



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-24-14  
Meeting 24-03  
January 24, 2024

## AGENDA ITEM 8

### AGENDA ITEM

Addition of a Legacy Road as a new Trail Segment at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, including Use Designation and Proposed Trail Name, and Consideration for Highlighting the Presence of American Badgers in the Skyline Area

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve the addition of a 0.5-mile legacy road to a vista point as part of the trail network at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve and designate the trail as multi-use with the proposed trail name of "Fog Drift Vista" Trail, as supported by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee.
2. Consider the Planning and Natural Resources Committee's recommendation to highlight the presence and importance of American badgers (badgers) in the Skyline Area for greater public awareness, and if supported, provide direction on the proposed options as detailed in this report.

### SUMMARY

The General Manager recommends incorporating a legacy road into the formal trail network at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, designating the trail as multi-use, consistent with the connecting trails, and naming the trail segment the "Fog Drift Vista" Trail. This legacy road is the former Smith Driveway that once accessed a private inholding with a residence and barn (which are no longer present). The proposed trail use designation is consistent with Board Policy 4.07, *Trail Use Policies*. The proposed trail name is consistent with the naming criteria specified in Board Policy 5.01, *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition*. Pending Board approval, the trail addition, designation, and name would be implemented through new trail signs and maps and the mileage added to the trail data counts. On December 12, 2023, the Planning and Natural Resources (PNR) Committee received a presentation on the recommendations and unanimously (3-0) voted to forward the recommendation to the full Board of Directors (Board) for approval. PNR also made a separate motion recommending the exploration of options of highlighting the presence and importance of badgers in the Skyline Area.

### DISCUSSION

Please refer to the PNR Committee Report (Attachment 1).

### FISCAL IMPACT

None

## PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

On December 12, 2023, the PNR Committee received a presentation on the recommendations for adding a 0.5-mile legacy road to the Russian Ridge trail network as a multi-use trail with the proposed name “Fog Drift Vista” trail. The committee voted unanimously (3-0) to forward the recommendations to the full Board for approval. During discussion, the PNR also expressed interest in the alternative name “Badger’s Byway”. The alternative name led to a discussion about the presence of badgers in the Skyline Area and ways that the species could be highlighted and honored. The committee determined that the 0.5-mile proposed trail was not the most appropriate location for the name “Badger’s Byway”, as the vista at the top was the predominant feature. However, the PNR passed a second motion recommending that the Board consider having staff explore ways to highlight the presence and importance of badgers in the Skyline Area. A summary of the PNR committee discussion is provided below in Table 1.

One written public comment was received prior to the PNR meeting expressing concern with allowing mountain bikes in any open spaces due to their impacts on the land. The comment included an attached literature review conducted by Michael J. Vandeman, PhD. The comment did not express specific concerns about the addition of the trail to the Russian Ridge Trail network or the name “Fog Drift Vista”.

**Table 1 – Summary of PNR Committee Feedback (December 12, 2023)**

Theme/Topic	PNR Feedback/Comments
Name of new trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The committee asked if the phenomenon of fog drift is visible from the hilltop in question – staff confirmed that it is often present in the area.</li> <li>• The vista would be a destination and the highlight of the trail and is therefore appropriate to have in the name.</li> </ul>
Rock outcroppings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The committee asked about the protection and status of rock outcroppings during the demolition of the Smith House. Staff confirmed that the rock outcroppings had been protected and were in good condition.</li> </ul>
Presence of badgers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The committee recommended staff keep Badger’s Byway as a potential name for future trails with preference of a longer future trail through areas characteristically used by badgers.</li> <li>• Desire expressed to honor and bring more attention to the badger, either as part of a future trail naming in the Skyline area, as part of new interpretive signage, in renaming an existing trail, or other means.</li> </ul>

As it relates to increasing the awareness of badgers in the Skyline area, Pathways for Wildlife and the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory prepared the American Badger and Burrowing Owl Habitat Suitability Assessment Report for the District in 2022. Based on information from the assessment report and natural resources staff expertise, staff determined the following factors of importance:

- Members of the public are often unaware that badgers are present in the Bay Area and District preserves. Highlighting their presence and ways that people can help protect them is important for public education and species protection.

- American badgers are concentrated in the Skyline area in six District Preserves, including Russian Ridge, La Honda, and Windy Hill.
- There are multiple identified corridors for travel and known badger locations within Russian Ridge.

