When Friends of the Dunes took ownership of the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area on October 15, 2020, we didn't totally know what to expect. Our North Coast community was entering the brutal second wave of a pandemic. Friends of the Dunes' long-standing ability to gather and mobilize people for coastal conservation was severely limited.

More specific to Samoa Dunes and Wetlands, there was looming uncertainty about this property's relatively recent history of illegal encampments and associated resource damage, including burning and trash dumping. When Friends of the Dunes took on this conservation challenge, there wasn't even a decent map of the property showing its trails, or the trash that still remained from the previous ownership. There was also uncertainty about who would be the long-term conservation landowner and steward of this property.

We did know a couple of things, however. We knew that this remarkable landscape of coastal dune forest, wetlands, and open dunes was too important, too ecologically rare and beautiful and significant, for us to stand aside and let it be degraded. We also knew the most important thing—we knew that you would step forward to help steward this land. I’m talking to you—members, supporters, Volunteer Trail Stewards, walk leaders, naturalists, ambassadors, and our amazing agency and Tribal partners. We were right. You have come with us on

(Continued on page 2)
this journey of embracing a surprisingly wild new nature preserve located a few minutes’ drive from Eureka or Arcata.

To grow—as a community, as a non-profit organization, even as a person—requires taking significant risk. It requires us to stretch ourselves, and to risk failure. We’ve all done that over the last year, and guess what? This bold, beautiful experiment in community conservation is working.

Here’s how it happened: Our volunteers and staff quickly explored and mapped the property, producing geo-referenced trail maps for navigation and stewardship maps for management.

Working with dedicated partners like the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Backcountry Horsemen of California’s (BCHC) Redwood Unit Wilderness Riders, we have steadily removed more than 3,000 pounds of legacy trash from the land, restoring rare coastal forest habitat.

Two cohorts of Volunteer Trail Stewards stepped forward for training in the middle of a pandemic, and are currently active on the land as our eyes and ears. And our skillful staff—Restoration and Stewardship Manager Dante Ryman deserves a lot of credit here—has been empathetic in communicating with people on the land that trespass camping is no longer allowed here, and that there are alternatives.

Our public walks at Samoa Dunes and Wetlands have been so popular that we doubled their frequency during the spring, so that we could introduce more of you to the land. You in turn introduced others who would fall in love with this special place.

Meanwhile, the effective stewardship of this land by all of us has opened doors to thoughtful conversations with our agency and Tribal partners. We are learning more every day about both the cultural and ecological significance of the lands in the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area.

We at Friends of the Dunes are currently advancing conversations with both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Wiyot Tribe, and it looks like we have found two committed long-term conservation landowners for the two separate pieces of the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area, located on either side of Highway 255. We are proceeding with plans to transfer property on the west of Highway 255 to the BLM, and east of Highway 255 to the Wiyot Tribe for permanent conservation ownership. There are always more conversations to have, and work to do to connect the conservation lands and partners of Humboldt Bay. I encourage you to read Adam Canter’s engaging article in this Dunesberry about the Wiyot perspective on this conservation project, to see how far we’ve come, and where we might go together.

At Friends of the Dunes, we’re growing in all kinds of ways, and as always, it’s because of you. Thank you for coming on this journey with us—you have made this ambitious community conservation project possible, and there’s still so much for us to do together.
Carla Alvia-Martinez

By Daisy Ambriz-Peres, Outreach Manager

Carla Alvia-Martinez is one of those people that you admire and think, “Wow... how do you do it?” A woman of environmental science with a passion in community education: She’s a Planner for RCAA’s Natural Resources Services, Leader of the Peninsula Community Collaborative, Coastal Naturalist Graduate, Secretary on our Board of Directors, and volunteer for the community. If you’ve ever had the pleasure to work with Carla, you know exactly what I am talking about! She has a beautiful way with words that captivates and educates, not only in the English language but in Spanish as well.

Carla is a bilingual naturalist Latina. Over the past year, she has used her skills, language, and background to expand Friends of the Dunes’ reach in the Latinx community. She is the chair of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee and deeply understands the urgent need for welcoming outdoor natural spaces for our BIPOC community.

In early April, Carla collaborated with Paso a Paso, St. Joseph’s, and Redwood Memorial Hospital's Latinx community program, to offer a Ma-le'l Dunes North guided walk to Spanish-speaking families. As a fellow bilingual naturalist, I offered to help as the ambassador. The trip was to begin at 10 am. We both waited anxiously while practicing our Spanish flora... next thing we knew, it was 10:30 am and nobody had arrived. We were both feeling disheartened but Carla insisted on waiting for families. Sure enough, by 11 am we had a total of 18 people!

