

# FORT ROSS NEWS

February 2026 Newsletter | Fort Ross Conservancy



## Foreword

IAN TAYLOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Fort Ross Conservancy,



As we step into February, 2026 has greeted us with a welcome stretch of rain along the Sonoma Coast. While stormy skies can slow us down at times, they also nourish the landscapes that make Fort Ross State Historic Park such an extraordinary place. The hills are greening, the creeks are flowing, and we are reminded that renewal often begins in the quiet work of winter. At the Fort Ross Conservancy, we are embracing this season with optimism and looking forward to clearer skies ahead—both literally and figuratively—as we continue strengthening our programs, partnerships, and stewardship efforts for the year to come.

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OPEN DAILY 10:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Rain or shine, our work is only possible because of the dedication of our volunteers. From events, education programs, and visitor engagement, volunteers are the heart of our continued success.

Your time and talents make a lasting difference for this park and the many communities it serves. I encourage you to explore the volunteer opportunities highlighted in this newsletter and consider joining us in the months ahead. Together, we can ensure that Fort Ross remains a place of learning, connection, and inspiration for generations to come.

**DONATE**

With gratitude,

Ian Taylor  
Executive Director,  
Fort Ross Conservancy

*Oliver's*  
Real Food. Real People.®

Support FRC while grocery shopping.  
Community cards at Oliver's Market in  
Santa Rosa, Windsor and Cotati are free!

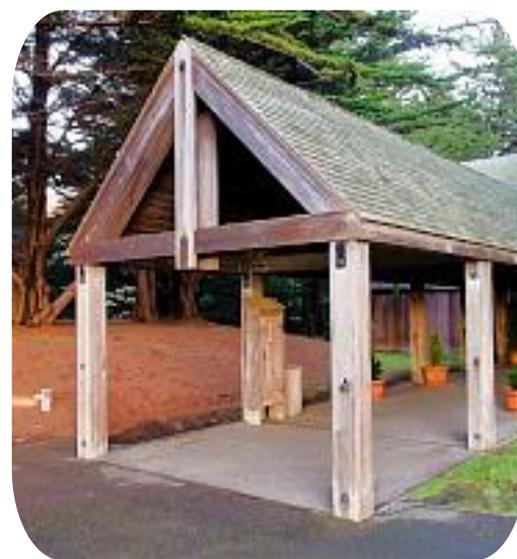
# Volunteer Opportunities

## **FORT ROSS VOLUNTEER**

Are you passionate about nature, community, and local history? Join our team in Fort Ross State Historic Park and welcome local and international visitors!

Fort Ross volunteers play a crucial role in connecting visitors with the history, tours, programs, and other opportunities in the Park. Volunteers provide information on trails and local wildlife and assist people with directions, maps, and park information.

There are a number of ways to get involved in the Visitor Center, Gardens, Fort, or at Festivals.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES CONT. PAGE 13

Email [info@fortross.org](mailto:info@fortross.org) or call the visitor center (707-847-3437) to get involved!



## Updates and Events

### Welcome to 2026

It has been a beautiful start to the year. We have been blessed with warm, sunny days and clear skies in January. Spring flowers are starting to bloom and grey whales are making their way north. January to March is the best time to see them as they migrate back to their arctic feeding grounds.

February has brought back the wet and wild weather. Remember to check our social media and website for updates when planning to visit Fort Ross State Historic Park.

### Tabling at Festivals

Meet our instructors at Russian River Fungi Festival in Guerneville on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of February and Santa Rosa's North Bay Science Discovery Day on March 7<sup>th</sup>!

North Bay Science Discovery Day is a free community event to spark curiosity in science with over 100 organizations of scientists and engineers. Every stall will have interactive activities such as rockets and beehives, robots and sharks, catapults, animation, animals, art, and more. We hope to see you there!



### Marine Science Saturdays

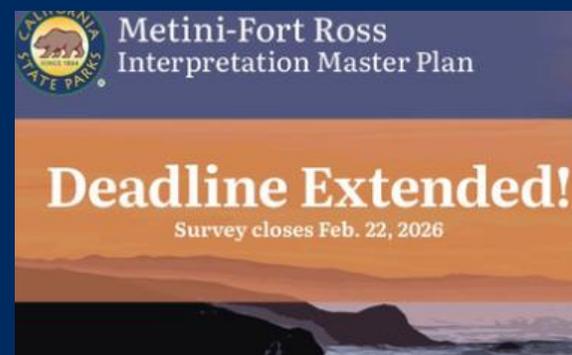
FRC's tidepool tours are back with two exciting weekend programs on March 28<sup>th</sup> and April 25<sup>th</sup>! See page 11 for more details.

