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UC SANTA BARBARA
Cheadle Center for Biodiversity & Ecological Restoration

Restoration Register

November 2026



A burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) catches the first rays of sunrise on the NCOS Mesa on October 7, 2026.

Updates

Campus Point Restoration

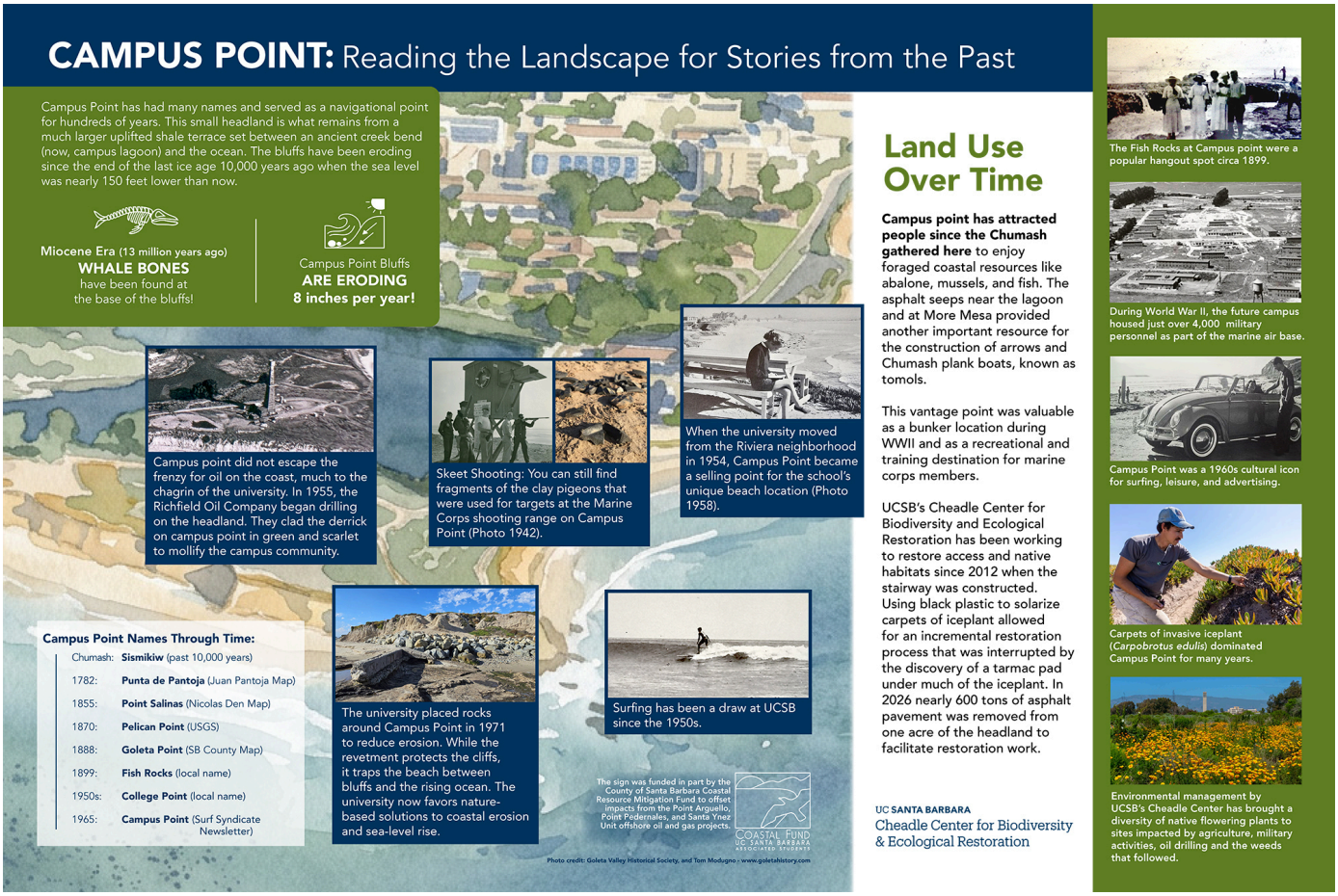


Aerial view of Campus Lagoon and Campus Point showing the newly cleared asphalt area at Campus Point (right side of the lagoon) and the recent prescribed burn area on Lagoon Island (peninsula extending into the lagoon from the left). Photo by Bill Dewey.

