



Scenic Pacifica
Incorporated Nov. 22, 1957

CITY OF PACIFICA

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May 5, 2021

Mike Mooney's Liberty Garden

Dear Community Member,

Pacifica resident Mike Mooney has done a great service for the Pacifica community and visitors by creating and maintaining his "Liberty Garden" on City property along the Calera Creek Trail in the former quarry nearly two decades ago in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy. His dedication to beautifying this area at the entrance of the Calera Creek Water Recycling Plant, as well as his passion for the symbolism of the garden, have been acknowledged by the community, City of Pacifica staff, as well as City Councilmembers over the years, and his garden has been featured in news coverage and more.

Gradually, voluntary garden plots started being planted adjacent to Mike's Liberty Garden. And in recent months, many more plots began, now totaling more than 50 gardens beyond the original Liberty Garden. Recently, when the City's irrigation pipe that supplies water to the Liberty Garden broke, the City learned the irrigation had been extended to some plots without permission and that some gardeners have been taking water out of the creek, which is prohibited by law unless that removal is permitted by the State. Additionally, removal of water from the creek for irrigation could cause the City to be in violation of various regulatory permits. The City has posted a sign advising people that water should not be taken out of the creek and is working to repair the irrigation pipe this week.

The Calera Creek area near the City's Water Recycling Plant, including the areas where gardens have been planted, is a sensitive habitat area for certain species of animal and is subject to an extensive permit held by the City from the California Coastal Commission from when the treatment plant was built. The City is in the process of assessing the permit conditions and other relevant information to ascertain whether any of the gardens established since the original Liberty Garden can remain. However, due to sensitive habitat and environmental permit constraints, this area is unlikely to be appropriate for the number of gardens that have been created and gardens other than the original Liberty Garden may need to be removed. The City will reach out to known gardeners in this area to keep them apprised of the City's determination. The City must take its permit requirements seriously to avoid Coastal Commission enforcement actions.

I understand and appreciate the good intent that gardeners have brought to these expanded garden plots, to beautify the area and, in some cases, serve as memorials to their loved ones. However, the sensitive habitat and Coastal Commission permit requirements are controlling factors in this area. Again, the City is in the process of assessing these permit conditions and other relevant information to determine next steps.

The City's Beautification Advisory Committee (BAC) has worked tirelessly to identify and create locations of City-owned land that are appropriate for planting and beautification. If you are interested in the BAC's work and where these activities are occurring on appropriate public land, please contact them at PacificaPride@ci.pacifica.ca.us.

Sincerely,



KEVIN WOODHOUSE
City Manager