



We Plant Pride. You Can Too.

COMMUNITY PROFILE
MORRO BAY CALIFORNIA

MAY 2014

S T E N T H O O C

SUSTAINABLE MORRO BAY CALIFORNIA	3
ABOUT MORRO BAY	4
2014 MUNICIPAL INFORMATION	4
MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION	6
MORRO BAY IN BLOOM	6
PROJECT 1: CENTENNIAL PARKWAY	7
PROJECT 2: MORRO BAY LIBRARY	8
PROJECT 3: MORRO BAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	9
PROJECT SURF CAMP AND SURFBOARD ART FESTIVAL	10
MORRO BAY RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT	11
MORRO BAY ADOPT A PARK PROGRAM	11
MORRO BAY URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN	12
SAN LUIS OBISPO BOTANICAL GARDEN	13
MORRO BAY BEAUTIFUL	13
MORRO BAY GUERRILLA GARDENING CLUB	14
ECO ROTARY CLUB OF MORRO BAY	14
MORRO BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM	15
LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT MORRO BAY IN BLOOM	15
AMERICA IN BLOOM EVALUATIVE CRITERIA	16
FLORAL DISPLAYS	16
LANDSCAPED AREAS	16
URBAN FORESTRY	16
TREE COMMITTEE	16
PUBLIC WORKS: THE URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN	16
50 TREES FOR 50 YEARS	16
ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORT	17
THE CITY COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY	17
ZERO-WASTE PROGRAMS	17
HERITAGE PRESERVATION	18
OVERALL IMPRESSION	18
OUR BEST IDEA	19
MAP OF MORRO BAY WITH MORRO BAY IN BLOOM PROJECTS	20
MAP OF MORRO BAY STATE PARK	20

SUSTAINABLE MORRO BAY CALIFORNIA

Morro Bay lies in a spectacular natural setting on the Pacific Coast about half way between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Morro Rock, our famous landmark and a California State Preserve, guards the entrance to the estuary and harbor that have given the city its character. This idyllic environment is completed by a mild Mediterranean climate with partly foggy summers and winter weather punctuated by rain. The whole area, onshore and offshore, teems with an amazing variety of life.

Ever since the Chumash began living here over 6,000 years ago, the place we call Morro Bay has been a connector between land and sea. It has provided a sheltered place for a village of the seagoing Chumash; a shipping point for the ranches, dairies and businesses that arrived with the Anglos; and later a safe harbor for a commercial fishing fleet. For generations, Californians have visited Morro Bay to escape the inland heat, to play in the surf, or just to be in such a beautiful place.

We emphasize the setting because it is the fundamental reason why a thriving tourist industry exists here, why people move here to retire, and why families work so hard to stay. It is why we want to work through **Morro Bay in Bloom** (see our website, MorroBayInBloom.org) to help sustain our quality of life and our community.



One of the partners with Morro Bay in Bloom is Joe Woods, the Director of the city's Recreation and Parks Department. Joe has said "we have an abundance" but that we need to work to sustain it. His comment about the abundance

is echoed in different ways by almost everyone who has tried gardening in Morro Bay.

The most successful plants we find in the city range from California natives to

imports from the Mediterranean, Australia, South Africa, and South America where other zones of the Mediterranean climate exist. In fact, an amazing array of plants will grow in Morro Bay's benign climate if you manage the sandy and light clay soils a bit and add water.

Water, however, is a problem. The State of California has declared drought conditions, and the City of Morro Bay has followed suit with mandatory water conservation measures. We are now in the 4th year of a deep, and deepening, drought. We have had just over 4½ inches of rain since this rain year began on July 1 (as of May 1), far below average and far less than we need. Already the driest year on record, we could end the rain season with far less than half of the normal 18 inches.

Sustainability will be a constant theme for Morro Bay in Bloom, and we think for our entire community on a bigger scale. For Morro Bay in Bloom, sustainability means plantings that are fully adapted to our basically arid climate, as well as maintenance routines that conserve water. We are fortunate to have community partners and garden suppliers who are well versed in Mediterranean climate plants from around the world. Our native plants and these desirable imports offer us a beautiful palette to adorn Morro Bay.



ABOUT MORRO BAY

According to the 2010 Census, there are 10,234 residents of Morro Bay, but on any given summer weekend there may be several thousand tourists enjoying outdoor activities, shopping or just relaxing. Most of the tourists come from the Central Valley (from towns like Fresno, Bakersfield and Visalia), Los Angeles or San Francisco. Yet it is common to hear a language like German spoken on the bayside Embarcadero, or to hear a British accent. Lying on the famous California Highway 1 about 50 miles south of Big Sur, Morro Bay is well known.

2014 MUNICIPAL INFORMATION

POPULATION	10,234
INCORPORATION	1964
CITY WEBSITE	www.morro-bay.ca.us
CITY CONTACT	Joe Woods, Director, Recreation and Parks Department
AIB COMMITTEE CHAIR	Walter Heath
TOWN AREA, SQUARE MILES	10.3
ACRES OF ACTIVE RECREATION	50.9
ACRES OF PASSIVE RECREATION	10.9
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR	Walter Heath



Morro Bay is in the middle of the Estero Bay coastline, with Cayucos about 5 miles north and Los Osos about 5 miles south. Scattered in this region are numerous day use areas, state beaches, and campgrounds. California State Parks maintains offices here and trains many residents as docents. Adjacent to Morro Bay are the Morro Bay State Campground and Natural History Museum, Morro Strand State Beach and the county-owned Morro Bay public golf course (the “poor man’s Pebble Beach”).