Restoration work is officially underway at Campus Point! The Cheadle Center is working to remove remnants of the site's military-era infrastructure and restore native coastal habitats across the nearly seven-acre headland. The project includes removing an old asphalt pad, controlling invasive iceplant, and reestablishing a mosaic of native habitats, including coastal sage scrub, beach dunes, and seasonal wetlands.

Sometimes restoration requires substantial disturbance to undo the impacts of the past. From using heavy equipment to remove old asphalt at Campus Point to prescribed burns that help control invasive grasses on nearby Lagoon Island, these efforts create opportunities for native vegetation to reestablish and thrive.

We're currently finalizing the Campus Point interpretive sign highlighting the site's recent history, shown below, and would love your input. You can access a high-resolution PDF of the sign at this link. If there's anything you like, dislike, find confusing, or wish we could include, please send your feedback to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



The Cheadle Center is also collaborating with the Barbareño Band of Chumash Indians to protect cultural resources and develop interpretive signage highlighting the site's ecological, geological, and cultural history. As part of this collaboration, we're developing an additional sign focused on Chumash use of the area and its coastal resources.

The project was recently featured in *The Current* in an article by Harrison Tasoff exploring the site's history, ongoing restoration efforts, and plans for the future. Read the full article here.

Key funding for this project was financed by County of Santa Barbara's Coastal Resource Mitigation Fund, a partial mitigation of impacts from the following offshore oil and gas projects: Point Arguello, Point Pedernales, and Santa Ynez Unit.

Campus Point will also provide a great opportunity for school groups to participate in restoration, with sandy soil that's easy to plant in and excellent views of the coast. To arrange a visit, learn more about Campus Lagoon, and help with planting, please contact Andy Lanes, our Environmental Education Coordinator, at lanes@ccber.ucsb.edu.

Prescribed Burns at Campus Lagoon and Coal Oil Point Reserve



Prescribed burn in progress on Lagoon Island.

With help from the Santa Barbara County Fire Department, we conducted two prescribed burns at Lagoon Island and Coal Oil Point Reserve on September 14 as part of our ongoing efforts to control invasive annual grasses and restore native coastal sage scrub and wildflower habitats.



California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) bloom in abundance in the 2022 burn plot on Lagoon Island.

We've been using prescribed fire as a restoration tool at Lagoon Island since 2009, having conducted 10 burns to restore native habitats. These efforts build on research by former UCSB EEMB graduate student Alice Levine, who found that adding supplemental woody fuel could create a fire that burns hot enough and long enough to reduce the invasive grass seed bank by upwards of 99%. Following the burns, we seed the treated areas with a diverse mix of locally collected native wildflowers and conduct follow-up weeding to prevent invasive grasses from reestablishing.



Before (July 2026) and after (October 2026) photos of the COPR burn plot.

While we've had many successful burns at Lagoon Island over the years, this was our first time using the technique at Coal Oil Point Reserve, adjacent to s'o' hil xus (Bear Spring). We're looking forward to seeing how this new burn plot develops over the coming growing season.

For more background on the history and methods of prescribed burning at Lagoon Island, check out our May 2023 feature story, Controlled Burns on Lagoon Island.

Monarch Butterfly Tagging at Ellwood Grove



Roosting monarchs at Ellwood Grove in the early morning of November 12.

On November 12, researchers and volunteers gathered at Ellwood Grove in Goleta to participate in monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) tagging as part of Project Monarch, a multi-organization research collaboration tracking monarch butterflies across North America. The tagging was led by Charis van der Heide and Fiona Reidy of Althouse and Meade, with volunteers assisting with data recording, visually assessing wing condition, and photographing the process.