In response to PNR's request, the following list includes potential options with preliminary estimated cost and timelines for efforts aimed at increasing public awareness of badgers. Selection of any of the following actions would create a new, separate project that would be programmed into a future fiscal year workplan.

**Table 2 – Options for Highlighting Badgers**

Action	Estimated Cost	Estimated Timeline	Considerations
1. Renaming <sup>1</sup> a section of the Bay Area Ridge Trail (currently called "Ridge Trail") within Russian Ridge or a future new trail in La Honda, Hawthorns, or Cloverdale Ranch to "Badger's Byway"	\$800 - \$1,200 to replace/install trail directional signs plus moderate staff time	9-12 months for existing trail, ~5 years for new trail	The Ridge Trail corridor in Russian Ridge is a significant path of travel for badgers. Signs affecting Ridge Trail would need coordination with the Bay Area Ridge Trail organization. Other areas listed (for new trails) contain known badger habitat.
2. Interpretive panel at a key location	\$5,000 - \$8,000 for interpretive panel plus significant staff time	12+ months	Public education and awareness of badgers within their habitats is important for species protection. Limited staff capacity within the Interpretation and Education Program.
3. ESRI Story Map on webpage with info about badgers plus social media push and flier with QR component in preserve signboards where badgers are present	Moderate staff time	6-8 months	Additional online information could increase interest in badgers. A story map could be updated periodically. A virtual platform enables the sharing of photo and video content, especially important for a cryptic species that is rare to see.
4. Public-focused Lunch and Learn Presentation by Natural Resources plus excerpts of recording in social media and webpage	Minimal staff time	3-6 months	Staff gave a presentation about the badger and burrowing owl study in 2022 and could do so again. Presentation could be recorded and posted on the webpage for public viewing with excerpts posted throughout the year in social media

<sup>1</sup> The Bay Area Ridge Trail designation and medallions would remain on trail signs.

Actions related to this trail previously came before the full Board of Directors at the following public meetings:

- **February 23, 2022:** Board approved the disposition of the Smith House. ([R-22-23, meeting minutes](#)).
- **August 24, 2022:** Board approved the award of contract to KM 106 Construction to complete the demolition of the Smith house ([R-22-100, meeting minutes](#)).
- **December 12, 2023:** Planning and Natural Resources Committee forwarded a recommendation to the Board to name the legacy road “Fog Drift Vista” Trail, incorporate it into the formal trail network of Russian Ridge, and designate it as multi-use ([R-23-141](#)).

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The selection of a trail name is not a Project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The designation and use of the existing driveway as a publicly accessible trail is categorically exempt in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities. The former driveway is an existing facility and the proposed use as a multi-use trail would result in a less intensive use than that of a vehicle driveway. Installation of trail signs is exempt from CEQA in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land.

## **NEXT STEPS**

If Recommendation #1 is approved by the Board, the new trail will be added to the official trail network within Russian Ridge with updated online mapping and trail signs. Based on Board direction for Recommendation #2, the General Manager will determine the appropriate timing and programming of subsequent work to highlight badgers in the Skyline area.

### Attachments

1. Planning and Natural Resources Staff Report

Responsible Department Head:

Jane Mark, AICP, Planning Department

Prepared by / Contact person / Graphics prepared by:

Mattea Ottoboni, Planner II, Planning Department





Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

## PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-23-141  
December 12, 2023

### AGENDA ITEM 2

#### AGENDA ITEM

Addition of a Legacy Road as a new Trail Segment at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, including Use Designation and Proposed Trail Name

#### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Forward a recommendation to the full Board of Directors for their review and consideration to add a 0.5-mile legacy road to a vista point as part of the trail network at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, and designate the trail as multi-use, with the proposed trail name of "Fog Drift Vista" Trail.

#### SUMMARY

The General Manager recommends the Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR)) forward a recommendation to the full Board of Directors (Board) to incorporate a legacy road into the formal trail network at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, designate the trail as multi-use, consistent with the connecting trails, and name the trail segment the "Fog Drift Vista" Trail. This legacy road is known as the former Smith Driveway that was formally used to access a private inholding with a residence and barn (which are no longer present). The proposed trail use designation is consistent with Board Policy 4.07, *Trail Use Policies*. The proposed trail name is consistent with the naming criteria specified in Board Policy 5.01, *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition*. Pending Board approval, the trail addition, designation, and name would be implemented through new trail signs and maps and the mileage added to the trail data counts.