With the decline in commercial fishing over the last 20 years, tourism has become the major industry in town. 40 hotels and motels and numerous restaurants serve these tourists, and other businesses exist to either cater to them or to service the tourist industry. The city benefits from tourism directly because 20 to 25% of its annual revenue is from the Transient Occupancy Tax collected through hotel bookings.



Tourism influences most things in Morro Bay, and that is certainly true about beautification. City government recognizes its importance and supports projects like the Harbor Walk that improve the tourist’s experience in the area. In a sense, the city itself is part of the “product” for tourists even though the natural setting is the true draw. Public spaces need to be attractive and usable.

ABOUT MORRO BAY



Residents know how lucky they are. Few people want to leave Morro Bay, and it is not uncommon to meet someone who is a 4th or 5th generation resident. Some of these long term families have Swiss Italian surnames handed down from immigrants who came to work in what was once the largest dairy farming region in California. The dairies are long gone, but you can still hear these names in connection with tourist businesses on the Embarcadero or other aspects of community life.

Yet Morro Bay is an ordinary town in a lot of respects. Unlike some tourist towns, it is a full service city with all of the businesses, institutions and neighborhoods that enrich a place and give it community. Young families with children are common in some neighborhoods, and Morro Bay hosts



the only high school for the towns on Estero Bay. Some of the workers in these families commute to San Luis Obispo or other towns in the county, while others work in town.

Some of us are more recent transplants. Parts of the city seem like naturally occurring retirement communities, populated by older families who moved from the big cities to semi-rural Morro Bay. These residents bring a wealth of experience and skill to the community, and the time to share it.

To an unusual degree, Morro Bay residents are engaged in the community. They volunteer to serve on advisory committees of the city; join forces to build and then rebuild the library; organize events like Dahlia Daze and the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival; hold block parties; support public safety officers and help to supply them with equipment; and attend the many churches that are spread throughout town.



MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

People and organizations are also very actively engaged in public beautification projects, and these are the core collaborators of Morro Bay in Bloom. Some of these collaborations are formal arrangements with public agencies and others are informal arrangements with complementary groups. In addition, Morro Bay in Bloom works with and supports organizations like Project Surf Camp, a surfing program for persons with special needs. ALL of these groups share the common purpose to build our community, and we include short profiles of some of them.

MORRO BAY IN BLOOM

As an organization, Morro Bay in Bloom is a group of about 50 volunteers ("Bloomies") that includes a good cross section of the community. We have women and men from all age groups (down to about 10 years old!) who get together on Saturday mornings to enjoy some "gardening therapy". Within the group we have professional landscaping expertise, experienced gardeners, and willing beginners.



Morro Bay in Bloom is one of the younger community groups dedicated to enhancing and maintaining common spaces in Morro Bay (our first event occurred on October 26, 2013), but is also one of the most active. We are the only organization that schedules activities every Saturday morning, week after week. Every Saturday an informally rotating crew of 10 to 15 turn out to work on scheduled tasks in our projects. On certain weekdays, a few of our volunteers have committed to providing routine maintenance at Centennial Parkway.

We have three ongoing landscaping projects. For each of these, we have agreed to renovate the landscaping and provide continuous maintenance. The drought is making us look to specific kinds of plants, groundcovers and watering arrangements. Where the city is involved, severe water management restrictions are in place.



MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

PROJECT 1: CENTENNIAL PARKWAY

Centennial Parkway connects Morro Bay's Embarcadero area, the main tourist area of the city, to the downtown business district along Morro Bay Boulevard via a large wooden staircase. It is visited and used by hundreds of citizens and visitors. We have entered into an Adopt a Park contract

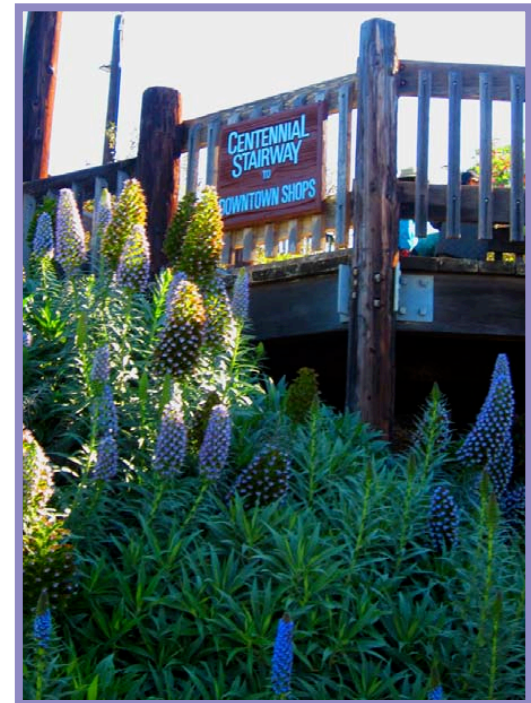
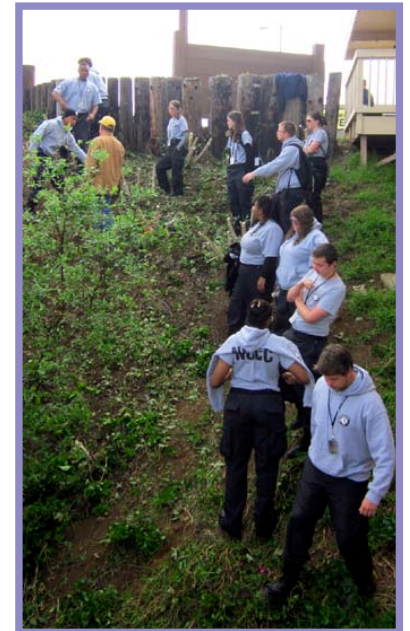


with the Recreation and Parks Department to renovate, replant and maintain this area of diverse uses from the foot of Morro Bay Boulevard to the water's edge and the public dock!

