A walk along the Asilomar dune boardwalk will lead you through a living environment of a California sand dune landscape. With examples of native plants and wildlife, the Asilomar dunes illustrate what can occur when balance is lost and found once again.

Historic Precedent
The original dune system along the western edge of the Monterey peninsula spanned 480 acres, from Point Pinos in Pacific Grove to Point Joe in Pebble Beach. When Europeans settled in the area, logging and grazing removed many trees and damaged the delicate vegetation which held the dunes in place.

Efforts to prevent the sand from shifting and engulfing the conference buildings were started in the 1960s and 1970s. Non-native plants, particularly ice plant which is native to South Africa, were introduced and unwittingly contributed to the problem. Ice plant provided neither food nor shelter to native wildlife and invaded the remaining native plant community. By the mid-1970s, the dunes had become a virtual wasteland of bare sand and exotic plants.

A New Beginning and Restoration
The State Park staff launched an ambitious project in 1984 to restore the condition of the dunes to their “pre-European influence.” Luckily, amidst the desolation, a few isolated pockets of native habitat remained. These areas became the model upon which guidelines were developed for the restoration project.

In addition, the project’s goal was to allow restricted public use in the dunes. A boardwalk footpath was designed to offer the visitor a nature trail through the dunes habitat which would protect it from further destruction.

The first phase in the restoration was to acquire a seed inventory. Most of the native plant seeds were collected from the dunes, utilizing the few...