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# RIO DEL MAR

## Improvement Association

### Spring 2026 Newsletter



**RDMIA Semi-Annual Spring Meeting:**  
Rio Sands Hotel Meeting Room, April 8, 2026, at 6:30 PM

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**REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW FOR 2026**  
**The annual Membership Fee is \$30 (Use the enclosed form or pay online)**

#### **Spring 2026 RDMIA Newsletter Highlights:**

- Thank you, John Fuchs and others, for repairs to the Rio Del Mar entrance sign
- Thank you to the Finkelman Foundation
- A Crisis in our Marine Mammals
- Updates from District 2 County Supervisor, Kim De Serpa
- Highway updates from the County Regional Transportation Commission



# Spring Newsletter

The Semi-Annual meeting of the RDMIA was held on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at the Rio Sands Meeting Room

**The meeting was also provided to members via Zoom**

## Highway One Improvements, Coastal Rail Trail construction through Aptos

- Fernando Dos Santos, Caltrans Assistant Resident Engineer (Construction)
- Zach Siviglia, Project Manager/CEO of Mark Thomas Consulting, Engineer of Record/Designer
- Joel La Cagnina, RTC Senior Engineer
- Amin AbuAmara, RTC Director of Capital Projects

### Supervisor Kim De Serpa:

Updates on all manner of projects and initiatives throughout the District.

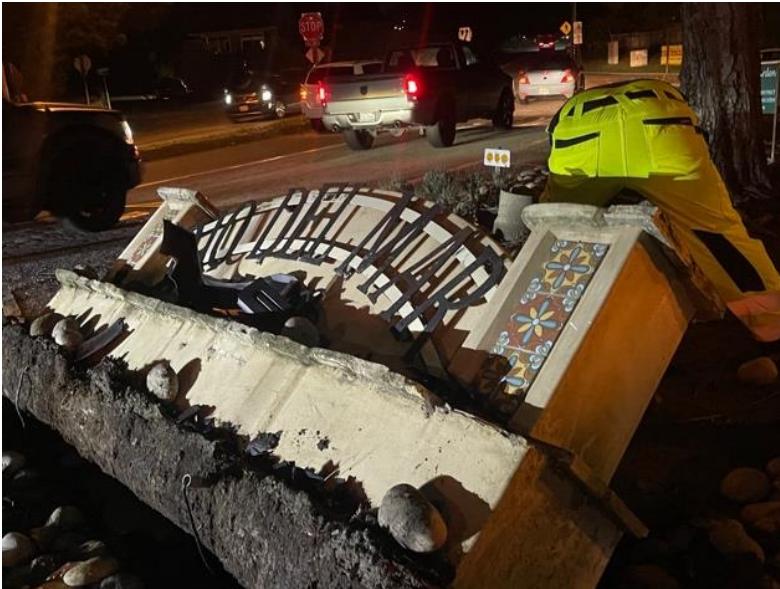
♡ Thanks go out to our new sponsor, Showtime Pizza!



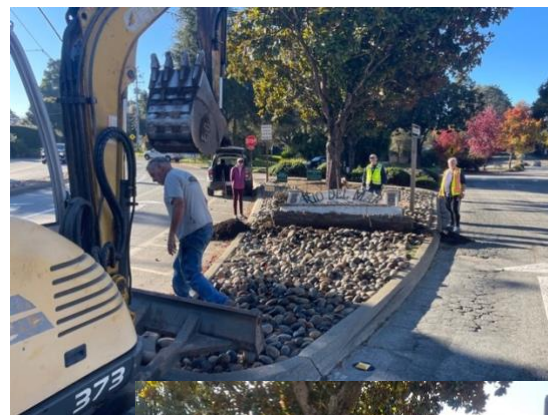
Thank you to Robert Graham for bringing cookies to our meetings. ♡

## Shout out to **John Fuchs Properties: Construction + Real Estate**

On November 6, the driver of a BMW SUV, temporarily blinded by the setting sun, struck the concrete-and-steel Rio Del Mar sign that welcomes us as we enter the neighborhood. We were contacted and met the Highway Patrol as they secured the scene and took notes.



John Fuchs took up the cause to initiate restoration and met to create a plan. With the help of Ed Mumm Excavation and Ed's loader, Pat Kelly and Jerry Cannella's manpower, and RDMIA Secretary Christine DeLapp, we managed to restore the heavy sign to its upright position on December 8, in time to decorate it for the holidays!



