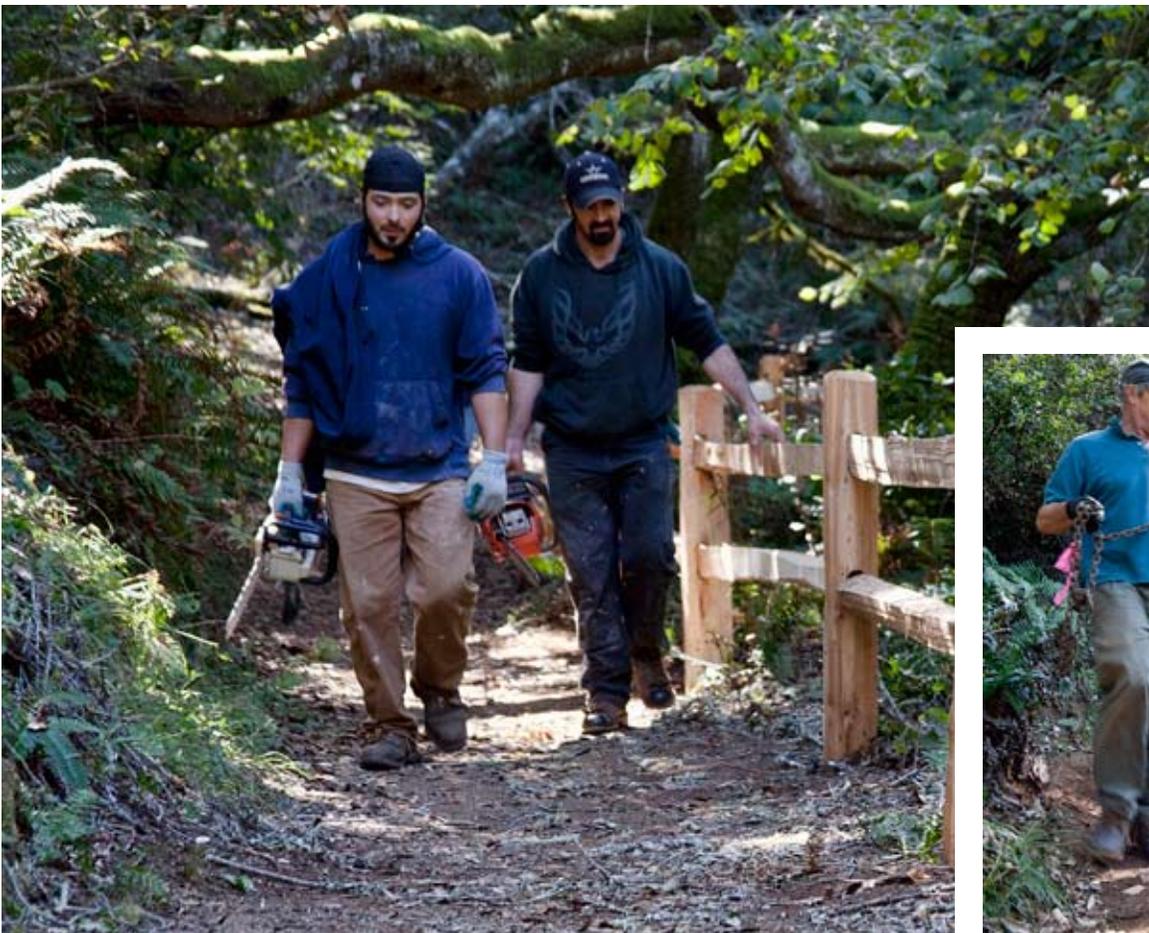
ON A MISTY FALL AFTERNOON, I headed to Shell Beach to admire the repaired trails to Shell Beach One and Two. The improved trails are the result of the incredibly hard work and craft of two dozen or so volunteers who turned out November 4 to fix what seemed broken. I wanted to walk in the mist and muse about the power of concerned neighbors to tackle a difficult job, one of considerable concern for beach goers, hikers and others.

Shell Beach and Chicken Ranch Beach are “our” beaches, in the sense that we feel entitled to visit and enjoy them, and take seriously our stewardship of their extraordinary presence.

I want to thank all those who turned out and hauled rails up and down the trail, dug out huge tree roots, cleared brush and trees, sculpted the dirt path for good drainage and brought homemade cookies.

Special thanks go to Tom Baty, chief organizer of supplies, volunteers and coordination with the State Park personnel. My story ends on a wistful note: I had forgotten that on Thursdays, Shell Beach is closed. Perhaps next year, if and when California’s budget catastrophe improves and with aid from the Point Reyes National Seashore, all of us can walk down the trail to Shell Beach in the middle of the week.

— Julie Monson, President, Inverness Association Board of Directors





## Volunteers Hit the Shell Beach Trail

*Katherine Mitchell (below) organized the Shell Beach workday. Bill Moseley, IA Board member, and Ken Emanuels (top) were a posthole team.*

*Roberto Barajas, Wendy Lieberg and Neysa King, Tomales Bay Watershed Council director, (top left) celebrated a job well done.*

*Tom Baty and Daniel Cordrey (left) attack the intransigent stump.*

*Manuel Gutierrez and Oscar Lopez (far left) examine a job well done.*



## Trail work

*Continued from page 1*

and Millerton—the three parks that comprise Tomales Bay State Park—was all smiles seeing so much happen so quickly and so efficiently. Several days earlier a crew donated by Nick Whitney’s Pacific Slope Tree Company had chain-sawed overhanging limbs and fallen trees threatening the trail. Ismael Gutierrez of Inverness Landscaping offered two of his crew on the November 4 workday for chainsaw work.

Sudden Oak Death is responsible for many of the fallen tanoaks that have hovered over the trail and knocked down sections of fence. With its new fence and safe trail, the route to Shell Beach has never looked better, and a precedent of local volunteers amiably working side-by-side with state employees has been set.

**Inverness Foundation**  
Post Office Box 382  
Inverness, California 94937

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The Inverness Association meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Jack Mason Museum. The agenda is posted in advance on our website:  
[www.invernessassociation.org](http://www.invernessassociation.org)

### IA Directors

**Julie Monson**, President  
663-9484  
juliemon@svn.net  
**Bridger Mitchell**, Vice-president  
669-9641  
bmitchell@crai.com  
**Burton Eubank**, Secretary  
663-9241  
burton\_eubank@hotmail.com  
**Bill Moseley**, Treasurer  
669-7341  
wfmose@pacbell.net  
**Jerry Abbott**  
669-1192  
jdabbott@horizoncable.com  
**Laura Alderdice**  
669-1138  
alderdicelaura@yahoo.com  
**Joyce Arndt**  
669-1181  
arnmolly@aol.com  
**Rebecca Dixon**  
669-1159  
rdixon@DixonMarineServices.com  
**Jack Matthews**  
669-1249  
**Michael Mery**  
663-1623  
mmery@horizoncable.com  
**Nick Whitney**  
663-1572  
bignwhitney@yahoo.com



*"We Are Lumberjacks and We're OK..."*

Removing a large fallen tree that made navigating the Shell Beach trail difficult took a three-man effort most of the day. Volunteers Walter Hoffman, Jim Grant and Tom Baty got sweaty, dirty and happy in the process.

### *The Bagpiper*

Editor: Elizabeth Whitney  
Photographs: Elizabeth Fenwick  
Design: Dewey Livingston  
Mailing: Barry and Linda Linder

Inverness Association  
Post Office Box 382  
Inverness, California 94937  
[www.invernessassociation.org](http://www.invernessassociation.org)

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