### Interpretive Master Plan

Help us shape the future of Fort Ross interpretation by filling in California State Park's online survey! Survey closes February 22<sup>nd</sup>. See page 5 for more details.

### Reef Campground is closed for winter

with hopes of reopening in March, weather dependent. Check our website or call the Visitor Center on 707-847-3437.





## FRC Events on the horizon

Alaska Native Day, May 16-17th  
 In a Landscape Concert, May 25th  
 SnapShot Cal Coast Bioblitz, June  
 Ocean and Art Festival, July 25th  
 Harvest Festival, October 17th  
 Planting Party, October

!!  
**DATES  
 ANNOUNCED**

## Fort Ross Tours

**Tours about the rich and diverse natural and cultural history of Fort Ross and Salt Point led by our knowledgeable guides:**

### **Public Tours\***

Three guided group tours per day on weekends and most holidays. \$15/person, Children 10 & under are free.

### **Private Tours**

Book a guided tour of Fort Ross or Salt Point parks \$25/person per hour (\$100 minimum). Children 10 & under, free.

### **Tours are led by:**

Hank Birnbaum, FRC Interpreter  
 Birgit Nielsen, FRC Event Coordinator and Interpretive Senior Park Aide at California State Parks.

### **Call House Open days**

First full weekend of every month

Contact us by email at [info@fortross.org](mailto:info@fortross.org) or phone at 707-847-3437 (10 am - 4:30 pm) to verify availability and timing of tours.

Alaska Native Day 2026



Hank Birnbaum leading a Fort Tour



Birgit Nielsen (photo by LesCar)



# Metini-Fort Ross Interpretation Master Plan

Share your insights.

Shape our plan.

Participate in our survey today.

[FortRossSurvey.com](https://FortRossSurvey.com)

## STATE PARKS INVITES THE PUBLIC TO HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE STORY OF METINI-FORT ROSS

JENNER — California State Parks today announced the launch of public outreach efforts for the Metini-Fort Ross Interpretation Master Plan (IMP) Engagement Project. State Parks invites the public to help shape the future of interpretation at Fort Ross State Historic Park (SHF) by filling out an online survey. The survey will close on Feb. 16, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.

**DEADLINE EXTENDED  
TO FEBRUARY 22**

**PRESS**  **RELEASE**



## A Commitment to Inclusive Interpretation

The development of a new IMP aligns with ongoing State Parks initiatives to improve the accuracy, inclusion and relevance of interpretation across the State Parks System as part of Reexamining Our Past and other department initiatives.

The IMP will guide interpretation across the park, the assessment of existing interpretation, and the development of new interpretation. The IMP will replace the interpretive direction established in the Fort Ross SHP General Plan, which is more than 50 years old and focuses primarily on the history of the Russian settlement and colony of Fort Ross at the expense of a broader and inclusive interpretation of the site. Key goals of the engagement project and IMP include elevating tribal voices and highlighting the site's layered history. As part of the IMP engagement process, State Parks will undertake formal government-to-government consultation with Tribal governments and will work in close partnership through a co-creative process with the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of Stewarts Point Rancheria.



Cayla Kalani



Dione Deaker

In addition to the online survey, State Parks is engaging with a cohort of stakeholders and experts through focus groups and individual interviews. Alongside tribal co-creation and findings from the online survey, these efforts will help to build a framework for subsequent development of the IMP.

### We Want to Hear From You!

As a site of statewide historical significance, we welcome input from local community members, visitors from across California and people who know Fort Ross from elsewhere. Please complete a survey by visiting this link. Your response will help to identify important topics, priorities, programs, goals and more for the Fort Ross SHP IMP.

[fortrosssurvey.com](https://fortrosssurvey.com)

*Click here* 

**DEADLINE EXTENDED TO  
FEBRUARY 22**

**PRESS**  **RELEASE**



# HOME HARDENING AND HOME INSURANCE WORKSHOP

**February 21, 2026 at Fort Ross Visitor Center**  
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

**Central Sonoma Coast Firewise Community and Coast Ridge Community Forest**

Invites you to attend a workshop with

**Ivan O’Neill, Madronus Wildfire Defense**

**Hear the latest updates on the home insurance market, including FAIR Plan discounts and the Wildfire Prepared Home certification that insurers increasingly require**

If you received a Madronus assessment through SoCoAdapts, you can submit questions about your report beforehand, and we will learn together about completing report recommendations.