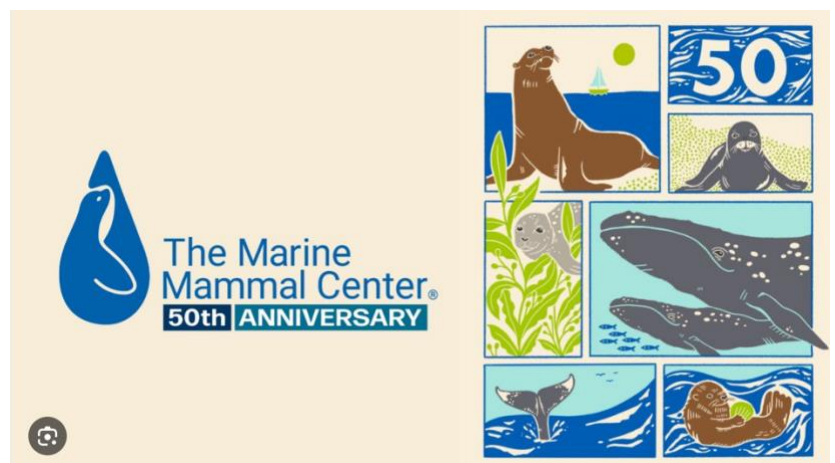
## Thank you to the Finkelman Foundation

The Rio Del Mar Improvement Association would like to acknowledge and thank long-time residents Herb Finkleman and Edda Tusinac and their foundation for their ongoing support of the Rio Del Mar Improvement Association. As longtime members, their generous contributions over the years have been much appreciated and have greatly helped improve our area. While they are legacy or lifetime members, they have continued to donate graciously every year. Their generosity has been a valuable resource, helping fund ongoing beautification, maintenance of the many areas of landscaping in our area, and other projects. They feel that supporting the organization benefits all residents and visitors, and they encourage other neighbors to join. They have enjoyed living in Rio Del Mar for many years, and RDMIA is grateful for their presence.

## A Crisis in our Marine Mammals

Over several months, a large number of marine mammals have become sick or have died, ending up on local beaches, including Seacliff. Since July of 2025, over 400 California Sea Lions have been found sick or dead. Several causes have been determined. Leptospirosis, a bacterial kidney infection, poisonous algae, and food scarcity are common culprits. The newest crisis to hit our coast is the discovery of avian flu, also known as Bird Flu, in elephant seal pups at Ano Nuevo, and more alarming in a sea otter. This disease has decimated the elephant seal populations in South America. According to UC Davis, the California outbreak is small but concerning. Ano Nuevo has been closed to the public for the remainder of the season. These outbreaks have been the worst on record.

Marine Mammals are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. It is illegal to approach, handle, or take any parts of dead marine animals. If such an animal is encountered, there are several safety recommendations. Animals should not be approached or touched. A distance of at least 50 is required. These diseases are particularly dangerous because they can infect humans and their pets. It is very important to keep pets away and on a leash, as infections can be spread to humans and pets.



***Report stranding or dead animals to the Marine Mammal Center hotline at 415-289-7325***

## Why are mammal carcasses left on our beaches?

The illness and death of marine mammals on our beaches raises the question of what is done with them. Sick mammals are treated by The Marine Mammal Center. They come, do an assessment, and determine next steps, which may require their removal to the center in Sausalito. Here they are treated and, if successfully rehabilitated, returned to the sea. Some dead marine mammals are left on the beach to let Nature take its course. Why? one might ask. There are several reasons. Extreme cost in removal is primary. There are also logistical difficulties in moving massive carcasses. Sea Lions can weigh several hundred pounds, and whales often weigh several tons. There are also hazards from a dead animal, such as predators, disease, and explosion risks. Recently, the Marine Mammal Center reported that, due to leptospirosis and the Avian Flu, they may not pick up sick or dying animals because of the risk. Carcasses can build up internal gases, such as methane, which can cause rupture. Another reason to stay away. Strangely, there are benefits from decomposing carcasses as they provide food for ecosystems. Some smaller carcasses might be removed while larger ones, especially if in remote or inaccessible areas, are left to mature. So remember. If a sick or dying marine mammal is found, be sure to give you and your pets a wide berth, and please report.