The parkway includes a patio area on the upper level at the foot of the business district and a human-sized chessboard on the lower level across from the Embarcadero businesses. Bordering and surrounding these features were some aging plants and untended—and unwanted—groundcovers and bushes. The stairs can support seasonal floral displays.



We have removed unwanted weeds, shrubs, and a very large area of invasive "ice plant" on the slope beneath the staircase, with help from a crew of AmeriCorps volunteers. We have smoothed the slope, and covered it in burlap in preparation for replanting. We have begun to install succulents in small patches bordered by sidewalk or on the seawall. This area includes a large area of turf, and we will discuss possible renovation of at least some of this area.



MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION



PROJECT 2: MORRO BAY LIBRARY

The Morro Bay Library project is almost a square city block in area. Volunteers have removed large sections of overgrown bushes and their roots, replacing them with drought-resistant succulents and locally successful plants. We have pruned up manzanitas for visibility and public safety, planted drought-tolerant grasses and flowering plants, shaped other bushes, and mulched.

This project is ongoing and will be permanently maintained by Morro Bay in Bloom.



MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

PROJECT 3: MORRO BAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce site is small but highly visible. The wide borders of the parking lot had deteriorated almost completely, and the underlying drip irrigation and weed control had failed. We removed invasive ivy geranium that was strangling the bushes there, pruned the bushes to encourage new growth, weeded, repaired irrigation where possible, and installed agave and other succulents. In the future, we will add small trees in the borders to offer shade and soften the asphalt of the parking lot.



MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

PROJECT SURF CAMP AND SURFBOARD ART FESTIVAL

As a very special non-gardening project, Morro Bay in Bloom is organizing a public art display and auction of art that's created on surfboards to benefit Project Surf Camp and Morro Bay in Bloom. The Morro Bay Surfboard Art Festival will run from November 1st through 28th, with over 20 painted surfboards by local artists on display around town. This is the only event of its kind on the west coast, and will have plenty of press.

On the evening of November 29th The First Annual Surfboard Art Festival Gala Auction will be held at Inn at Morro Bay with all of the surfboards being auctioned off. The proceeds will split between Morro Bay in Bloom and Project Surf Camp.



Project Surf Camp is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is "to build self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy" in individuals with special needs. The organization helps disabled people "experience the ocean" through activities like surfing, sharing with others in the process, and gaining greater independence. Participants receive expert help and feedback from paid staff whose compensation is mostly funded through charitable donations.



MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

MORRO BAY RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

Leadership in civic beautification projects is provided by the city Recreation and Parks Department, under Director Joe Woods. The Department is actively building its Adopt a Park Program and is working on a number of initiatives to improve the sustainability of the city’s parks and public spaces. For example, the Department has a turf removal program to reduce the amount of water-dependent plantings on city land.



MORRO BAY ADOPT A PARK PROGRAM

The City of Morro Bay has developed the Adopt a Park Program using a formal contract with civic groups that specifies the duties of the group. The list of current Adopt a Park participants gives you an idea of how the community is working with the city on beautification.

COMMUNITY GROUP	ADOPT A PARK CONTRACT
Morro Bay in Bloom	Centennial Parkway
Morro Bay Guerilla Gardeners	Shasta Pocket Park (with Garden Club)
Rotary	The Roundabout at the City entrance
Eco Rotary	Bayshore Bluffs
The Garden Club	Shasta Pocket Park; the Entrance to the Harbor Walk
Embarcadero Inn (Hotel)	Mariner Park
Morro Bay Yacht Club	Tidelands Park
Teen Action Club	Lila Kaiser Park
Morro Cove Homeowners Association	Morro Cove

There are several parks without contracted partners. The city will draw up contracts with groups when the capacity to maintain them is reached.

MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

Urban Forest Management Plan

"A Plan for the Public Trees of Morro Bay"



Morro Bay City Tree species is the Monterey Cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*)

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world."

--John Muir--

Vision Statement

A healthy urban forest with a thriving, sustainable mix of tree species which are cared for and valued by both the City and citizens of Morro Bay. As an essential environmental, economical and community asset, the urban forest provides an attractive location for businesses, residents and visitors. The Urban Forest Management Plan seeks to increase age and species diversity in the public tree population, and enhance the character and aesthetics of our City for the people who live and work here.



Mission Statement

The Urban Forest Management Plan seeks to ensure that all benefits of a healthy urban forest are available to Morro Bay's residents and visitors for future generations. The UFMP accomplishes this by increasing age and species diversity in the public tree population, augmenting biomass and canopy coverage, and enhancing the character and aesthetics of our City by achieving exemplary conservation and sustainable practices for the public trees from all who live, work and visit here.

MORRO BAY URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

The City of Morro Bay will also continue to work with Morro Bay in Bloom and other community groups to encourage people to "adopt a tree". In conjunction with the Morro Bay Urban Forest Plan, this will help to ensure the survival of trees because the City does not have the resources to water and maintain all the trees on residential streets.

