



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District


R-13-70  
Meeting 13-17  
July 24, 2013

## **STUDY SESSION AGENDA ITEM 1a**

### **AGENDA ITEM**

Vision Plan Board Workshop on the Planning and Analysis Results from Phase 2, “Hearing the Voices”

### **GENERAL MANAGER’S RECOMMENDATION**

1. Receive a presentation on the Planning and Analysis results from Phase 2, “Hearing the Voices”, of the Vision Plan.
2. Discuss and provide input regarding the Vision Plan process and progress to date. 

### **SUMMARY**

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) initiated the Vision Plan Project in August 2012 to engage the District’s partners, stakeholders, and the public in a District-wide vision for land preservation, resource management, public recreation, and working lands (see Report R-13-10 for a summary of the Vision Plan process and timeline). Since that time, the Vision Plan Project Team have made significant progress on major elements to both engage the public and complete the initial technical analysis in support of the Vision Plan (see Reports R-13-08, and R-13-09 for a summary of the project scope). The technical analysis of the planning area is a critical first task designed to evaluate the existing conditions (i.e., biological, cultural, agricultural, and recreational) within the District’s Boundary. The results of this characterization will help determine and prioritize where work should be focused as well as educate the public regarding the values of the resources in the region.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Background**

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District’s (District) Vision Plan Project, entitled ‘Imagine the Future of Open Space’, is a broad-based effort to engage the public, District partners, and stakeholders in creating a shared vision for the future of the District and the region’s open space. This multidisciplinary effort combines scientific analysis with broad public engagement to ensure that the final vision reflects both District and community values and priorities. An update on project progress through Phase 2, entitled “Hearing the Voices”, was held with the Board of Directors on June 12, 2013 (see Report R-13-57), focusing largely on the public engagement work completed to date.

Staff worked closely with two lead consultants, Jodi McGraw Consulting (JMC) and Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC), to create a robust community values-based and science-informed

planning process for the District's Vision Plan. JMC is responsible for conducting the planning and analysis work, which is providing important scientific information to the Vision Plan process and informing the development of the selection criteria and priority actions. JMC has assembled a team of technical and planning experts who represent the broad range of themes that the Vision Plan covers. This team consists of qualified ecologists, foresters, as well as agricultural, recreational, and cultural resource experts, with the expertise needed to create a comprehensive, science-informed plan. The sections of the report that follow provide a summary of the work completed by the Planning and Analysis consulting team during the first two phases of the project.

### **Planning Area Characterization**

The characterization of the planning area is a critical first technical task designed to evaluate the existing conditions (i.e., biological, cultural, agricultural, and recreational) within the District's Boundary. The results of this characterization will help determine and prioritize where work should be focused as well as educate the public regarding the values of the resources in the region. Each consultant produced a report containing the planning area characterization results. District staff are reviewing the results and using them to help identify recommended priority actions for the Vision Plan. Technical report summaries are provided below with further detail in the attached Key Findings Table (see Attachment 1: Key Findings from Planning Area Characterization):

#### Biodiversity Consultant – Dr. Jodi McGraw, Ecologist

Dr. Jodi McGraw has led the Planning Team's work to develop the biodiversity component of the Vision Plan. This work encompasses an analysis of existing biological data to then inform the mapping and characterization of priority conservation areas using a weighted overlay. This analysis will also assess the relative conservation value of restoration and stewardship projects to promote persistence of terrestrial and aquatic species and habitats.

#### Recreation Subconsultant – Alta Planning + Design

The work conducted by Alta consists of synthesizing existing recreation data and assessing gaps and opportunities for access. The District was divided into eight (8) sub-regions with varying levels and types of visitor access (see Attachment 5: Sub-region Map) to complete this assessment.

#### Agricultural Subconsultant – Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE)

SAGE completed an existing conditions report that identifies the trends, constraints and opportunities for agriculture within District boundaries. The report was informed by the review of existing plans, studies, and data, as well as interviews with various agricultural experts.

SAGE has identified the need for a long-term vision that includes strategies for farmland conservation and the enhancement of agricultural viability that meets multiple goals for agriculture, open space and community livability, and is linked with regional sustainability planning.

#### Cultural Resources Subconsultants – Mark Hylkema and Pacific Legacy, Inc.

The cultural resources team developed an existing conditions report that summarizes the research on cultural resources and includes: 1) Regional Prehistoric and Historic Background, 2) Community Consultation, 3) Baseline Cultural Resources Inventory, and 4) Interpretation Opportunities.

The cultural resources team is creating a Cultural Resources Stewardship guide to inform the development of priority actions for cultural resources. This guide will identify the threats to cultural resources and recommended goals and stewardship actions in accordance with the District's resource management policies.