## The Rio Del Mar State Living Shoreline Project

Rio Del Mar is no stranger to flooding, a result of the many storms that have hit our region in the last few years. One attempt to stem the ravages of Mother Nature's assault on our shores is the Dunes Project behind the restroom on the esplanade. The goal is to reduce erosion, improve coastal resiliency, and restore dune habitat. Extreme storm activity has also caused serious sand erosion. Using large pieces of driftwood buried and then covered by sand the area is planted with native plants, creating dunes that protect from storm surges and rising sea levels. It is also hoped to mitigate the erosion that has threatened the restroom and some homes. The project, implemented by the State Parks, has shown some success and *is being used in other areas.*

# State Route 1 Auxiliary Lanes, Bus on Shoulder, and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Slides from our April 8 member meeting Caltrans and RTC presentation:

**State Route 1 Auxiliary Lanes  
Bus on Shoulder, & Coastal Rail Trail  
Segment 12 Project**

Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission  
April 8, 2026 | Rio Del Mar Improvement Association

Amin AbuAmara, SCCRTC, Project Delivery Manager  
Zach Siviglia, Consultant Project Manager

**Background - Project Overview**

**Project Overview**

**Project Overview – Bus on Shoulder**

Buses travel in auxiliary lanes between interchanges and on the outside shoulders within interchanges

**Project Overview – Auxiliary Lanes**

Looking North Towards State Park - Proposed

**Project Overview – Bus on Shoulder**

Looking North at Freedom Blvd - Proposed

**Project Overview – Coastal Rail Trail**

**Aptos Creek**

Source: <https://www.sccrtc.org/projects/streets-highways/hwy1/state-park-dr-to-freedom-blvd/>

## Spring Update from Supervisor Kim De Serpa



Happy Spring! The swallows are back at the birdhouse outside my window, arriving a bit earlier than usual this year. They're already sweeping through the air and settling in for the season. Their return is a small but welcome sign that the days are growing longer and spring is underway.

At the same time, there are many issues in the world weighing on all of us, from international conflicts to concerns about proposed offshore oil drilling along the California coast. California Attorney General Rob Bonta has filed a lawsuit challenging the proposal. Thank you to the many residents who submitted comments. The comment period is closed as of March 30th, but I will continue to monitor this closely and share any future developments.

I want to thank everyone who attended the County of Santa Cruz District 2 Strategic Planning Meeting at the end of February. Every six years, the County develops a strategic plan to guide our work, and community input is essential. These conversations often lead to discussions about housing, infrastructure, and transportation, all issues that shape our community's future. About 75 community members joined us, along with County CEO Nicole Coburn and leaders from Sheriff, Public Defender, Probation, Planning and Public Works, Health Services, Behavioral Health, Human Services, Economic Development, and Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3). Residents had the opportunity to learn about County services and share their priorities directly with staff.

Housing continues to be a hot topic. Santa Cruz County must plan for more than 4,600 new housing units in the unincorporated area between 2023 and 2031, as required by the state Housing Element adopted by the previous Board. Only about 275 units have been built to date, meaning significant work remains. Several sites in our county were identified for potential housing, including the former Par 3 property in Aptos. While multiple developers have explored the site in the past, a new potential buyer is now evaluating it. No formal proposal has been submitted, but early discussions with planning staff include a mix of affordable and market-rate housing, both of which are needed in our county.

Santa Cruz County faces real demographic pressures. Many young families, teachers, nurses, first responders, and service workers cannot afford to live in the communities they serve, while our county also has one of the highest percentages of seniors in California. Housing is also tied to the long-term health of our schools, as districts like Pajaro Valley Unified are experiencing declining enrollment.

My focus is on thoughtful planning that meets our housing obligations while protecting the character and quality of life that make Santa Cruz County special.

In terms of transportation, the Mar Vista Bike and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project is starting to take shape and will be completed in 2026. The Auxiliary Lane Project on Highway 1 is also still progressing with the addition of auxiliary lanes between Bay Avenue and Porter Street and State Park Drive, with completion of this phase expected later this year. All these projects are designed to ultimately make our commutes to work, school, home, and errands more efficient. I know it makes traveling more challenging right now, but the result should be a significant improvement.

My staff, Maureen McCarty and Regina Kelbert, are always here to help residents navigate county services. Please don't hesitate to reach out. As spring unfolds along the Central Coast, I hope you're finding small moments of joy too, whether outdoors, in longer evenings, or simply watching the swallows return home.

Warmly,  
Kim De Serpa  
Santa Cruz County Supervisor, District 2  
[Second.district@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:Second.district@santacruzcountyca.gov)  
831-454-2200

### **SUPERVISOR OPEN OFFICE HOURS:**

Office hours will take place at various locations throughout the district to ensure accessibility for all constituents. No appointments are required, but if you wish to reserve a specific time, please contact our offices. All community members are encouraged to attend.