Executive Summary

The preservation of the natural environment is essential to the resident and visitors of Morro Bay. The coastal setting and its stunning beauty of this area attracts people to visit and live here. The residents and visitors of Morro Bay deserve a healthy urban forest that is conserved for future generations. Therefore sound guardianship of this unique and attractive community is necessary if the quality of life is to be maintained. Many of such measures will have to be in the area of conservation and the maintenance of the urban forest. The Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) is a living document and a long range policy guide that will respond and develop over time.

The UFMP will require close partnership between policy makers, staff and the community. The UFMP will help the Public Services and the Recreation and Parks Departments define the goals for City of Morro Bay public trees. This UFMP is the road map for these departments and the Tree Committee to follow in order to get the desired results for the trees located in the public right of ways. The UFMP establishes guiding principles and associated goals that result in specific strategies for address the needs of public trees.



Tree City USA- The City has been recognized for over twenty years, since 1989, by Tree City USA. In order to meet the Tree City USA recognition the City must have a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, a community forestry program with at least an annual budget of \$2 per capita and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

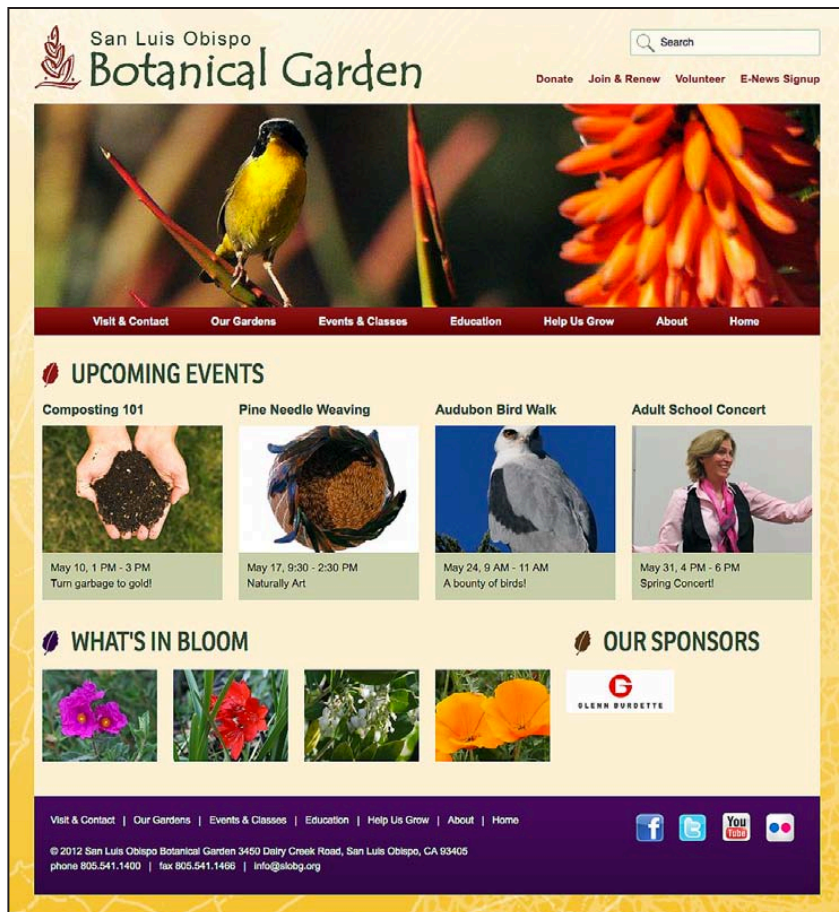


MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

SAN LUIS OBISPO BOTANICAL GARDEN

The San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden (www.slobg.org) is a labor of love for its founder, Eve Vigil, and the many volunteers who give their time and energy to the garden. They maintain the gardens, propagate and nurture new plants, and run an educational program about plants from Mediterranean regions around the world. Located about 6 miles from Morro Bay, the garden will eventually cover 150 acres.

San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden has donated excess succulents to Morro Bay in Bloom and can provide expertise in Mediterranean plants when needed. In general, it donates root bound plants that cannot be sold to civic organizations like Morro Bay in Bloom.

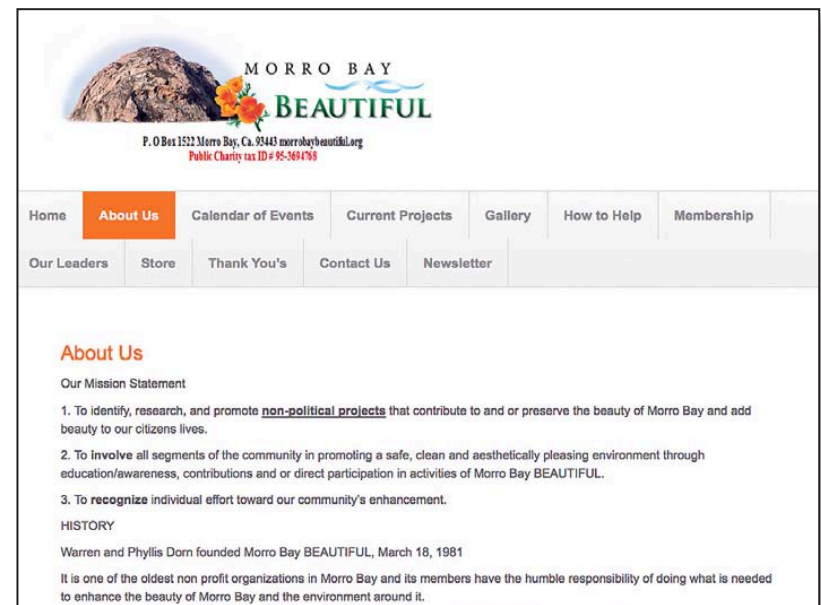


MORRO BAY BEAUTIFUL

Morro Bay BEAUTIFUL, founded in 1981 by Warren and Phyllis Dorn, is one of the older community groups that volunteers on an assortment of projects to beautify the city. Ann Reisner, who has been President for the last 7 years, says the organization is informal, encouraging people to act independently according to their time and abilities.