### **Scenic Landscapes**

An analysis of scenic beauty is an important element when considering land for acquisition and identifying areas for public access. The first step toward identifying important scenic landscapes has been to create an inventory of scenic resources within District preserves and throughout the District's jurisdiction (see Attachment 6: Scenic Resources Map). This task is being completed by District staff. To date, District staff have:

- Created a comprehensive map that depicts county and state designated scenic areas;
- Surveyed knowledgeable staff on areas of high scenic significance (on both open and closed lands);
- Created a GIS database of these scenic resources

Our next steps will be to discuss these findings with staff, partners, and the public, and receive input about our assumptions and analysis. We will also be interested to hear of additional areas which fall outside of our current lands and may provide scenic resources. This will be accomplished through survey questions, discussions, and participatory mapping.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The FY13-14 budget includes \$282,900 for the planning and analysis work, which is being completed by Jodi McGraw Consulting. Expenditures by this consultant remain on track.

### **BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

The Board waived Committee review of this project in lieu of full Board engagement. The full Board continues to remain apprised of ongoing Project progress and next steps.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice was provided pursuant to the Brown Act. Notice was also sent to the interested parties list for this project.

### **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The Vision Plan public engagement update does not constitute a project under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

### **NEXT STEPS**

The results presented in this report will guide and inform the creation of the Vision Plan's selection criteria and priority actions. District staff will utilize these results to inform their recommendations on the priority actions.

#### Attachment(s)

1. Key Findings from Planning Area Characterization by Topic
2. Subwatershed Rating Map
3. Wildland-Urban Interface and Community/Wildfire Protection Plan Priority Areas Map
4. Areas of Potential Climate Resiliency
5. Open Space Subregions Map
6. Scenic Resources Map

Responsible Department Head:  
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager

Prepared by:  
Casey Hiatt, GIS Administrator

Contact person:  
Casey Hiatt, GIS Administrator

## Attachment 1: Key Findings From Planning Area Characterization by Topic

<b>BIODIVERSITY</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Current Conditions/Finding</b>
<i>Highly Sensitive &amp; Biologically Significant Communities</i>	There are 89,315 acres of highly significant native plant communities within District boundaries. The District has preserved 10.2% of these while an additional 41% are protected by other agencies and organizations. Over 50,000 acres remain in private ownership.
<i>Watershed and Streams</i>	The District has protected 22% of the land located within the highest priority watersheds; other conservation agencies and organizations have protected an additional 27.5%. Approximately 50.5% remain unprotected (see Attachment 2: Subwatershed Rating Map).
<i>Landscape Connectivity:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The central and western portions of the District feature numerous large intact habitat patches that are still in need of further protection.</li> <li>• Highway 17 constrains east-west animal movement through the Santa Cruz Mountains.</li> <li>• Highway 101 and Interstate 280 create barriers to connectivity between upland habitat and the bay lands.</li> <li>• Smaller highways and major roads, including Highways 1, 35, 84, and 92 may also inhibit movement of animals and biological processes.</li> </ul>
<i>Threats to Biodiversity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threat of soil erosion and sedimentation is greatest in the Pescadero and San Geronimo watersheds (the two highest priority watersheds for conservation), and in the southeastern portion of the District.</li> <li>• Invasive species dominate approximately 9,557 acres within District boundaries, 860 acres (9%) of which are within District open space preserves.</li> </ul>
<i>Forest Management and Restoration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The District open space preserves contain 16.5 percent of all coast redwood-Douglas fir forests that exist in the District boundary.</li> <li>• Hardwood forests are facing two main threats that necessitate active management: widespread tree mortality due to sudden oak death, and Douglas fir encroachment in the absence of natural fire.</li> <li>• The area within District boundaries contains the highest concentration of recorded SOD detections in the Santa Cruz Mountains, though this may be due, in part, to the District's active monitoring program to slow the spread of SOD.</li> </ul>
<i>Fire Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An estimated 21,048 acres of vegetation within District boundaries, including 8,419 acres within District open space preserves, features fire-dependent communities.</li> <li>• 8,749 acres of urban lands are located at the interface of District open space preserves. The majority of these urban areas have been designated as communities at risk in Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP).</li> <li>• The CWPPs have identified priority areas for fuel reduction at Pulgas Ridge, Bear Creek Redwoods, and Sierra Azul, and along Highway 35 within Saratoga Gap, Long Ridge, Skyline Ridge, Monte Bello, Russian Ridge, Coal Creek, and Windy Hill OSPs (see Attachment 3: Wildland-Urban Interface and Community/Wildfire Protection Plan Priority Areas Map).</li> </ul>
<i>Global Change</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities of coast redwood-Douglas fir forests may be vulnerable to declines and ultimately extirpations due to decrease in fog frequency.</li> <li>• More frequent fire may dramatically alter the structure and species composition of the natural communities within the Santa Cruz Mountains.</li> <li>• Coastal scrub, maritime chaparral, &amp; coast redwood- Douglas fir forests may decline while grasslands expand.</li> <li>• Wet areas, such as seeps, springs, streams, ponds, marshes, lakes and reservoirs, feature cooler microclimates, provide sources of free water, and may indicate areas of greater ground water, and collectively may confer resiliency to the region's species in a future hotter, and likely drier, climate. Areas within District boundaries feature topographic variability that creates a variety of microclimates. Importantly, narrow, deep canyons and north-facing slopes receive less insolation (solar radiation) and thus have cooler microclimates (see Attachment 4: Areas of Potential Climate Resiliency).</li> </ul>

