



For Immediate Release

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Rancho Palos Verdes Wildfire Update Portuguese Bend Reserve Closed Temporarily

In the aftermath of wildfires that burned 235 acres in the Portuguese Bend area of the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve on August 27th, the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy is working closely with the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and various County and State agencies on a fire recovery team to assess the fire damage and identify actions, especially those involving public safety, that have arisen as a result of the fire.

While the assessments are being made, the Portuguese Bend Reserve, where the fire occurred, will be closed to the public. This temporary closure will continue until the next RPV City Council meeting on October 6th, at which time the timing for the reopening of the Reserve will be discussed.

The Portuguese Bend Reserve is 399 acres and includes five distinct canyons which cut through this area along with many miles of trails. Eagles Nest is a dramatic knoll topped with pine trees, in an area called Peacock Flats, and Ailor Cliff stands tall on its Eastern boundary. The flat lower section near Palos Verdes Drive South is often called the "Sandbox" and contains the active landslide area.

The attached map of the Portuguese Bend Reserve shows the area that will be closed to the public. It also shows the main accesses to the trails, which will have signs posted announcing the temporary closure to the public.

The PVPLC Stewardship team is creating a multi-phased plan to provide recommendations to address both the immediate and long term actions needed to deal with the fire's consequences such as soil erosion in the fragile post-fire ecosystem. These current efforts include:

- Mapping the extent of the fire area and surveying the vegetation in the burned areas and comparing it to data collected earlier this year;
- Preparing for debris clean-up and safety measures within the Preserve;
- Surveying trail markers in the burn area and repairing or replacing as needed;
- Studying potential erosion programs and propose actions to provide temporary soil stabilization to allow for natural recovery as well as to mitigate the impacts of post fire flooding and erosion that may result;
- Evaluating the spread of invasive plants threatening native species that are critical to the survival of endangered wildlife in the Preserve; and
- Plan for the seeding of native plants in some portions of the burned area before the rainy season which begins in the November/December timeframe.

“The Conservancy will consult with statewide experts who have worked on post-fire responses, and examine successful past actions in order to develop the best possible plan of action” said Andrea Vona, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy, “The fire has presented many challenges, but we’ll try to turn some of these into opportunities to boost our restoration efforts. While fire leaves the landscape looking charred and black, plants can bounce back quickly, we may enjoy a springtime with an abundant explosion of blooms amid the blackened snags.”

While the Portuguese Bend area is closed, we encourage visitation and exploration of the many other areas of open space on the Peninsula such as the Forrestral Reserve.

The PVPLC is a nonprofit community based organization dedicated to preserving land and restoring habitat for the enjoyment and education of all. The Conservancy owns or manages the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve, the Linden H. Chandler and George F Canyon Preserves in Rolling Hills Estates and the White Point Nature Preserve and habitat restoration on the Defense Fuel Supply Point in San Pedro. For further information, please visit: www.pvplc.org.

Photo caption: The fire occurred in the most visible and extensively used part of the Preserve around Eagles Nest where the trees barely survived.