Beginning with a bequest, and then continuing through fund raising by various methods, Morro Bay BEAUTIFUL has been able to contribute financial assistance to other organizations from time to time. For example, it gave \$5000 to the Tree Committee when it reformed several years ago.

Morro Bay BEAUTIFUL manages the maintenance of 19 planter boxes in the downtown area with the help from the businesses that are next to them. However, it is probably better known for its annual citywide yard sale timed to coordinate with the spring-cleaning garbage pickup provided by Morro Bay Garbage. Well over 100 households participate in this event every year. The organization also encourages Christmas lighting on residences and judges them, awarding prizes to the best displays. Finally, up to 20 residents participate in a litter pickup every Monday, helping to keep an area they use or live in trash free.



MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

MORRO BAY GUERRILLA GARDENING CLUB



From its beginnings, possibly in 1973 according to Wikipedia, 'guerrilla gardening' was where urban gardeners reclaimed vacant spots by gardening without permission. London's guerrilla gardeners refer to it as a 'mildly mischievous' activity.

The Morro Bay Guerrilla Gardening Club (GGC) could not be more different. The group is an active, positive part of the community, a 501c3 organization working both as a direct service provider in cooperation with the city, and as a resource to like-minded groups (like Morro Bay in Bloom). GGC maintains a nursery to help supply projects of other organizations and businesses. It also runs a zero waste program to educate and assist other organizations of all kinds to reduce landfill demand and focus on recycling and reuse.

The group's unique model connects people on the fringes of society with desirable community-oriented activities, to the benefit of both the person and the community. Taylor Newton, founder of the group, says the organization has about 50 members, roughly 80% of them between 20 and 30 years of age, mostly men. These young men—and some older ones—are people who have had difficult lives, and scrapes with the law in many cases due to drug use.

Morro Bay in Bloom and the Guerrillas will be partners in a common effort to beautify our city and improve our community. We will perform what Taylor Newton calls "public works projects" with coordination to maximize our reach.



ECO ROTARY CLUB OF MORRO BAY

According to Trina Dougherty, President Elect of the Eco Rotary Club of Morro Bay (aka Eco Rotary), the local club is one of only 4 Rotary clubs that have a focus on ecology, out of a total of over 34,000 clubs worldwide. Eco Rotary shares the Rotarian goals of eradicating polio and combating poverty, but its specific local mission is to educate about environmentally sustainable practices in our homes, businesses and community. It was chartered in June of 2011, and has 29 active members.

Eco Rotary has a partnership with the Guerrilla Gardening Club in a zero waste program at local events. The GGC takes on the "big" events, and Eco Rotary does the little ones. The aim is simple: to keep waste out of landfills.

Eco Rotary has several on-going projects:

- ❁ Provide information and services to local events about reducing waste, aiming for zero waste operations.
- ❁ Stage the annual Green Light ECO Faire showcasing eco-focused businesses, organizations, products and practices.
- ❁ Maintain Bayshore Bluffs Park under an Adopt a Park contract with the City.



Morro Bay in Bloom is scheduling working sessions to assist Eco Rotary Club of Morro Bay with on-going work at the Bayshore Bluffs Park.



MORRO BAY IN BLOOM: PROJECTS AND COLLABORATION

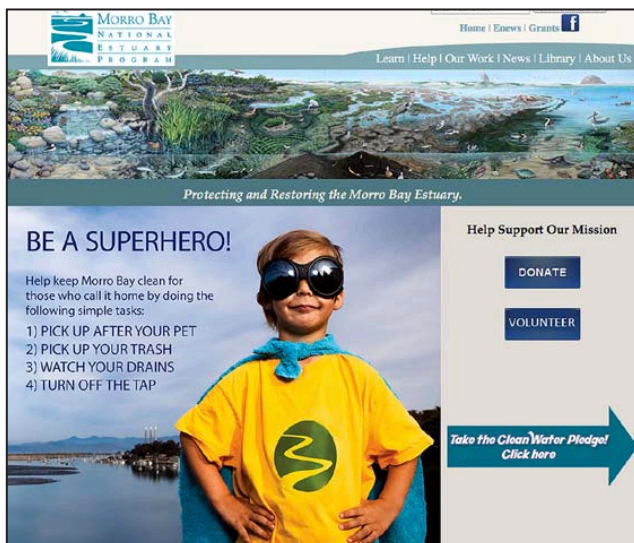
MORRO BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

Morro Bay is actually an estuary that forms a “bay” at high tide and displays watercourses, eelgrass and islands at low tide. This estuary is unique on the Central Coast, and one the most important nurseries of life in California.

The purpose of the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) is to help preserve this fragile eco-system. It is continuously silting in to the detriment of wildlife and human recreation, and settlements along its shores and watershed send pollutants into the water.