Fort Ross, 12 miles north of Jenner on Highway 1. Parking is complimentary, say you are attending the workshop.

If you would like to schedule a home hardening inspection with Madronus, please go to [www.madronus.com](http://www.madronus.com)

For more information: [centralsonomacoastfirewise@gmail.com](mailto:centralsonomacoastfirewise@gmail.com)



**Central Sonoma  
Coast Firewise  
Community**



# Alaska Native Day

Save  
the Date **May 16-17, 2026**



**Celebrate our Culture at Historic Metini-Fort Ross, CA**  
**More Details Coming Soon**

Sponsored By



# IN A LANDSCAPE

*Classical Music in the Wild™*



## FORT ROSS STATE HISTORIC PARK

JENNER, CALIFORNIA

Join pianist Hunter Noack for the outdoor concert series where America's most stunning landscapes replace the traditional concert hall. Listen through wireless headphones and wander afield with the music as a soundtrack to your experience in the wild.

MEMORIAL DAY • MAY 25 • \$45

Refreshments by Fort Ross Vineyard and Fort Ross Conservancy  
Timber Cove Resort 25% off room rate for Monday night  
To book, call Timber Cove Resort 707-847-3231 - Code: FRC

BRING A CAMPING CHAIR OR PICNIC BLANKET  
CONCERT STARTS ~3 PM

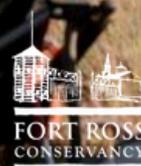
Photo by Arthur Hitchcock for IN A LANDSCAPE



SCAN HERE FOR TICKETS  
& THE FULL 2026 SCHEDULE  
OR VISIT [INALANDSCAPE.ORG](http://INALANDSCAPE.ORG)



FORT ROSS  
VINEYARD





## Welcome to the team!

### Getting ready for 2026 programs

We are excited to welcome three naturalists/MEP instructors and an ecologist in 2026! Dione and the team have a busy spring coming up with almost 30 school programs booked in just March to May.

#### Naturalist: Ariana Klappert

Ariana is an experienced science communicator and evolutionary ecologist. She has worked in museums, and zoos, created wildlife documentaries, researched antelope and bird evolution, and monitored endangered dormice populations. Her favorite wildlife encounter is swimming with African penguins in South Africa.

#### Naturalist: Dash Rogers

Originally from Brooklyn, NY, Dash has spent the last few years exploring Sonoma where he has volunteered at the Bodega Marine Labs and Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods. With a passion for teaching, he is pursuing a degree in education.

#### Naturalist: Noah Fisher

Noah grew up on the Mendonoma coast and studied Marine Science at California State University, Monterey Bay. He loves surfing, disc golf, rock climbing and spear fishing.

#### Ecologist: Jaclyn Schneider

Jaclyn (she/her) is an ecologist and experienced marine educator. She has a background in California's coastal ecosystems and community science where she has taught thousands of youth. Jaclyn will be helping with our silverspot butterfly restoration project.



MEP in January 2026



Team training

Birgit Nielsen



MEP 2026



## Marine Science Saturdays

# HELP KELP!

**SATURDAY MARCH 28, 1-4 PM**

### All about KELP FORESTS

Over 90% of kelp forests have been lost in California due to a population increase in purple sea urchins. In this 3 hour program, you will learn about kelp forest ecosystems, sea urchin biology and ecology, and the incredibly diverse intertidal!

**1 pm** - Meet FRC's naturalist in the Visitor Center auditorium for a short talk and hands-on activities with digital microscopes, sea otter fur, and much more!

**2:30 pm** - Guided tidepool exploration in Sandy Cove. Collect sea urchins to try uni for an afternoon snack\*



# INVERT ALERT!

**SATURDAY APRIL 25, 1-4 PM**



**The tidepools at Fort Ross are bursting with life.** Learn about sea stars, fish, crabs, algae, snails, anemones and so much more! We will go through how to identify different species, learn fun facts about their fascinating biology, and find them in the tidepools.

