



## Friends of Castle Crags, McArthur~Burney Falls and Ahjumawi State Parks Winter 2023 Newsletter

As winter sets in and 2023 comes to a close, the staffs at the parks are having a chance to draw a deep breath and relax from the throngs of visitors who visited these pristine venues during the summer and fall. We on the Board of Directors of the McArthur-Burney Falls Interpretive Association have also had a moment to pause and reflect on the tremendous success we've had in meeting our 2023 plans and objectives.

**Board:** We started off the year with 12 members. We lost four due to retirement, etc. And we filled a key Board position with the addition of Sue Lang; for the first time in many years, we have an active representative serving as a liaison between the Board and Castle Crags State Park. We hope to add another one in 2024 as we are going to be placing additional emphasis on building activities and services to that park.

**Burney Falls Trail Closure:** This is occasioned by the planned closure of the trail leading from the parking area at Burney Falls to the bottom of the falls; that trail will be closed for the majority of 2024 due to the necessity of repairing and upgrading the trail. Unfortunately, many users have migrated off the trail; that, combined with heavy precipitation, has caused extensive erosion of the trail and adjacent ground. But visitors will still be able to observe the falls from the overlook.



**Planned Road Construction:** We've also been advised that there will be road construction on Highway 89 next summer near the park entrance; we don't have the exact dates yet, so you'll want to check highway conditions before heading this way.



**Heritage Day:** To the left are Bob Boyce, MBFIA President, and Ryan Rzab, McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park Peace Officer Supervisor.

The event was exciting, as usual, and we're going to be looking for additional participants and, perhaps, a change in focus for the 2024 event. If you have any thoughts in this respect, we'd love to hear from you!

**Memorial Tables:** Another bit of exciting news is that we've resumed our memorial table project and had the first new picnic table delivered to the park in October, dedicated to and provided by the Strickler Family. It's located right by the General Store! Another table was recently ordered and will be delivered in the summer of 2024. If you have interest in donating a memorial table to Burney Falls Park, please contact us through the [friends@burneyfallspark.org](mailto:friends@burneyfallspark.org) Email address.

**Burney Falls Park Visitor Center:** The major problem we faced in 2023 was we were not able to keep the Visitor Center at Burney Falls open through the summer on a regular basis due to staffing shortages. The Park was short on park aids and camp hosts, and they've been our resource for staffing the Visitor Center in the past. If you live in the vicinity of Burney and would consider volunteering a day or two during the week to help us in 2024, it would be of great help, not only to park visitors, but to our income stream as well.

**Highlights of 2023:** Our annual report won't be ready until after the first of the year, but here are some highlights:

We planned to raise \$75,000 and, through October, slightly exceeded that amount

We planned to add additional members to the Board and recruited one, but had a net loss of three

We planned to sell two memorial tables for Burney Falls and did so

We planned to raise \$25,000 through Burney Falls Visitor Center gift shop sales, but fell \$8,000 short

We planned to fund interpretive services at Burney Falls Park for \$14,000 and did so

We planned to replace three interpretive signs, damaged by weather and age; two at Burney Falls and one at Castle Crags and that is being completed now at a cost of \$12,306

We planned to purchase and install a storage shed for items used in Heritage Day activities, etc. and did so at a cost of approximately \$7,000

There will be a more complete summary with the Annual Report, due early in 2024.

**Burney Falls Parking and Traffic:** During the summer months, particularly on weekends and holidays, the volume of visitors to McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park is so high that Highway 89, which is the main Park access and also the major north-south traffic route from Reno to Mt. Shasta and Oregon, gets plugged up. The resulting delays in getting into the Park or travelling through the area have raised a lot of complaints and a multitude of proposed alternatives to resolve the issue.

There is no easy fix, no ready solution. It is a balancing act that requires a lot of study and analysis. Anything that resolves the issue will likely result in more visitors being able to get into the Park. As we have already seen from the erosion problem along the trail down to the bottom of the falls, more visitors cause increased wear and tear on the natural beauty of the Park. Unchecked, the very nature of the Park's ecosystem may eventually be compromised or even destroyed. Be assured... they're working on solutions.



**Firewood Sales:** Firewood sales at both parks were up this year. Campers enjoy the warmth of a nice evening fire without the hassle of bringing their own wood with them, and having firewood available at the parks reduces the possibility of inadvertently bringing along harmful insects. The firewood we provide is acceptable, provided by Cal-Fire crews, and coordinated through the park system. We sold about 7,500 bags of firewood so far this year.

### **Going Forward Into the 2024 Season**

**Campground Hosts:** In 2023, we had a shortage of campground hosts. Hosts get a free, preferred camping site for the season in return for assisting Park staff by manning their assigned areas in the park, answering visitor questions, etc. If you have an interest in doing so or know of someone who might be, please contact: [ryan.rzab@parks.ca.gov](mailto:ryan.rzab@parks.ca.gov)

**Websites:** In 2023, the association website for Burney Falls Park was totally revamped and upgraded. [www.burneyfallspark.org](http://www.burneyfallspark.org). We plan to do the same for Castle Crags Park within the next 60 days.



**Castle Craggs:** Since we'll be putting additional emphasis on Castle Craggs State Park in 2024, we're open to ideas and suggestions. What activities would you like to see there? How can the association, Friends of the Craggs, do a better job in supporting that Park?

**Board Membership:** We would like to increase membership in 2024 by two or three members. Hopefully, we'll add a member with some or all of these attributes: interested in Castle Craggs State Park; bookkeeping background; advertising/publicity background. Having the ability to video conference enables people who live outside the immediate area to become a Board Member if they are able to travel to the parks to assist in special events, etc.

**Fund Raising:** As you can see, we manage to get a lot accomplished with what we have. We have no paid Board Members or staff and we spend our money very carefully and wisely. But, if we're going to move things forward at the parks we serve to make things better for visitors, and if we're going to reach our future goals, we do need to raise more money.

We've been discussing some ambitious projects, such as: renovation of the cabin at Burney Fall Park which was constructed back in the CCC days; replacing more interpretive signs at the parks; adding an interpretive position at Castle Craggs State Park; holding special events at Castle Craggs and maybe adding one at Burney Falls. These ideas require more income and we're looking at applying for grant funding as well as increasing our individual donations. All of this, of course, means getting our message out to more people about who we are and what we do.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation before the end of the year... \$10, \$20, \$100, or even \$10,000 (smile), will go a very long way and be used very prudently. You can donate through our website, [www.burneyfallspark.org](http://www.burneyfallspark.org) or by mail to P.O. Box 777, Burney CA 96013. Thank you in advance.

**Resignation:** I have decided to step down as president of the board in January of 2024. Old age and a plateful of obligations have taken their toll. My objective over the last year was to build a Board of Directors consisting of a diverse membership with the knowledge, energy and commitment to carry the association to the next level. I commend every member of the board for being able to fill those shoes and I know I'm leaving it in good hands. I'll stay on as a Board Member and Webmaster for a year or until this position is filled, whichever comes first.

Thanks to every member of Friends of the Falls and Friends of the Craggs for your interest and dedication to the future well-being of the parks.

Bob Boyce, President