Topics of discussion may include local government services, public safety, housing, infrastructure, and other community concerns. Supervisor De Serpa welcomes input from all constituents and encourages residents to bring their questions and ideas.

For more information or to reserve a specific time at office hours, please contact us at [second.district@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:second.district@santacruzcountyca.gov) or call us at (831)454-2200.

I'm deeply committed to this work, and I look forward to continuing to learn, grow, and serve our community together.

Warmly,

Kim De Serpa  
<https://www.santacruzcountyca.gov/Government/BoardofSupervisors/District2.aspx>

## What is the Rio Del Mar Improvement Association?

The Rio Del Mar Improvement Association (RDMIA) is a non-profit, community-based organization in Aptos, California, that has been active since its founding in 1941. It's the second-oldest neighborhood association in California. The association works to represent residents and improve the quality of life in the Rio Del Mar area through beautification, community engagement, and advocacy.

### Key functions and activities

- Community representation: RDMIA advocates for community interests to Santa Cruz County government officials regarding local matters like flooding, sewage, and development.
- Neighborhood projects: The organization initiates and supports beautification projects to enhance the neighborhood. Recent and ongoing projects include:
  - Renovating the Esplanade roundabout and moving the "Bird in Flight" sculpture.
  - Maintaining landscaping on medians.
  - Making improvements to Hidden Beach Park.
  - Organizing beach cleanup events.
- Communication: RDMIA facilitates communication through its website, newsletters, and biannual meetings where members can voice their ideas and concerns.
- Historical context: The association was founded by property owners and has been involved in significant community development projects over the years, including the Deer Park Shopping Center and the Rio Highlands subdivision.

### Membership and funding

- The RDMIA is funded through membership dues and donations.
- Anyone who lives, owns property, or operates a business within the specified Rio Del Mar boundaries is eligible to join.

## Become a member!

We revised membership options. A Lifetime Membership can now be passed to a non-family member in the same household. Other forms of membership include a Joint Membership that applies to all household members, an Associate Membership for people not living or owning property in the district, and Honorary Memberships bestowed on individuals who have demonstrated exemplary service to the community.

### The RDMIA Updated By Laws and Expanded Service Area Map are online:

[https://www.rdmia.org/files/ugd/c30a45\\_8090ede1eee541728581d6b9499f2343.pdf](https://www.rdmia.org/files/ugd/c30a45_8090ede1eee541728581d6b9499f2343.pdf)

# RDMIA Appreciates New Members and Renewals!



Thank you to those who have already paid their 2026 dues 😊

Current Board members:

- President: Barry Scott
- Vice President: Jerry Cannella
- Treasurer: Patricia Perry
- Communications: Joseph Foster
- Secretary: Christine DeLapp
- Director: Linda Neuman
- Director: Sam Nazzal

## ***Renewal time is upon us for members to contribute for 2026!***

*Dues enable RDMIA to maintain area landscapes, improve local parks, and engage in community interests.*

*2026 RDMIA highlights in the community.*

- *Whaley Sculpture restoration campaign*
- *Tree trimming for solar lighting enhancement.*
- *Continued landscape care – renovated median landscapes.*
- *Ongoing communication and outreach*



Thank you, Business Sponsors!




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Thank you, Aptos Chamber of Commerce & Aptos History Museum!



<http://aptoschamber.com/>



<https://aptoshistory.org/>

**Rio Sands HOTEL**

*100 steps to the beach...*

- Spacious king rooms with patios
- 24/7 Guest Services/Business Center
- Year-round heated swimming pool
- Complimentary WiFi and HBO

**FREE ON-SITE PARKING**

**ALLEN PROPERTY GROUP, INC.** 116 Aptos Beach Drive | Aptos, CA 95003 | riosands.com | Reservations: **800.826.2077**

**Thank you!**

RDMIA extends its gratitude to the many sponsors who grace our newsletter with their advertisements. It is a win-win for all. The community learns about our supportive businesses in the area and will hopefully return the favor by supporting those partners. In the past, it has been customary to ask businesses that advertise in the newsletter to make a donation.

Sponsors may contribute \$100 per year or provide a service to the Rio Del Mar Community, such as landscaping, raffle prizes, or food and drinks for our members' meetings, and receive ad space on our website and in this newsletter.

We look forward to a continued partnership!

**Rio del Mar Improvement Association**

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