Ten monarchs, five males and five females, were carefully collected from their overnight roosts, measured, and fitted with tiny solar-powered BlūMorpho radio transmitters designed to track their movements. After tagging and data collection, the butterflies were released back into the grove.



Researchers carefully collect monarch butterflies from their overnight roosts at Ellwood Grove.



The monarchs are measured and wing conditions are assessed before tagging.



Tagging time! These tiny solar-powered BlūMorpho radio transmitters help researchers track monarch movements.

Project Monarch aims to better understand monarch movements throughout their multi-generational annual cycle using a network of tracking stations across North America. This research will provide valuable information about monarch migration and habitat use to support conservation efforts. You can explore the Project Monarch tagging map to see where tagging efforts are planned across North America.

Community members can also get involved by downloading the free Project Monarch Science app for iPhone or Android. Using Bluetooth, visitors to the Ellwood Grove can scan for nearby tagged monarchs and upload their detections to help researchers track the butterflies' movements.



As part of ongoing restoration efforts at Ellwood Monarch Grove, the Cheadle Center has planted a diverse native understory, including sticky monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), heartleaf keckiella (*Keckiella cordifolia*), and branching phacelia (*Phacelia ramosissima*).

The Cheadle Center has been working with the City of Goleta to restore monarch overwintering habitat at Ellwood Grove, addressing widespread eucalyptus decline and fire risk while improving habitat conditions for returning monarchs. Restoration efforts have included planting new trees, including red ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*), to rebuild the grove's canopy structure and establishing a diverse native understory, including heartleaf keckiella (*Keckiella cordifolia*), sticky monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), western vervain (*Verbena lasiostachys*), and California fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*). These native plants provide nectar resources for monarchs and other pollinators while helping create a more diverse and resilient habitat.

Burrowing Owl at NCOS



Burrowing Owl (Athene cunicularia) on the NCOS Mesa on October 7, 2026.

A burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) was observed at the North Campus Open Space on October 7, 2026. Once widespread in Santa Barbara County, these small, ground-dwelling owls have become increasingly rare due to habitat loss, declining ground squirrel populations, and other threats. Today, local observations are largely limited to overwintering birds migrating from breeding populations farther north.

While this owl hasn't been seen for several weeks, we're hopeful that other burrowing owls will arrive at NCOS to spend the winter. As always, please be respectful of the habitat by staying on designated trails and keeping all dogs on leash.

Click the image below to watch a few short clips of this owl.



The Cheadle Center has been working to support these winter visitors by installing artificial burrows at NCOS and expanding habitat conservation efforts across Santa Barbara County. For more background, check out our November 2024 newsletter update, which focuses on habitat enhancement at NCOS, and our September 2026 update, which highlights our efforts to identify and improve suitable habitat across Santa Barbara County.

Feature Story

San Benito Restoration Projects



Recently planted sand spikerush (*Eleocharis montevidensis*) along the shore of the San Benito Seasonal Pond.

UCSB is built on a raised marine terrace surrounded by a wide variety of wetlands; from the broad Pacific Ocean and its inland expression as sloughs and estuaries to unique vernal pools and freshwater marshes. As campus has grown from its beginnings on the former marine training base, where UCSB relocated in 1954, it has bumped into the edges of these various wetlands and, with encouragement from the California Coastal Commission, has worked to restore those wetlands to reduce the impact from development.

The new San Benito housing project is currently under construction in a hollow along campus's northern border with the Goleta Slough that was created during the military era in the 1940s, when terrace soils were moved into the slough to create an airport. San Benito includes seven buildings with beds for nearly 3,500 students that will be ready for occupancy in September 2027. There are three restoration projects associated with the project which help mitigate for impacts and enhance campus grounds and ecosystem services in the process.