#### DISCUSSION

In November 1989, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) purchased the former Smith Property as a ridge-top addition to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, which included the Smith House. In February 2022, the Board approved the removal of the Smith House due to the dilapidated condition of the structure (R-22-23). The Smith House was subsequently demolished in November 2022. The former house site is accessed by a road (former driveway), which connects with the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail) approximately 0.25 mile south of Rapley Ranch Road.

The former driveway has a gravel surface and is approximately 12 feet wide, 0.5 mile long, and leads to a relatively flat clearing on the hilltop where the Smith House was formerly located, shown in Attachment 1. The driveway provides a readymade out-and-back trail with a vista located at the hilltop. The hilltop offers 360-degree views of Russian Ridge and other skyline

open space areas to the south and west, Mt. Melville to the north, and the Peninsula and San Francisco Bay to the east. Photos of the views from the hilltop are included in Attachment 2.

The former Smith Driveway has been shown as “Private – No Access” on maps and signs given its prior use as a residential driveway. Since demolition of the Smith House, the public has been informally using the driveway, as reported by staff from the Skyline Field Office (SFO). The signage and online mapping showing the driveway as “Private” have been removed by staff since the hilltop site is no longer occupied and there are no structures that could pose a safety risk or attract vandalism. Due to the connection with the Ridge Trail and appeal of a short route to a scenic vista, staff finds that restricting public use and enforcing the restriction would be difficult. As discussed in the February 2022 Board Report for the disposition of the Smith House (R-22-23), incorporating the driveway into the trail system will open and formalize access to a scenic hilltop from the Ridge Trail as a destination for hikers, bikers, and equestrians. The recommended trail name and two alternative trail names are presented for PNR’s review and consideration. Section 1.1 of the District’s Trail Use Policies states that the District will endeavor to, “Provide multiple use on individual trails where such use is consistent with the balance of these policies.” In accordance with the Trail Use Policies, staff recommends a multiuse trail designation consistent with the multiuse allowed on the connecting Ridge Trail alignment.

Per Board Policy 5.01 for *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* (Attachment 3), Preserve trails shall ordinarily be named after: a) geographical, botanical, or zoological identification, or b) historical persons, uses, or events associated with the site. “Fog Drift Vista” is proposed due to its two-fold alignment with Board Policy 5.01. The name describes the unique phenomenon of coastal fog drifting over the hills from the ocean to the skyline area, visible from high points in topography. The “Vista” component of the name describes the destination of the hilltop that is accessible via the trail. Because of the short length of the trail and general public appreciation for scenic viewpoints, it is expected that trail users of the Ridge Trail would use the new trail to reach the hilltop and enjoy the view or stop for lunch or a rest. No new trail connections from the hilltop are proposed at this time. However, a connection to Mt. Melville or a mid-trail connection to the Ridge Trail could be considered in the future through a subsequent planning effort.

In alignment with the District’s trail naming process, two alternative names are presented for the Committee consideration. The first alternative “Badger’s Byway” is inspired by the presence of badgers (*Taxidea taxus*), which are a California Species of Special Concern, in Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve. The second alternative “Mt. Melville Vista” describes a predominant landmark of the preserve (Mt. Melville) that is visible from the hilltop.

## FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended action has no immediate fiscal impact.

## PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

Actions related to this trail previously came before the full Board of Directors at the following public meetings:

- **February 23, 2022:** Board approved the disposition of the Smith House. ([R-22-23, meeting minutes](#)).

- **August 24, 2022:** Board approved the award of contract to KM 106 Construction to complete the demolition of the Smith house ([R-22-100](#), [meeting minutes](#)).

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The designation of the existing driveway as a publicly accessible trail is Categorical Exempt in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities. The former driveway is an existing facility and the proposed use as a multi-use trail would result in a less intensive use than that of a vehicle driveway. The selection of a trail name is not a Project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

## **NEXT STEPS**

Following Committee consideration, the General Manager will forward the recommended trail name to the full Board of Directors for consideration and approval.