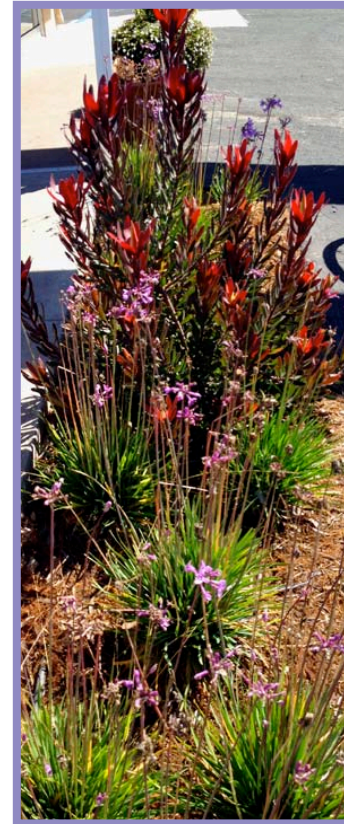
One of the most important issues is the deterioration of the eelgrass, the foundation species of the estuary. The loss of eelgrass reverberates throughout the system, reducing diversity in very visible ways. Eelgrass is a primary producer, forming the basis of the food web for other organisms living in or on the boundaries of the estuary. It also provides shelter for various other species, especially when nurturing young. Maintaining the water quality and eelgrass is essential for the vitality of the eco-system, and very directly affects the human quality of life in Morro Bay.

According to Jen Nix, the Restoration Manager for MBNEP, her organization is frequently seeking help with eelgrass restoration (planting doesn't stop at the water's edge!) and with a battle against invasive species in the watershed. Some of Morro Bay in Bloom's other partners, like the Guerilla Gardeners, have participated in MBNEP activities.



LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT MORRO BAY IN BLOOM

Morro Bay in Bloom is fortunate to have the support of a group of local businesses, organizations and agencies. They will offer expertise, occasional donations, and visibility to Morro Bay in Bloom.



The list includes:

Founders Community Bank
Gravity Design
Safe Harbor Tax Preparation
Laura Lopez Landscape Design
SLOCO Marketing
Native Sons Growers and Nursery
Miner's Ace Hardware
Azhiaziam Aerial Wear
Joe's Surf Shop
Forever Stoked Gallery
Sunshine Natural Foods/Shine Cafe
Fiona Bleu Gallery
Project Surf Camp
Moss Marketing Group
San Luis Obispo County Parks
Morro Bay Recreation and Parks Division
Morro Bay Tourism Bureau
Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce

Our collaborations are already beginning to bloom. In recent weeks, we have joined with the Eco Rotary club to help them maintain their Bayshore Bluffs Adopt a Park. We added a truckload of succulents to the Library grounds courtesy of a gift from the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden. We have worked with the Garden Club to help with its Harbor Walk maintenance. These are relationships we will cultivate!

AMERICA IN BLOOM EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

FLORAL DISPLAYS

There are floral displays, primarily in window boxes, in front of numerous businesses in downtown Morro Bay. The Lion's Club is working to build planter boxes and hanging baskets for use on the Centennial Parkway staircase and, possibly, on Morro Bay Boulevard.

LANDSCAPED AREAS

All of the parks in Morro Bay have landscaped areas, some more, some less. Small pocket parks such as Anchor are fully landscaped, combining beds, rock gardens, hardscape and, depending on use, turf in various ways.

URBAN FORESTRY

Morro Bay has participated in the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program for over 20 years, and has a long history of community action to plant and preserve trees. Part of this legacy can be found in huge Monterey pines in the city easements of some lots, and the parallel rows of red flowering eucalyptus lining Morro Bay Boulevard.

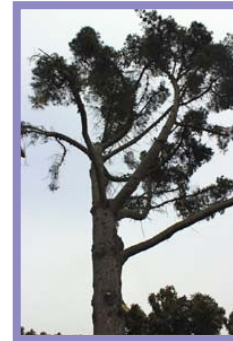
TREE COMMITTEE

One active group is simply called the Tree Committee. Initially formed in the 1970's, the committee re-formed in 2008 out of a concern that the city's urban forest was aging and needed better management. This group of volunteers is unique in that many of them are professionals in fields related to trees and landscaping: tree pruning and maintenance; landscape architecture; landscaping services; and botany, among others.



PUBLIC WORKS: THE URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

One of the most important acts of the Tree Committee has been to work with the city's Public Works Advisory Board to inventory the trees in

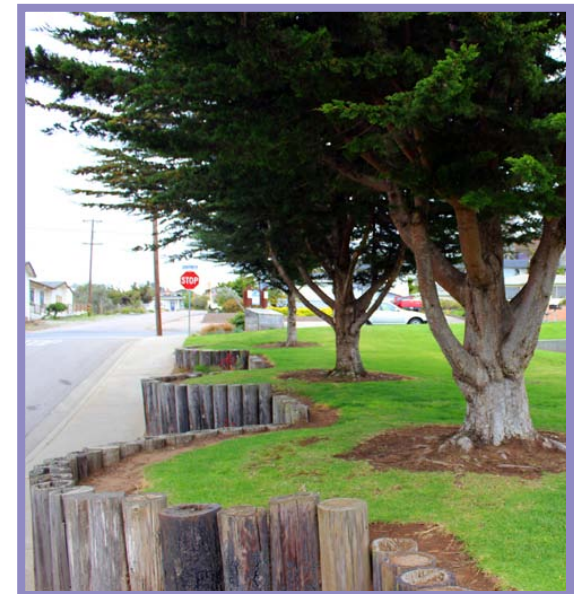


Morro Bay and to determine what kinds of trees would be most appropriate for specific locations. With this significant help, the city's Public Works Department was able to create an Urban Forest Management Plan. The aim of the plan is to encourage planting trees of the right kind in the right place, with proper maintenance. The Plan was submitted to the City Council in mid-March 2014 and has been approved with amendments. It will be fully completed by mid-summer.

