



# STAFF REPORT

---

**Meeting Type:** Watershed Committee/Board of Directors  
**Title:** Volunteer Program Update  
**From:** Shaun Horne, Director of Watershed Resources  
**Through:** Ben Horenstein, General Manager  
**Meeting Date:** October 17, 2024

---

**TYPE OF ACTION:**                      Action                      X                      Information                      Review and Refer

**RECOMMENDATION:** Receive a staff update on the District’s volunteer program

**SUMMARY:** The Marin Municipal Water District (District) Volunteer Program 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.

Community volunteers and students are a major contributing force to the conservation and restoration of the watershed. Over the past 15 years the District has developed a variety of volunteer activities, created unique environmental education opportunities for schools, and engaging with stakeholders and partner organizations on citizen science programs and watershed user outreach efforts.

Staff will present a Volunteer Program update to highlight the accomplishments from the past fiscal year and review opportunities for future volunteer programming, which supports the advancement of the Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP), the Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy, and the Watershed Recreation Management Feasibility Study.

**DISCUSSION:** Volunteers play a critical role in maintaining the scenic beauty and biological richness of the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed. From improving trails, restoring habitat, and protecting threatened flora and fauna, the District has developed a variety of volunteer opportunities designed to engage the community in natural resource stewardship. The volunteer program serves as an informational resource for engaged community members and stakeholders through educational and public outreach events, including trainings, outreach stations, guided hikes, and internship opportunities.

Environmental education increases people’s knowledge and awareness about the environment, develops the necessary skills to address shared challenges, fosters commitment to civic engagement and connects students to their local water source. The District’s Volunteer Program engages with

students ranging from pre-K through college in a variety of formats like in-classroom workshops, Watershed field trips, Library Story Times and internships. Additionally, through the District's collaboration with Trout Unlimited and California Department of Fish and Wildlife District staff is able to teach students about the salmonid life cycle and challenges associated with local fisheries through the Trout in the Classroom program; this year the District interacted with 51 classes. Additionally, two AmeriCorps members from the Watershed Steward's Program work with the District's Fisheries and Volunteer Program to improve the health and habitat of anadromous fish in Lagunitas Creek and help to support community stewardship programs for wildlife across the watershed.

During fiscal year 2024, 19 Frog Docents spoke with 844 visitors about foothill yellow-legged frogs and the importance of protecting their habitat near Carson Falls. Also, 16 Turtle Docents provided 86 hours toward monitoring native and introduced turtle populations in District reservoirs. The District's Volunteer Program also collaborates with One Tam to advance community science programs on Mt. Tamalpais and throughout the One Tam geographic area. Volunteers working on the Marin Wildlife Watch cataloged over 101,000 photos this year. The Tamalpais Bee Lab expands District monitoring efforts of wild bees; One Tam co-led three training events this year and four volunteers surveyed for 96 hours this spring at four different sites on the watershed.

The District volunteer programs are advertised through social media channels and on third-party community engagement websites. The District Communications Department recently updated the volunteer pamphlets and monthly event flyers to help raise awareness about upcoming volunteer opportunities on the watershed. Details about District volunteer programs and events are updated on the District's website and shared through a monthly email notice that reaches 2,824 people. Additionally, the District has been working to deepen relationships with the community to advance trail stewardship offerings on the watershed in an effort to advance the Strategic Opportunities identified in the Watershed Recreation Management Feasibility Study.

The District's Volunteer Program directly supports implementation of BFFIP Management Actions through hundreds of hours of Volunteer efforts to remove invasive broom and fir each year. Complementing these efforts, the Volunteer Program in conjunction with Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC) and One Tam staff, provide important public outreach materials and events related to the application of the Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy on the watershed, such as the use of prescribed fire in the Rock Spring area. Staff at the Tam Van engaged with 785 visitors while positioned at popular trailheads on Mt. Tamalpais, discussing District efforts toward improving watershed forest health. Two self-guided maps were created to help illustrate the forest health work, which is informed by the Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy. Forest health stewardship and community engagement initiatives are supported by GrizzlyCorps, an AmeriCorps program designed by UC Berkeley's Center for Law, Energy, and the Environment.

The District's Volunteer Program also supports implementation of numerous Stewardship Opportunities identified in the Recreation Management Feasibility Study. For fiscal year 2024, volunteers contributed 585 hours over the course of nine Saturdays through the District's Trail Stewardship program. The start of fiscal year 2025 has volunteers assisting District staff with trail maintenance directly related towards the anticipated launch of the Trail Sharing Pilot Program. While the Marin Superior Court has temporarily placed this Pilot program on hold, staff will continue hosting Monthly Volunteer Trail Days in support of ongoing watershed trail maintenance priorities.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:** Not applicable.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** None.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

1. 2024 Volunteer and Outreach Pamphlet