### Attachments

1. Trail Map
2. Views from Hilltop
3. Policy 5.01 Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition Policy

### Responsible Department Head:

Jane Mark, AICP, Planning Department

### Prepared by:

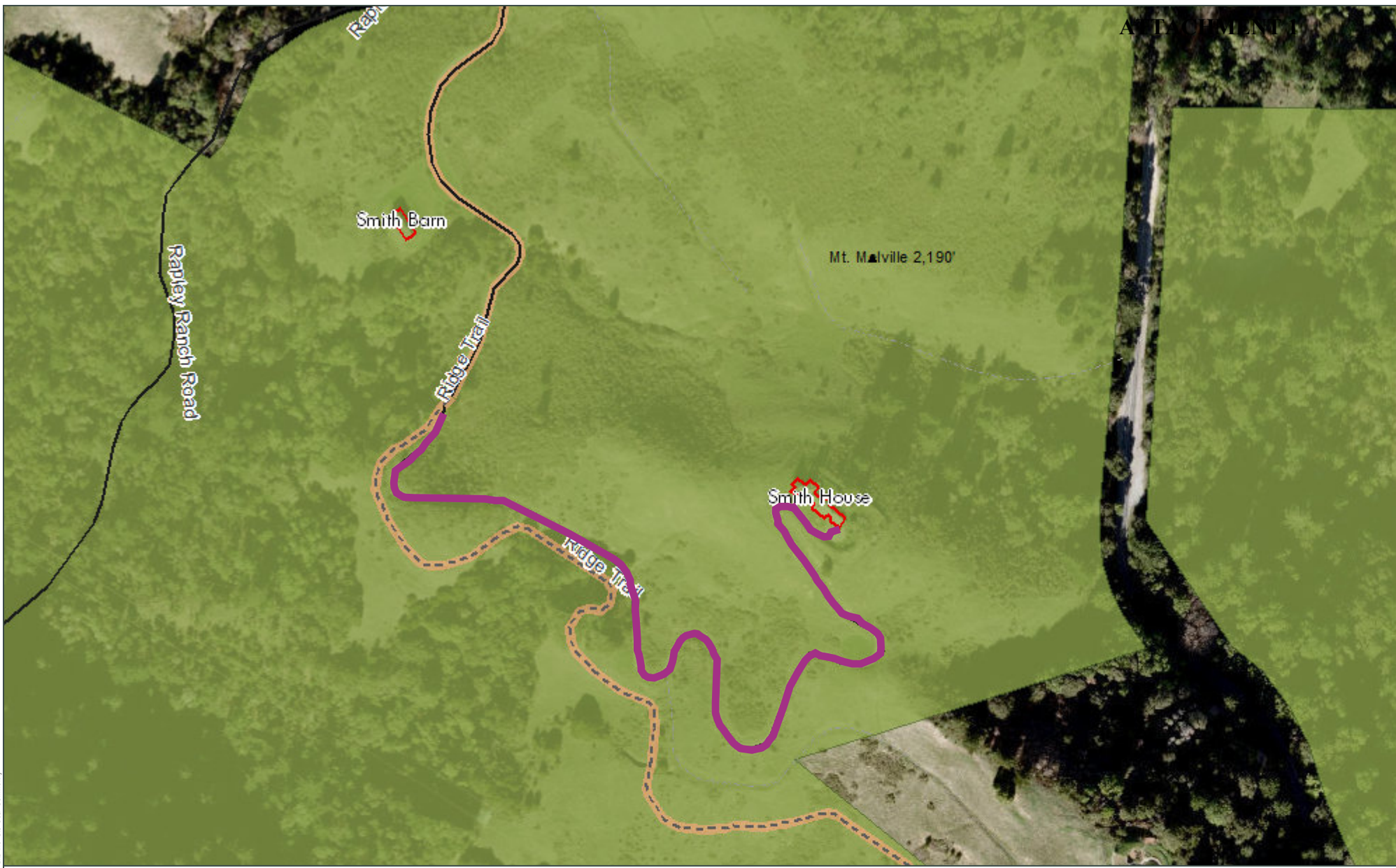
Mattea Curtis, Planner II, Planning Department

### Contact person:

Mattea Curtis, Planner II, Planning Department

### Graphics prepared by:

Mattea Curtis, Planner II, Planning Department



### Smith Driveway Renaming

**Landmark**

▲ Peak

**Building**

□ Demolished

**Trail (classes)**

— Proposed Trail

- - - Trail

- - - Abandoned / Unmaintained Road

— Bay Area Ridge

■ Preserve Boundary (fill)