The word of our event spread like wild fire. Families were so eager to participate in this event that we couldn't turn anyone down. Instead, we broke into two parties in order to adhere to COVID guidelines. The families were in awe at the majestic beauty of Ma-le'l Dunes. Children took off their shoes to run in the sand. Parents laughed as they saw their kids gallop like antelopes with bare feet. I saw how people instantly became more comfortable and relaxed when they saw that both Carla and I spoke their language. They were filled with questions! We compared plants and animals to those that many see in our southern home countries.

The leaders at Paso a Paso informed us that they had a plethora of families interested in more events! Carla quickly organized more. Thanks to Carla, Friends of the Dunes has cemented a beautiful and growing relationship with our Latinx community. We are now in collaboration with Paso a Paso, LatinoNet, and Latino Outdoors to continue this important work. We will offer more events like these in the summer months to come.

I want to honor and deeply thank Carla for connecting us and reminding FOD of the importance of this work. Spanish speaking families are hungry for interactions with the natural world. We have a job to create a welcoming non-discriminatory space in our coastal environments and in our organization. Nature is for everyone to enjoy regardless of your skin tone, language, or background. Everyone is welcome here.
Friends of the Dunes Dreams Big with the Wiyot Tribe

By Adam Canter, Assistant Natural Resources Director, Wiyot Tribe

Ha'wa'lou (greetings) from the Wiyot Tribe and Natural Resources Department (Shawir Darrudaluduk). We hope this newsletter finds you all healthy and out and enjoying the beauty and regenerative capacity of nature. The Wiyot Tribe has, since time immemorial, held deep relationships with the plants, animals, air, fish, water, and beings of the Wigi, Wiya't, and Baduwa't, stewarding resources of the lands, waters, and sky. As this last year has finally illuminated, the ruling society is being reminded of the atrocities that were committed by settler-colonialism and the inequalities that systematic racism has placed upon Native Americans, minorities, and people of color. The Wiyot's once vast and nearly 500 square mile ancestral territory, which ran from Moonstone Beach to Tsakiyuuwit (Bear River Ridge) and inland to the first ridge of the coast range, was violently taken away and the Wiyot people nearly wiped out by abuse, disease, and the infamous massacre at Tuluwat and other sites around the Wigi in February 1860.

Since that horrible time in 1860, the Wiyot have been working hard at rebuilding their culture and reclaiming stolen lands. The process has been slow and today the Wiyot hold less than 1% of their ancestral lands, with many habitat types and cultural sites locked away in private or government hands. After years in the making, in 2019 the Wiyot were returned a majority of the southern portion of Indian Island from the City of Eureka, which along with the northern parcels, consists of the Wiyot center of the universe and site of the world renewal ceremony at Tuluwat, as well as the shell mound, Hutverroulh, at what is now the heron rookery. Much of this property consists of saltmarsh and low elevation tidelands subject to inundation by future sea level rise.

As the state and nation begin to place more attention on Native American Land Return, the Wiyot are thrilled about the deepening of the relationship between the Tribe and Friends of the Dunes around the recently acquired Samoa Dunes and Wetlands property, which has immense cultural significance to the Wiyot people. The Wiyot are a people of the dunes, holding generations worth of traditional ecological knowledge about the habitats and centered around the arts of surf fishing and the cultural extravaganza of the dune forest huckleberry harvest.

The bayside parcels within the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area hold special significance and were a part of the Wiyot place, Digawututklh, which offers a direct line of sight to Tuluwat and lies along the main Wiyot route of travel from Batuwa't.

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Presently Mike Cipra and Friends of the Dunes have met with the Wiyot to welcome and provide unhampered access to the property, while also beginning exciting negotiations with the project partners including the California Coastal Conservancy (one of the conservation purchase funders), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Humboldt Bay Harbor District.

All partners seem interested and willing to pursue this pathway of the Wiyot Tribe being the permanent conservation landowner of the bayside parcels of the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands. Mike noted: “Friends of the Dunes is very interested in working in partnership with the Wiyot Tribe toward returning culturally significant lands to the Wiyot People.” Friends of the Dunes will present the proposition formally to the Tribe at the Wiyot Tribal Business Council meeting on June 14th. It is dreams and collaborations like this that make our community great and work toward healing the wounds of the past, present, and future.