50 TREES FOR 50 YEARS

Morro Bay celebrates 50 years as an incorporated city in 2014. As part of that celebration, the 50th Anniversary Committee has planned to plant 50 trees following the Urban Forest Plan. Morro Bay in Bloom, together with the Tree Committee and the Guerilla Gardeners, will help to plant these trees in early fall, just before the hoped-for winter rains begin—and pending approval of the city given the current drought conditions. If there is sufficient water, we will water and maintain the young trees until they are well-rooted.

Morro Bay in Bloom plans to plant trees in some of the other areas we maintain, again assuming that water restrictions permit it. In every case, trees will be chosen to match the soil and micro-climate conditions, consistent with the blueprint in the Urban Forest Management Plan.



AMERICA IN BLOOM EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORT

On January 28, 2014, the Morro Bay Public Services Director issued a press release declaring the city to be under “severely restricted water supply conditions.” For the first time, the State of California informed State Water recipients—Morro Bay is a recipient—that the state would not release any water into the system in the coming year. During the driest conditions in 119 years of rainfall records, water conservation becomes the top priority.

Under these conditions, the city directive greatly reduces permitted outdoor irrigation, forbids the use of fresh water for rinsing streets or docks, and even requires restaurants to withhold drinking water unless specifically requested by the guest. Basically, fresh water is intended for direct human consumption.

Clearly, installing new plants is a lower priority than maintaining the plants we already have. However, in some cases, such as the Library project, we are removing existing plants that are relatively thirsty compared to the plants that replace them—at the library we removed mature bushes that weren’t getting enough water and planted succulents, for example. We will follow this strategy in cooperation with the City to ensure that our water consumption is minimized.

More generally, some water conservation techniques we will follow include:

- ✿ Maintain existing plants at a minimal level, but ensure the survival of trees.
- ✿ Mulch deeply to conserve soil moisture.
- ✿ Replace thirsty plants with drought-tolerant ones that grow well in our area.
- ✿ Remove turf and replace it with less thirsty plants and/or hardscape.
- ✿ Keep planted areas totally free of water competition from weeds and invasive overgrowth.
- ✿ Allow plants that can tolerate it to die back until more water is available.
- ✿ Choose landscaping designs that incorporate a lot of open area for rock, hardscape, mulch and urban art displays.

THE CITY COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

The Recreation and Parks Department has been working for the past 5 years to reduce energy and water demand.

These efforts include:

- ✿ Conversion of incandescent to LED lighting when possible.
- ✿ Installation of low flow toilets and valves when repair or upgrade is needed.
- ✿ Turf removal in non-tourist areas; consideration for more aggressive turf removal in progress.
- ✿ Conversion of sprinkler watering systems to drip irrigation in all public areas.
- ✿ Radio-controlled, weather-linked irrigation controls (to shut off during rain).
- ✿ Installation of wireless programmable thermostats in public buildings.
- ✿ Photovoltaic array installations at the Morro Bay Community Center and the Rockies Teen Center.
- ✿ Solar-powered trash compactors to replace standard trash receptacles, to reduce landfill demand.

ZERO-WASTE PROGRAMS

As noted earlier, the Guerrilla Gardening Club and Eco Rotary have an active zero waste program. The aim is to reduce landfill use to zero, using a wide array of methods to encourage eco-friendly purchasing, operations, recycling, composting, and reuse. The County has other examples of zero waste, most notably the Dairy Creek Golf Course, where extensive work has actually achieved zero waste, and uses reclaimed water from the California Men’s Colony to keep limited parts of the course green. We aim to integrate these best practices into every Morro Bay in Bloom project.



AMERICA IN BLOOM EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Morro Bay's heritage can be found in many places, from old buildings to the ancient volcanic geology that defines it. However, in almost all cases, these artifacts have been recycled or re-used in new formats. Heritage preservation in Morro Bay is an on-going effort to preserve elements of previous versions of our community, such as the once-dominant fishing industry, while adapting to new opportunities. It is a truly American story.

The Morro Bay Historical Society was formed in the 1980's to identify and preserve important parts of the city's history. In its early years, working with the Central Coast Maritime Museum, it focused on documenting aspects of the commercial fishing industry. In recent years, the group has published two books about Morro Bay, one a history and the other a photographic review.



The Society is about to publish a walking tour that will identify the older structures in the downtown area. Morro Bay in Bloom has begun discussions with the Society to determine how to promote these structures and their history to residents and visitors to the city.



OVERALL IMPRESSION

As we survey actions by our city and its many volunteer groups to beautify and preserve our common spaces, we are struck by a common theme. In so many ways, we are trying to create a sustainable way of life in this special place. Our current drought has brought home the fact that we cannot take it for granted that water will always be there in generous supply to make our trees and gardens flourish, let alone keep our natural areas healthy.

City programs and volunteer groups have:

- ❁ Planted borders of major street crossings, pocket parks and the traffic roundabout with native and/or Mediterranean plants that minimize the need for water and maintenance.
- ❁ Slowly removed turf, replacing it with drought tolerant plants or hard surfaces.
- ❁ Designed landscaping along the Harbor Walk to maximize the use of maintenance-free native plants – there is no watering system installed. This approach will be used with the extension of the Harbor Walk to North Morro Bay.
- ❁ Declared citywide water use restrictions to limit usage to the most important things, including minimal yard watering to keep plants alive.