### ATTACHMENT 1

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(MROSD)  
9/27/2023





Attachment 2 – Views from Hilltop



North View



Attachment 2 – Views from Hilltop



East View



Attachment 2 – Views from Hilltop



South View



Attachment 2 – Views from Hilltop



West View



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Board Policy Manual

<b>Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition</b>	<b>Policy 5.01 Chapter 5 – Historical/Cultural</b>
Effective Date: 8/25/93	Revised Date: 5 /24/23
Prior Versions: 8/25/93, 9/14/94, 6/24/98, 9/12/01, 10/8/08, 1/13/10, 10/27/10, 11/13/13, 12/12/18	

I. SITE NAMING

All District site names and signs should be kept as simple and functional as possible. When a property is acquired, either as an addition to an existing preserve or for the establishment of a new preserve, a name will be recommended in the Preliminary Use and Management Plan. In most cases, "open space preserve" is appropriate as part of the name; however, there may be circumstances when another designation may be used. In some cases, a temporary name may be retained until the next Comprehensive Use and Management Plan review.

A. Open Space Preserves

The name given to each open space preserve should be general enough to remain suitable if the site is enlarged, but specific enough to give its location some significance. Properties added to an open space preserve may not always be contiguous with that preserve.

1. Preserves shall be named after:

- a) Geographical features of broad, general significance to the preserve;
- b) Historical persons, cultural names, uses, or events broadly associated with the locale.

2. Preserves shall not be named after any individuals other than historical persons as noted above.

B. Preserve Areas, Trails, Site Improvements, Historic Sites and Unnamed Natural Features

This designation refers to specific locations, land formations, trails, natural and physical features, staging areas and other site improvements, and areas of significance within open space preserves. Recognition of significant land gifts, including "bargain" purchases, will be negotiated at the time of the gift or bargain purchase.

- 1. Preserve areas, trails, site improvements including benches and bridges, historic sites and previously unnamed natural features shall ordinarily be named

after:

- a) Geographical, botanical or zoological identification;
- b) Historical persons, uses, or events associated with the site, or

persons and organizations listed in Section III: "Special Recognition".

2. Preserve areas, trails, site improvements, historic sites and unnamed natural features may in rare instances be named after a living individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the District, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

II. GIFT RECOGNITION

The purpose of the gift recognition policy is to provide an opportunity for the District to recognize and commend individuals or groups that have made significant contributions of cash, equipment, materials, goods or professional services toward the enhancement of the District, its programs, and its facilities.

A. Unsolicited Cash Gifts:

Up to \$1,999.99	Thank you by email or letter
\$2,000 to \$4,999.99	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of District gift item (note cards, etc.)
\$5,000 to \$9,999.99	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of framed photograph of favorite District preserve
\$10,000 or more*	Thank you by email or letter with offer of Resolution and framed photograph of District preserve and mention in a District publication
*These items will be provided only if desired by the donor	
All gifts will be recognized annually on the District website.	

III. SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Legislative, Funding and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) shall be the committee designated to discuss all requests that meet the criteria of the policy for special recognition made by members of the Board of Directors, and after deliberation shall forward a recommendation to the full Board for a vote.

The General Manager or his/her designee will review constituent bench dedication requests to determine eligibility based on the policy guidelines outlined below in Section III D.

Constituent bench requests may be brought to LFPAC if there exists ambiguity regarding whether the request meets the requirements below.

The District places benches in its preserves for three distinct purposes:

A. District Rest Benches

These benches provide constituents with a place to rest. District staff places these benches without involving a District committee or the full Board. Regular benches must be either a backed or a backless standard bench as described in Section V below.

B. Constituent Bench Dedications

These are benches which have been requested by constituents in order to honor or memorialize a member of the public and are funded by the requestors who must pay \$5,000 for a 10-year term. Requests must be in reference to a significant supporter or a volunteer, as defined in Section III D below. The General Manager or his/her designee reviews requests to determine if they meet the eligibility definitions. Requests that are administratively declined because they do not meet the eligibility definitions may be appealed to the General Manager for a second review. Eligible requests will be administratively implemented.

a) Constituent bench dedications shall only be selected from and placed in locations that have been pre-determined by the District and/or approved by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee and/or by the full Board of Directors.

b) If a request for a constituent bench meets the eligibility requirements, the requestor(s) shall pay for the cost of constructing, installing and maintaining a bench and plaque by contributing \$5,000 to cover the 10-year dedication term of the bench.

c) Bench plaques will be 2 x 6 inches in size.

d) Benches must be one of the two District standard bench designs.

e) Constituent bench dedications will have a term limit of 10 years. After 10 years, the original donor will have the option to contribute an additional \$5,000 donation for each additional 10-year term. Should the original donor decline to renew an existing bench, the bench will be offered to the public for re-dedication.