Wiyot Youth pulling invasive non-native iceplant (Carpobrotus chilensis) from the dunes.

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Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, there seems to have been a surge of interest in connecting with nature. Yet nature centers and organizations dedicated to connecting people with nature do not fall into the category of “essential services.” When shelter-in-place orders went into effect in March 2020, it was with some heartbreak that we closed the doors of the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center to the public and we canceled all in person programs - including school field trips, public guided walks, and Dune Ecosystem Restoration Team (DERT) work days. We quickly transitioned to offering distance learning resources and online programs designed to connect people with Humboldt’s coastal environments during a time when we could not meet in person. In fall of 2020, once it felt safe to gather outside in small groups and we received official approval from Humboldt County to do so, we resumed public guided walks with strict safety guidelines. It quickly became apparent that there was a huge interest in attending guided walks at the Lanphere Dunes Unit of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area. There was such a big demand that we ended up with long waiting lists for these programs and had to schedule extra guided walks throughout the first half of 2021 in order to meet the nature exploration needs of our community. Both experienced naturalists and the nature-curious have been itching to get outside and learn about our unique coastal dune ecosystems.

Friends of the Dunes has been offering free guided walks in our coastal dunes for over 35 years. Though we have had consistent interest and participation in these programs, I have never seen such long waiting lists to attend a guided walk as I did this year. Maybe it was the lack of community events and social gatherings. Maybe it was the exciting and long overdue acquisition of the Samoa Dunes and Wetlands Conservation Area, or the designation of Lanphere and Ma-l’el Dunes as a National Natural Landmark. Or maybe it was just a human need to seek comfort and solace in nature during a challenging time. Whatever the reason, it’s a good problem to have for an organization whose mission involves connecting people with the coastal dunes and wetlands surrounding Wigi, the Humboldt Bay. While it has been a challenge to keep up with the demand for nature education programs while doing so responsibly and safely, it has been a challenge that we gratefully and enthusiastically embraced.

While we are excited to return to in-person programs, doing so is still not yet feasible for all our programs and audiences. We are currently in a transitional state with some in-person programs in small groups and some online programs serving wider audiences.

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So far in 2021, we’ve been able to connect with K-12 students in virtual classrooms through modified versions of our Jr. Naturalist and Ocean Day programs. Both incorporate assignments that encourage students to get away from their screens and connect with the natural world in their backyard, neighborhood, or nearby streams, wetlands, and beaches (whatever is accessible to them).

These programs emphasize that nature is all around us and can be found right outside our door. We’ve also had a very successful Naturalist Notes Webinar Series featuring locally relevant topics presented by six knowledgeable and engaging content experts. Designing a Webinar Series was a completely new experience for us, and we definitely learned so much along the way! One of the many things I love about my job is the role that Friends of the Dunes plays in bridging the gap between our local scientific community, who are always willing to share their wealth of knowledge, and the community members who are excited to learn from them. The Naturalist Notes Webinar Series has allowed us to do just that, while also making these fascinating presentations accessible to even more people than they would have been as an in-person lecture series.

All of the Webinars were recorded, making them a long-lasting educational resource. Plus, we’ve raised over $2,500 from registration fees which will fund scholarships for the Coastal Naturalist Training!

After what has felt like a very long and challenging 14 months, I am cautiously optimistic and feel like I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. We were able to re-open the Humboldt Coastal Nature Center this May, welcoming visitors back into the building for the first time since March 2020! We have also resumed DERT workdays, and it’s very heartwarming to see our volunteers hard at work in the dunes removing invasive plants. With the increase in vaccinations locally and lifted physical-distancing restrictions, we’ve been able to increase the total number of participants allowed on our guided walks. And coming this fall, our fingers are crossed for a completely in-person Coastal Naturalist Training (more details below).

Thank you, members and volunteers, for your ongoing support as we’ve navigated the new territory of engaging our community in coastal education and stewardship programs during a pandemic. We are looking forward to seeing more of your smiling faces in real life soon!