RECREATION		
Sub-region	Access Limitations	Opportunities
<i>North San Mateo County Coast</i>	Traffic capacity on Highways 1 and 92 limit visitation on peak weekends; minimal mountain bike opportunities, and limited foothill access.	Although foothill access is relatively limited, further development of Rancho Corral de Tierra and the lower portion of Purisima Creek Redwoods OSP provide opportunities to alleviate these limitations.
<i>South San Mateo County Coast</i>	Very limited access and developed facilities	Most of the protected lands in the South Coast have very limited access and developed facilities. There is significant demand for more substantial picnic, camping, and lodging facilities.
<i>Central Coastal Mountains</i>	Dog access opportunities are quite limited (prohibited in both State and San Mateo County parks); mountain biking is limited to road-width trails rather than more technical single-track trails.	Sempervirens Fund and Save-the-Redwoods League are actively protecting the redwood forests in this region.
<i>Skyline Ridge</i>	Few opportunities for dog access	There is the opportunity to complete gaps in the S.F. Bay Area Ridge Trail, and local connecting routes and trails.
<i>Peninsula Foothills</i>	Although outdoor experiences are within close proximity to suburban areas, visitation is limited to visitors with cars. Visitation is concentrated at Rancho San Antonio and parking lot is at full capacity. There is also a relatively limited extent of access for dogs. No nature centers.	Due to its close proximity to suburban areas, there are opportunities to reach a broad range of users and opportunities to increase public transportation access. Because of the multitude of parks there is an opportunity to lessen the concentration of visitors and disperse users to other parks.
<i>South Bay Foothills</i>	Limited environmental education facilities.	Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve offers unique access and interpretative potential, with the redwood forest environment and former college facilities.
<i>San Francisco Baylands</i>	Gaps in the S.F. Bay Trail decrease the trail network's interconnectivity.	Need to complete gaps in the S.F. Bay Trail and Stevens Creek Trail. Environmental educational facilities in this area reach and serve a broad range of users.
<i>Sierra Azul</i>	The southern two-thirds of the area offers very limited access due to steep topography and challenging road access. Most of the southern portion of the Preserve is closed to the public.	Long-term opportunity to be a major outdoor recreation resource for the South Bay. Opportunities: to open currently-closed areas to the public through development of access and facilities at Rancho de Guadalupe, Mount Umunhum.

AGRICULTURE AND WORKING LANDS	
Category	Current Conditions/Finding
<i>Trends</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over the past decade, the value of crop production has experienced a steep decline (63%) with acreage also declining (22%). Brussels sprouts make up about half of crop values. Diversification of crops will be critical to future viability of industry.</li> <li>Fruit production (mainly berries and wine grapes) represents only around 10% of overall crop production value. However, over the past decade, fruit production value has increased by 73% and fruit acreage by 131%.</li> <li>While there appears to be some influx of new farmers, they are undertaking small diversified operations rather than taking over the larger, conventional operations.</li> <li>There is an increased demand for meat and animal products that are raised in a manner that cares for the environment, utilizes humane practices, and is local.</li> </ul>