C. District Bench Dedications

These are benches which are installed by the District in response to requests by members of the Board of Directors to honor "Founders," "Significant Supporters", and "Volunteers".

a) LFPAC can initiate a bench request and refer a decision to the full Board or individual Board members can initiate a bench request which will be referred to LFPAC for discussion before it is referred to the full Board for a final decision. Honorees must be "Founders", "Significant Supporters", and "Volunteers" (per policy Section III D below).

b) For these benches there are no design specification limits or limits on their location. The District will pay for the lifetime cost of the bench.

D. Founders, Significant Supporters, and Volunteers

"Founders", "Significant Supporters", and "Volunteers" are eligible for special

recognition, including memorials.

"Founders" shall be defined as an individual or group of individuals who participated in the formation of the District, or were significant supporters of the formation of the District.

"Significant Supporters" shall be defined as individuals or group of individuals who have shown conspicuous or noteworthy support for the District through extraordinary contributions of time and effort to the advancement of the goals, philosophy and mission of the District.

"Volunteers" shall be defined as individuals or groups of individuals who donated a minimum of 250 volunteer hours and 5 years of service to the District by working for the District's docent or volunteer program.

#### IV. RECOGNITION OF HISTORIC SITES

A. A recognition monument, normally in plaque form, may be considered by the Board if it is in relation to a specific existing building or other remaining structure of significant historic value. In such cases, the plaque will be affixed or in close proximity to the structure itself. If there is no structure, then recognition may be considered for inclusion on District informational materials or trail signage. Such a site, in the absence of a building or structure, will ordinarily not be physically marked except as determined by the Board on a case-by-case basis as part of the Use and Management planning process for the corresponding open space preserve.

Any Board-approved memorial names shall be included in site brochures, maps, or other informational materials.

#### V. STANDARD BENCH DESIGN SPECIFICATION

A. District Rest Benches and Constituent Bench Dedications, described in III (A) and (B) above, are limited to either of the two following standard bench designs:

Backed bench:

Dumor - Bench 88, recycled plastic slates (color: CEDAR), steel leg supports  
(color: BLACK, IMBEDDED)  
6' or 8' lengths

Backless bench:

Dumor - Bench 103, recycled plastic slates (color: CEDAR), steel leg supports  
(color: BLACK, IMBEDDED)  
103-60PL 6' long, 3 supports  
103-80PL 8' long, 3 supports

B. The General Manager or LFPAC can at any point bring designs to the Board that differ from the District's standard bench designs.

VI. PARTNER RECOGNITION SIGNBOARD

Partner recognition signboards provide an opportunity for the District to recognize and acknowledge significant partners who have made conspicuous or noteworthy contributions of cash, land, and/or time that were instrumental to the conservation, restoration, management, and/or public opening of a preserve. Partners may include agencies, organizations, or individuals. Partner Recognition Signboards may also be used to satisfy recognition requirements specified in grant, purchase, or other funding agreements.

Excluding recognitions previously approved by the Board (e.g. recognitions required in Board-approved agreements and resolutions), LFPAC shall review and forward for Board approval the list of partner(s) to recognize on the Partner Recognition Signboard. Following Board approval, the General Manager or his/her designee will follow the guidelines and specifications listed below.

- a. Guidelines and Specifications:
  - a) Partner Recognition Signboards shall be standalone signboards that follow the same design specifications as the District's standard trailhead signboards to maintain District branding and visual cohesiveness.
  - b) Partner Recognition Signboards shall normally be placed directly adjacent to existing preserve signboards to consolidate trailhead information and signboard placement.
  - c) Recognition content shall include logos and/or names.
  - d) The District will review recognition content with each partner for accuracy and completeness.
  - e) The General Manager or his/her designee will approve the final recognition content.
  - f) Exceptions to these guidelines and specifications will be forwarded to LFPAC for review and to the full Board for consideration of approval.