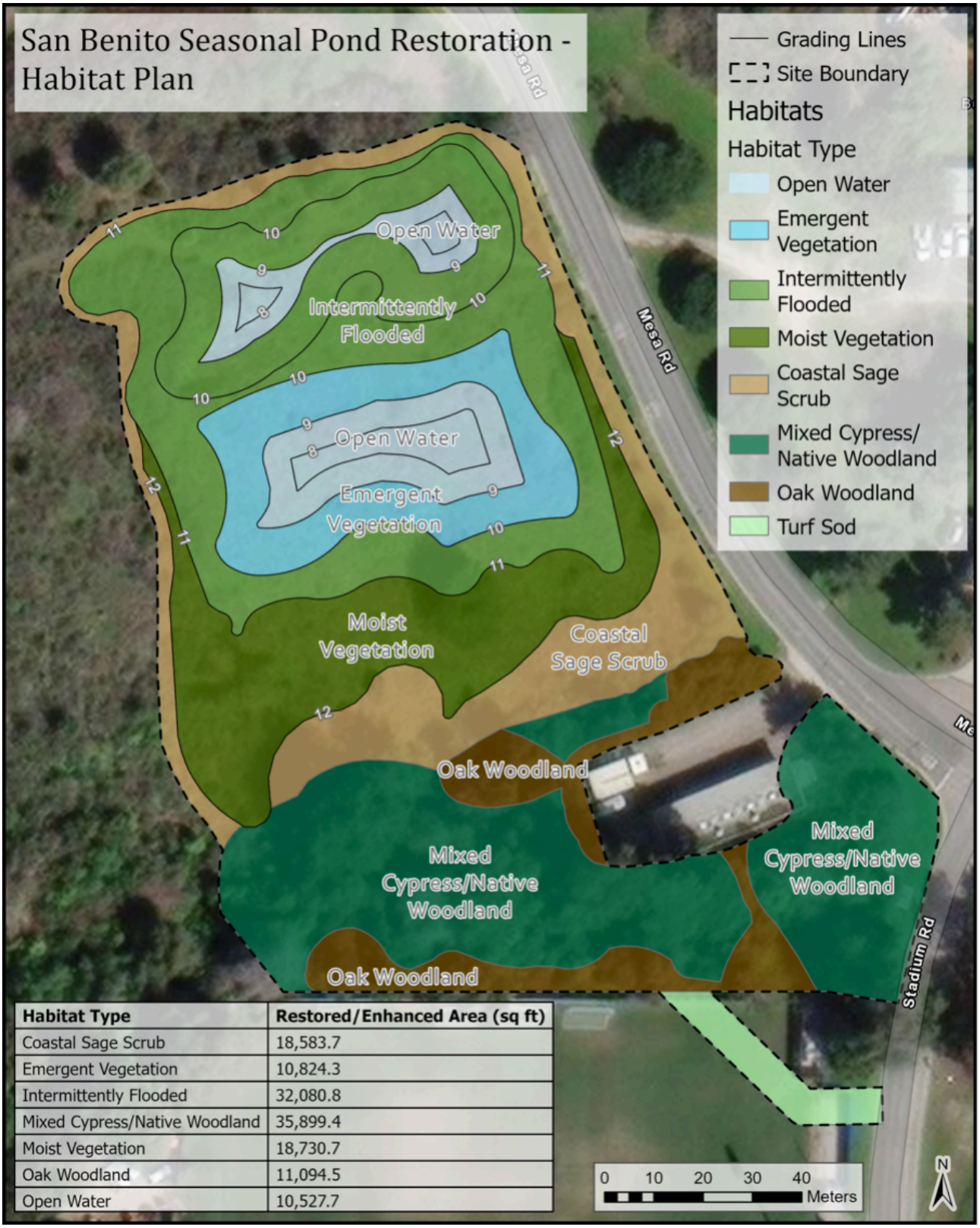


Locations of the three San Benito habitat restoration projects: San Benito Seasonal Pond (yellow), Facilities Management Slope (orange), and West Campus Oak Tree Mitigation (red).

