



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: Watershed Committee/Board of Directors
Title: FY 2025 Annual Volunteer Program Update
From: Shaun Horne, Director of Watershed Resources
Through: Ben Horenstein, General Manager
Meeting Date: December 18, 2025

SH
BH

TYPE OF ITEM: Approve X Review and Comment

RECOMMENDATION: Review and comment on the District's Annual Volunteer Program Update

SUMMARY: The Marin Municipal Water District (District) strives to connect people to nature and their water source by offering hands-on stewardship activities on the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed. By engaging volunteers and students, the District increases its capacity to improve trails, restore habitat, protect threatened wildlife, and monitor both the rare and invasive species across the landscape. Through their experiences, volunteers gain skills, become stewards, contribute to the health and safety of the watershed, and have fun while doing so.

Staff will provide a presentation highlighting accomplishments of the District and community volunteers from the past fiscal year and review future volunteer programming. The District's Volunteer Program directly supports the advancement of the Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP), the Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy, the Road and Trails Management Plan (RTMP) and Lagunitas Creek Stewardship Plan.

DISCUSSION: The District strives to provide unique engagement opportunities to connect community members to the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed, the District's primary water source. In this way the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed becomes a classroom for the community to learn about their drinking water, the watershed and the District's water distribution system. Community volunteers and students are a major contributing force to the stewardship and restoration of the watershed. The District has developed a variety of volunteer activities, created unique environmental education opportunities for schools, engaged with stakeholders and partner organizations on citizen science programs and advanced watershed visitor outreach. Through these opportunities, community members help preserve the District's drinking water supply, protect biodiversity, and foster a more resilient and connected community

The District has established a long standing partnership with AmeriCorps service whose members are integral to the District's ability to offer a wide array of community volunteer and educational

opportunities. In California, AmeriCorps programs train emerging environmental professionals through hands-on watershed restoration and community engagement. The District has hosted Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) members annually for over 15 years within the Fisheries Department. These fellows support habitat enhancement for anadromous fish in Lagunitas Creek and contribute to community stewardship programs that benefit wildlife across the watershed. This year, the District is hosting three California Climate Action Corps (CCAC) members who are working to implement programs focused on forest health, fire ecology, and watershed stewardship.

The District's Volunteer Program directly supports implementation of BFFIP Management Actions through hundreds of hours of hand pulling invasive broom and other priority weeds each year. Volunteers contributed over 1,200 hours on invasive plant management to restore and protect native plant communities. The District also collaborates with Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC) and One Tam staff to provide important public outreach materials and events related to the application of the Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy on the watershed. Over the past year, staff engaged thousands of people through programs focused on topics ranging from the use of beneficial fire to migratory birds, nature journaling, salmon migration, and lichen bio-blitzes.

Enhanced community trail stewardship was identified as a priority in the Recreation Management Feasibility Study. In response, the District expanded its partnership with the Redwood Trails Alliance (RTA). During fiscal year 2025, volunteers contributed 700 hours across 12 trail events. With the dedicated support of RTA, the District is positioned to deliver a record number of trail stewardship opportunities focused on bridge repairs, trail tread improvements, and vegetation management.

During fiscal year 2025, 15 Frog Docents engaged 487 visitors at Carson Falls, sharing information about foothill yellow-legged frogs and the importance of protecting their habitat. Twenty-eight Turtle Observers contributed 75 hours monitoring native and non-native turtle populations in District reservoirs. These activities help to reduce the impact that visitor can have on sensitive watershed resources.

Through collaboration with Trout Unlimited and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, staff support the Trout in the Classroom program, teaching students about salmonid life cycles and watershed health. This year, 49 classes participated, concluding with field trips to Bon Tempe Reservoir. WSP fellows also delivered a series watershed and fisheries science instruction to two classrooms throughout the school year.

The Volunteer Program also collaborates with One Tam to advance community science across Mt. Tamalpais. Volunteers supporting the Marin Wildlife Watch cataloged more than 479,000 photos this year. The Tamalpais Bee Lab expanded monitoring of native bees; One Tam staff piloted new protocols for documenting *T. gummifera* habitat preferences, and 12 volunteers contributed 56 hours of field surveys on the watershed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: Not applicable.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT(S): None.