



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTY PARKS TO BEGIN RESTORATION OF FREEDOM LAKE

Santa Cruz County Parks and Supervisor Zach Friend are proud to announce a collaborative initiative focused on the restoration and maintenance of Freedom Lake in Watsonville. This partnership aims to enhance the ecological health of the surrounding lake area by removing invasive and non-native vegetation species that have overgrown and limited access to the lake shore.

Freedom Lake, a cherished natural resource for both wildlife and the community, has faced challenges from non-native plant species that disrupt native habitats and diminish water quality. In upcoming months, dedicated teams from Watsonville Wetlands Watch and the California Conservation Corps will work side by side to identify and remove these invasive species, promoting a healthier and more sustainable environment around the lake prior to working on the longer-term objective of lake water restoration.

"This work begins the process on reopening a treasured community asset for South County. Freedom Lake is one of the most bucolic settings in our area and restoration is an important for gift for our community," Santa Cruz County Supervisor Zach Friend said.

"With support from Supervisor Friend and his staff, and our partnership with Watsonville Wetlands Watch, the renewal of Freedom Lake is becoming a reality," said Rebecca Hurley, Deputy Director of Santa Cruz County Parks. "Through this collaborative effort, we are not only improving the lake's habitat but also providing the community with a great example of impactful restoration work."

In addition to invasive species removal, habitat and biotic studies are set to commence in 2025 to assess the current biodiversity of Freedom Lake and inform strategies for its total renovation. By understanding the existing ecological conditions, the team will be better equipped to implement restoration techniques that support the growth of native species and enhance the overall health of the lake water.

For more information about the restoration of Freedom Lake and how to participate, please visit the Santa Cruz County Parks website at scparks.com.