San Benito Seasonal Pond

The first of these restoration projects focuses on restoring a portion of the historic East Storke Wetland while also managing stormwater runoff from the new San Benito housing development. All new campus development is required to capture and infiltrate stormwater to improve water quality and reduce downstream impacts on wetlands and creeks. Instead of creating underground cisterns or buried gravel beds, this project will create a new wetland to the west that is being restored as both habitat and an infiltration wetland. It will take water that would have been in a pipe and 'daylight' it in a broad shallow wetland that will be planted with native plants and support wildlife long into the future. We have just started restoring this site at the intersection of Stadium and Henry T. Yang Drive.

By restoring the site's hydrology through stormwater runoff, the project will help bring back wetland functions that have been lost over time. The newly graded basin includes a range of elevations and slopes designed to support different native plant communities based on their tolerance for seasonal flooding. The lowest areas will support open water habitat and emergent freshwater wetland plants, while the surrounding slopes will transition through intermittently flooded habitats, moist areas with clay-tolerant species, and upland coastal sage scrub and grassland.



Habitat Type	Restored/Enhanced Area (sq ft)
Coastal Sage Scrub	18,583.7
Emergent Vegetation	10,824.3
Intermittently Flooded	32,080.8
Mixed Cypress/Native Woodland	35,899.4
Moist Vegetation	18,730.7
Oak Woodland	11,094.5
Open Water	10,527.7

Habitat restoration plan showing the proposed wetland, coastal sage scrub, and woodland planting zones.

Some of the native species planned for planting in these areas include California bulrush (*Schoenoplectus californicus*), giant bur-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), and southern cattail (*Typha domingensis*) in the emergent vegetation areas of the basin; clustered field sedge (*Carex praegracilis*), common rush (*Juncus patens*), and basket rush (*Juncus textilis*) in the intermittently flooded areas; and saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*), southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* var. *australis*), and alkali heath (*Frankenia salina*) in the moist vegetation

areas. Higher elevations will support coastal sage scrub and grassland species such as California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), California bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and native grasses including creeping wild rye (*Elymus triticoides*) and blue wild rye (*Elymus glaucus*).



Student workers planting saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) in the moist vegetation habitat zone, with the San Benito dormitory under construction in the background.

These restoration sites start from humble beginnings, often with little more than a blank canvas of bare earth that we gradually bring to life with a diverse palette of native plants and years of hard work. In just a few years, these habitats will be almost unrecognizable compared to the moonscape-like landscape shown above. However, even in these early stages, the first signs of animal tracks and occasional avian visitors offer glimpses of the habitat's potential. Native plants are already beginning to establish on their own, including salt marsh heliotrope (*Heliotropium curassavicum*), alkali mallow (*Malvella leprosa*), and spreading alkaliweed (*Cressa truxillensis*).



Raccoon prints on the shore of the open water wetland zone.





Salt marsh heliotrope (*Heliotropium curassavicum*).



Alkali mallow (*Malvella leprosa*).



Spreading alkaliweed (*Cressa truxillensis*).