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**Coastal Naturalist Training**

**September 9 to October 28, 2021**
Thursday Evening Classroom Sessions from 6 to 8 p.m. (In-person or Zoom – TBD)
3-5 hour Weekend Field Sessions – Times and locations vary

We are excited to announce that registration is open for the Coastal Naturalist Training! The Coastal Naturalist Training is an 8-week course that will introduce participants to the wonders of our local ecology and engage them in the stewardship of California’s natural communities. This course will combine a junior college-level introductory science curriculum with classroom and field experiences, guest lecturers, and project-based learning to immerse students in the natural world of the Humboldt Bay region and coastal dune ecosystem. Guest lecturers and field instructors include professors, geologists, botanists, biologists, long-time naturalists, and other local experts. Upon completion of course requirements, participants will earn a California Naturalist Certificate through the UC California Naturalist Program and are eligible for an optional four UC Davis Extension academic credits. The course is for community members interested in expanding their knowledge of the coast, as well as students, teachers, naturalists, and environmental educators seeking professional development. While you may take the course strictly for your own enjoyment, the course will also prepare you to become an active volunteer with Friends of the Dunes or other environmental organizations.

Participants should be able to hike several miles in soft sand while carrying their own supplies (field notebook, water, lunch, and snacks). We will be traveling at an easy pace but will be in the field for up to 5 hours per field trip. Field sessions take place rain or shine, participants are expected to be prepared for the weather.

Course Fee: $375 or $350 for Friends of the Dunes Members, Peninsula Residents & students.
Optional Additional Fees: $80 for 4 academic credits, Approx. $30 for Kayak Rental
Annual Kids Ocean Day Event Goes Virtual

By Emily Baxter, Education Coordinator

Every year Friends of the Dunes enters the classrooms of hundreds of Humboldt County students to share why the ocean and our coastal ecosystems are really amazing and important habitats. Then, at the end of May, students are ushered to the South Spit for a day of stewardship where they pull invasive European beachgrass, pick up trash, and finish the day by sitting together in an aerial art image.

As one can imagine, COVID has changed the way our school programs are able to run. This year for Kids Ocean Day students were visited in their virtual classrooms where we highlighted all the cool creatures on our local coastline and discussed the importance of a clean watershed. To help keep our watersheds clean, during the month of May, they are collecting as much litter as they can by picking up trash wherever they go - whether it’s a trip to the beach or a walk around the neighborhood.

They are logging into the Marine Debris Tracker app, contributing to worldwide research on the trash movement. Using the app also allows us to see how many students are participating, and those with the most trash collected will receive eco-friendly prize bags. In lieu of the aerial art, this year students are creating an original piece of artwork to reflect what they love most about the ocean. The art from students participating in Kids Ocean Day across the entire state will be featured in a digital moving mosaic, created through www.picturemosaics.com. The main image of the mosaic will be chosen from the winning artwork of all 5 participating regions in California.

Students from San Diego, Orange County, San Francisco, Humboldt County, and even from Hong Kong, China, are sharing their message for clean oceans. Friends of the Dunes has been participating in this statewide program since 2005.

In lieu of the aerial art, this year students are creating an original piece of artwork to reflect what they love most about the ocean. The art from students participating in Kids Ocean Day across the entire state will be featured in a digital moving mosaic, created through www.picturemosaics.com. The main image of the mosaic will be chosen from the winning artwork of all 5 participating regions in California.

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The entire month of July!

A physically-distanced version of the 26th Annual Sand Sculpture Festival will be taking place during the entire month of July! During the Dispersed Sand Sculpture Festival, teams are invited to create sandy masterpieces on local beaches, post creations on social media, send photos of their sand sculptures to Friends of the Dunes, vote for their favorites, and be entered to win exciting prizes. Plan to make a date with a sandy stretch of beach and get creative with your family and friends this July!

"Humboldt High Fortress" by Team Maximum Wattage, 2020’s Dispersed Sand Sculpture Festival winner of the Best of Show award.
Friends of the Dunes is dedicated to conserving the natural diversity of coastal environments in Humboldt County, California, through community supported education and stewardship programs.

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DUNE ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TEAM IS BACK!
Every 3rd Sunday from 10 am to 1 pm
BLM Ma-le’l South
Visit friendsofthedunes.org/volunteer for more information
Support us by supporting our BUSINESS PARTNERS
UPCOMING EVENTS

6/20  Ma-le'l Dunes South Restoration
      10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

July  Dispersed Sand Sculpture
      Festival

7/3   Lanphere Dunes Guided Walk
      10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

RSVP Required for all programs. Email
info@friendsofthedunes.org to reserve a spot.

Visit friendsofthedunes.org/calendar for a complete
list of upcoming programs.

Join our email list for updates about guided walks,
restoration days, and school programs.

Would you like to see the Dunesberry in color?
Contact info@friendsofthedunes.org to receive
Dunesberry by email, or view it in color at
friendsofthedunes.org/about.

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