

A PRAIRIE ONCE AGAIN

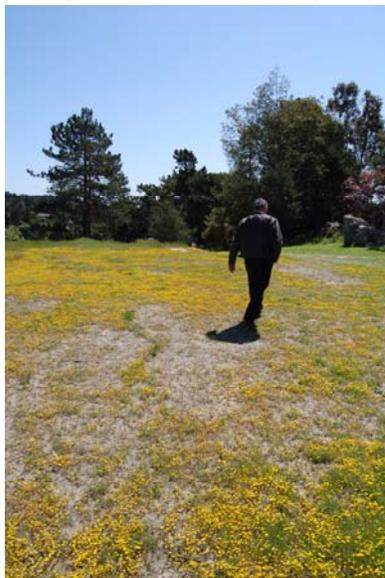
Serpentine Prairie Restoration Update

By David Amme

One of the rarest flowers in California, the Presidio clarkia, will be assured preservation on one of only two sites in California when EBRPD's Serpentine Prairie Restoration Plan is completed. Beginning this summer, EBRPD will begin the first phase of restoration, cutting the trees outlined in the first phase of the plan. This will remove the pine trees on the north side of the old Hunt Field where a portion of the protection fence will be built parallel to and above the Dunn Trail. Other trees removed in the first phase include trees just below the southeast corner of the parking lot where a new



David Amme meets with Redwood Park Supervisor Dee Rosario and EBRPD Assistant General Manager Rosemary Cameron to discuss the future restoration project, which includes removing trees and vegetation to bring the prairie back to a natural more healthful state.



Amme walks through a patch of Goldfields. Once thick with native vegetation, the north end of the prairie now has isolated patches of wildflowers. Without some protection, such as the soon to be placed fence, native plants and wildflowers on this portion of the prairie will likely be forever lost.

staging area and trail head will be constructed. A small number of pine trees will also be removed on the northwestern part of the Serpentine Prairie near the top of the Dunn Trail near Skyline Boulevard. The view from this area will be spectacular, The view from the parking lot will also be unobstructed and the area will once again look like the sign says: Serpentine Prairie. After the initial pines are removed and the new entrance trail is constructed, a protective fence will be put in place around the upper portion of old Hunt Field. Another trail will lead out to an interpretive overlook. All of this will happen between July and October.

The vast majority of trees and seedlings to be removed are Monterey pines. Other trees to be removed in this phase include Coulter pine, Arizona cypress, black acacia, Bailey's acacia, eucalyptus, and many small sapling coast live oaks and bays. It is important to note that the oaks and bays are spontaneous trees transported by blue jays and squirrels and have been nurtured by the shade of the pines since the mid 1960s. As the pine trees matured, the amount of precipitation on the site increased dramatically because of summer fog condensing on the

needles (See Harold Gilliam's great paperback book on the weather of San Francisco Bay). In addition to this extra summer moisture, estimated to be an annual increase of up to 10" of precipitation, fog and winds have also picked up and deposited approximately 20 to 25 lbs/acre/year of wet and dry NH₃ (fertilizer) that has drifted to the East Bay hills as a consequence of nitrogen and nitrogen oxides being released by automobile catalytic converters since the 1980s. The two processes are the primary reason why the oaks and bays have not colonized on serpentine soil, where oaks and bays do not normally grow.



The Federally endangered Presidio Clarkia depends on the serpentine grassland for its survival.

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David is currently the Wildlands Vegetation Program Manager for the East Bay Regional Park District and the project manager for this important restoration project. David has a MS degree in Range Management from U.C. Berkeley. He is a long time member of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) and collector of many native plant cultivars. David is one of the founding members of the California Native Grass Association (CNGA), the California chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration (SERCAL), and the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC). Over the past ten years David has been a part time lecturer and consultant specializing in native grass horticulture, grassland restoration, stewardship grazing, and integrated roadside vegetation management (IRVM). David is absorbed in native California grassland ecology and author of many articles devoted to the horticulture of native grasses and graminoids.