AMERICA IN BLOOM EVALUATIVE CRITERIA



- ❁ Installed solar trash compactors in critical places to help keep highly traveled areas litter free, but also to ensure greater recycling.
- ❁ Provided “doggie mitts” to pet owners who walk their dogs on frequently-used paths.
- ❁ Created a program to supply compost and mulch on a limited basis.
- ❁ Inventoried the urban forest, and based on that and a microclimate analysis, created the Urban Forest Management Plan to encourage the planting and maintenance of trees appropriate for their locations.
- ❁ “Adopted” streets, roads, parks and trees for volunteer litter pickup and landscape maintenance.
- ❁ Designed and planted the community garden in North Morro Bay to provide food, pleasure and companionship.
- ❁ Volunteered to plant, weed, rake, dig out roots, prune and shape in public spaces all over Morro Bay.

This list would not be complete without recognizing the multitude of private gardens that line our residential streets. Just like everywhere else, these gardens vary in ambition and upkeep. But we notice more and more of the newer installations emphasize native plants, open space, and drought tolerance. We are working toward a Morro Bay that is beautifully sustainable.

OUR BEST IDEA

Unlike most other volunteer groups in Morro Bay, Morro Bay in Bloom organizes brief project activities on a weekly basis. Morro Bay in Bloom has also made a commitment to the Surfboard Art Festival as a means of raising awareness of the impact of public art in well-maintained public spaces, but our best idea is bringing volunteers together frequently over time.



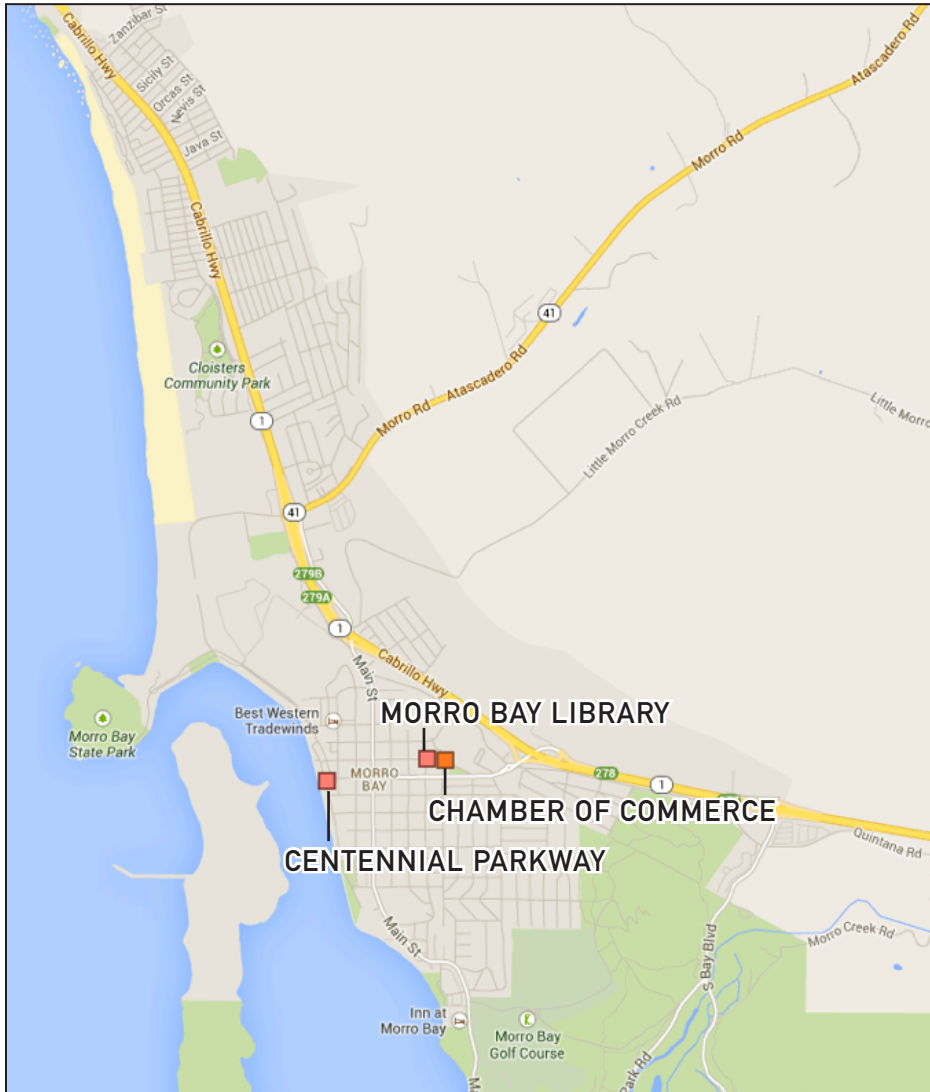
Our aim is to encourage “ownership” of the city by its citizens. We believe that by working side by side with someone you didn’t know very well before helps to build ties beyond the usual relationships. And when you see a project you worked on begin to take hold, it fosters a feeling of pride and of being part of the whole community. These attitudes will generalize: Morro Bay in Bloom volunteers will start seeing things in the public domain they ignored before and take responsibility for them.

The contentious times we live in can divide people. But we are determined to keep Morro Bay in Bloom a “politics free zone” where we focus on what we have in common.

Over time, we plan to grow our volunteer base and expand our collaboration with like-minded people in other groups. There is no room for competition in these projects – there’s more than enough for all of us to do!



MAP OF MORRO BAY WITH MORRO BAY IN BLOOM PROJECTS



MAP OF MORRO BAY STATE PARK



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