**1 pm** - Meet FRC's naturalist in the Visitor Center auditorium for a short talk and hands-on activities with intertidal species.

**2:30 pm** - Guided tidepool exploration in Sandy Cove. Collect sea urchins to try uni for an afternoon snack\*

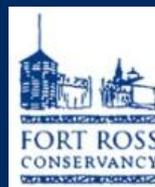


### Who are these programs for?

Programs are designed for families and are open to anyone interested in learning about marine ecology! Children will be provided with activity sheets.

### How to book?

Email [mep@fortross.org](mailto:mep@fortross.org) to book (max 25 persons)



Adult\* = \$35  
Child (16 & under) = \$25

\*Parking passes at Fort Ross State Historic Park included

\*Collecting sea urchin requires participants over 16 to have a valid California fishing license.



# Marine Ecology Program in 2026

## School programs

Field trips, in-class lessons and assemblies!

## Any group welcome to book

The MEP is for anyone and all ages. Families, friends, corporate and social groups - anyone!\*

## Programs at Fort Ross

Day programs: 1-5 hours

Overnight programs: 6.5 h of activities across 2 days. Sleep overnight in the Fort or at Reef Campground!

For more details and to book, visit the [FRC website](https://www.frc.org) or email [mep@fortross.org](mailto:mep@fortross.org)



## Book for 2026

Book now for Spring, Summer and Fall 2026. Winter is possible although storms may lead to park closures and program cancellations.

Pssst...our most popular tidepool programs are nearly booked out with only eight dates left this spring!

## School Partnership Program

FRC will work with you to organize an *MEPlan* so your students can experience the different fun-filled activities we have on offer. We have worked with schools to provide:

- Field trips for multiple grades across years
- Multiple field trips for one grade/class
- In-class lessons or field trips for the whole school



Sea urchin under the microscope

## In-class programs

Pair a field trip with an in-class program\*\* to set the scene for your students. FRC can also provide stand-alone in-class programs and assemblies.

\*Program minimums apply. Special allowances may be made for schools

\*\*Available if ~2 hours away from Fort Ross



# Volunteer Opportunities

## Fort Ross State Historic Park

Volunteering is a great excuse to get outdoors and come down to the coast. If you are a birder or love hiking, teaching, wildlife, tide pooling and gardening, we have a number of opportunities to get involved with.

**The perks** | Log your hours as a California State Parks Volunteer  
 40 hours = a district day use pass for the next year.  
 200+ hours = a statewide day use pass for the next year.

### GARDEN VOLUNTEER

Help us make the Visitor Center native garden and education garden beautiful! Join our new group of volunteers. We will be collecting seeds this spring and growing new plants in the greenhouse to add to the garden! Our greenhouse will be ready to grow in the spring.



### CALL HOUSE

Join the volunteer group for the only building that truly represents the ranching era at Fort Ross! The volunteers help maintain the garden, open the Call House on the first full weekend of the month and provide free docent-led tours to the public.



### MARINE MAMMAL SURVEYS

We are always looking for more sets of eyes for our fortnightly seal surveys in the spring (weekday or weekend) and sea lion surveys once a month throughout the year (weekdays)! [Click here to learn more!](#)

**Interested in helping in a different capacity?** We have many opportunities throughout the year including festival support, program support, tabling at events and more! [Check Careers for new position announcements](#) too



Email [dioned@fortross.org](mailto:dioned@fortross.org) for more information and to sign up!



# WILDLIFE

## SPOTTED ON THE COAST

### ➤➤➤ **FETID ADDERSTONGUE**

**February 5**

Fetid adderstongues are in the lily family and are native to the California Coast. This incredible flower was found by Cayla Kalani hiking in Fort Ross' Stanley Spyra Redwood Grove opposite the historic orchard.

### **WITCH'S** <<<< **BUTTER**

**January 18**

A brightly colored jelly fungus to see after the winter rain!

Photographed by  
maynard\_paz, iNaturalist



### ➤➤➤ **NORTHERN** **FLICKER**

**February 2**

“Who are you looking at?”

Keep an eye out for these woodpeckers on the ground! Although they can hammer on wood like other woodpeckers, they prefer to dig for ants and beetles in the dirt.

Photographed by  
mikewitkowski, iNaturalist



**SEE YOUR PHOTO HERE**  
Post photos taken in Salt Point or Fort Ross to iNaturalist to have the chance at being selected for the next newsletter!

**DONATE**