Facilities Management Slope

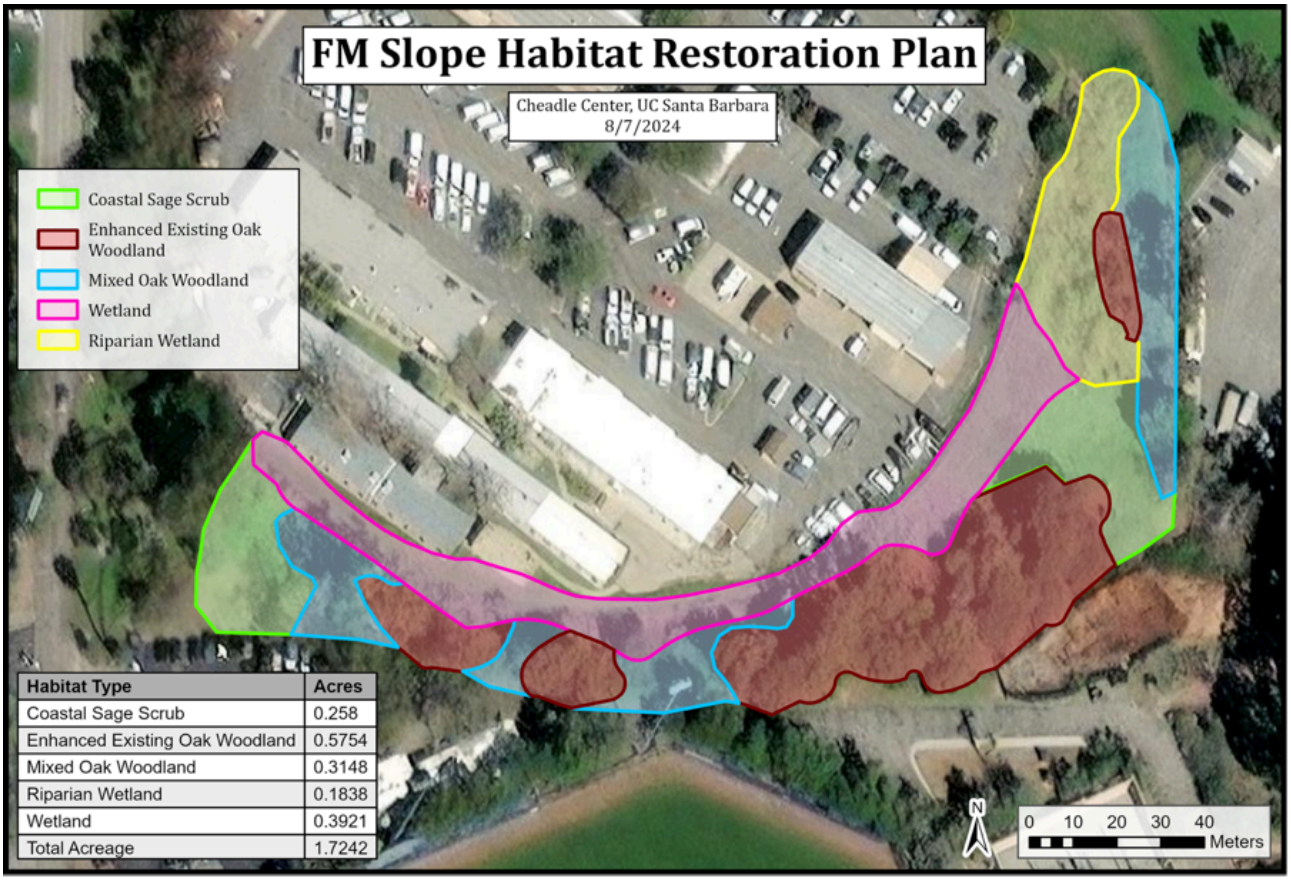
Moving east from the San Benito Seasonal Pond onto the grounds of the new dormitory complex, we arrive at the next restoration area: the Facilities Management (FM) Slope. Over the past 70 years, the slopes of this hollow have been colonized by a mix of oaks, willows, and poison oak. As part of the restoration effort, several non-native trees, including eucalyptus, pines, and palms, have been removed to make way for a more diverse community of native plants.





Canary Island date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*), Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*), and blue gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) are among the non-native trees that were removed as part of the restoration effort.

Beginning in the summer of 2027, the existing vegetation will be enhanced and diversified with native species that provide fruits, seeds, and nectar for birds and pollinators. Restoration efforts will focus on five different habitat communities, as shown in the map below.



Habitat restoration plan showing the proposed wetland, riparian, existing/mixed oak woodland, and coastal sage scrub restoration areas.

The existing oak woodland (red) and mixed oak woodland (blue) will be enhanced with native understory species such as hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*), California rose (*Rosa californica*), and fuchsia-flowered gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*), along with flowering and fruiting shrubs such as toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), and coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*). The wetland (pink) and riparian wetland (yellow) areas will be enhanced with native rushes, sedges, willows, and other moisture-loving plants, while the coastal sage scrub areas (green) will support flowering species such as bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*), golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and western vervain (*Verbena lasiostachys*).



Golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*) and western vervain (*Verbena lasiostachys*) are two pollinator-friendly species slated for planting in the coastal sage scrub zone on the FM Slope.



This established oak woodland at the North Bluff Restoration Site provides a glimpse of the future for the FM Slope.

West Campus Oak Trees

Finally, to mitigate for trees on the project site that were removed, a small oak woodland will be planted and restored opposite the Orfalea Children's Center on West Campus on the slopes surrounding the riding ring. Nearly 250 oak trees will be planted there to create a small woodland. The restoration will focus on two areas of West Campus Mesa.



West Campus Mesa Oak Mitigation Sites.

The first, shown in green in the figure above, surrounds the riding ring and is currently dominated by non-native annual grasses and scattered shrubs. Here, coast live oaks will be planted in clusters of approximately 30 trees, with open areas between them for native flowering and fruiting shrubs that will provide resources for birds and pollinators. The second area, shown in blue, already supports scattered coast live oaks that have established naturally among patches of coyote brush. Planting oak seedlings among this existing vegetation will help accelerate the development of a more extensive woodland. All planted oaks will be grown from locally collected acorns and protected from gophers during establishment.



Coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) provide habitat for countless species, such as this northern house wren flitting through dense oak foliage at the North Campus Open Space.

Stay tuned for future updates on these restoration projects!

Volunteer Opportunities



Second Saturday Volunteer Day

s'o' hil xus: November 14, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Please RSVP to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu. Meet at 6969 Whittier Drive at 9:00 a.m. Bring water and sunscreen, and wear a hat, clothes, and shoes that are suitable for outdoor work.

Greenhouse Transplanting

Thursdays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Come help transplant seedlings of native plants with the Cheadle Center team. To join, please send an email to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu.



Community Photos

We are interested in any observations of wildlife activity from our management areas, as well as plants and landscapes. Please send your observations, with or without photos, to ncos@ccber.ucsb.edu. Thank you!



Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*) near Venoco Bridge on October 7, 2026. Pectoral Sandpipers breed in the Arctic tundra of eastern Russia, Alaska, and northern Canada. While a few migrate to Australasia for the winter, most travel to southern South America, with some making an annual round-trip migration of nearly 19,000 miles. Like many shorebirds,

Pectoral Sandpiper populations are declining, and the species is listed as an Orange Alert Tipping Point species. Photo by Sally Colman.



Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) at Campus Lagoon on October 12, 2026. Photo by Sally Colman.



Immature Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) at Whittier Pond, NCOS, from August 2025. As they transition into adult plumage, immature birds develop a mix of juvenile and adult features, including faint chest streaking, a dark gray cap, and increasingly gray back feathers. Photo by Suzanne Weakley.



Western Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*) at NCOS on September 13, 2026. Western Fence Lizards vary considerably in color, from light brown and gray to nearly black. They feed on a variety of small invertebrates, including crickets, spiders, ticks, and scorpions. Interestingly, although invasive Argentine ants are generally avoided by native California reptiles, Western Fence Lizards have been observed eating them in Santa Barbara County. Photo by Marianna Karagiannis.



Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) near Venoco Bridge on September 13, 2026. Red-necked Phalaropes have reversed sex roles compared to most bird species, with females being larger and more colorful than males. Females compete for mates, while males take responsibility for incubating the eggs and caring for the young. Photo by Marianna Karagiannis.



Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) in a dense stand of California bulrush (*Schoenoplectus californica*) at Whittier Pond, NCOS on October 3, 2026. These small, secretive songbirds inhabit dense marsh vegetation, where they build dome-shaped nests woven from grasses and reeds. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.



Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) at the NCOS Visitor Plaza on October 3, 2026. Hummingbirds use their long, specialized tongues to rapidly draw nectar from flowers. Their tongues can extend well beyond their bills and flick in and out more than a dozen times per second while feeding. Photo by Jeremiah Bender.

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