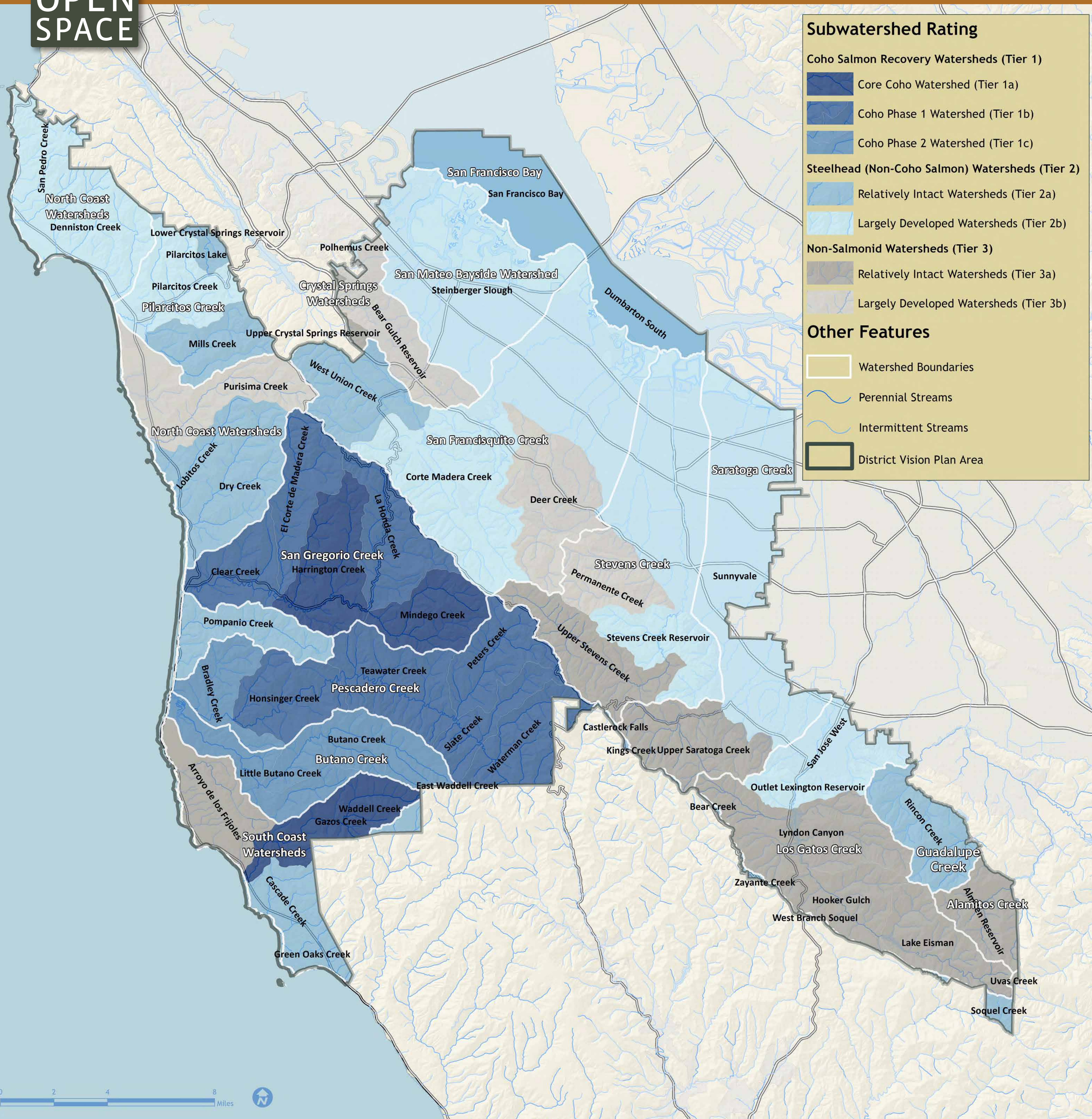
Category	Current Conditions/Finding
<i>Trends (Continued)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The growing recognition on the part of landowners that grazing animals provide important ecosystem services may provide an opportunity to make more land available for grazing. Some ranchers also hope that at some point there might be payment for the provision of such ecosystems services.</li> <li>• Brussels sprout production is up by 78%, even though acreage is down 9%, which indicates impressive gains in yields.</li> </ul>
<i>Constraints</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water, including access to water and water supply reliability, are a big challenge especially given increasing demand.</li> <li>• There is virtually no farm labor pool on the coast primarily due to the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing for farm employees.</li> <li>• Peak season labor needs exceed local capacity.</li> <li>• Some ranchers express concern that their viability is in the hands of the District and other public landowners for whom maintaining and enhancing agricultural economic viability is not a top priority.</li> <li>• There is more demand than supply for grazing lands.</li> <li>• According to interviewees, ranch-based infrastructure, regardless of ownership, is largely degraded.</li> <li>• Fragmentation of grazing lands requires moving animals around.</li> </ul>

CULTURAL RESOURCES	
Category	Current Conditions/Finding
<i>Community Consultation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation is ongoing and includes contacting and discussing the Vision Plan with the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), descendants of Native Americans who lived in the region, and local historical societies.</li> </ul>
<i>Baseline Cultural Resources Inventory</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to better understand the variety of District cultural resources, the cultural resources consultants conducted records research to determine listed and unrecorded pre-historic and historic sites located on District lands.</li> <li>• Research revealed 62 listed cultural resources, as well as 19 unrecorded cultural sites.</li> <li>• The inventory illustrates the diversity of resources on District lands. However, the number of recorded sites is low compared to the long and diverse human history recorded on District lands, suggesting that numerous unidentified cultural resources are likely to be present.</li> </ul>
<i>Interpretation Opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural resources on District lands provide an opportunity for public education and interpretation. The cultural resources consultants recommend the following:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is more important to protect and preserve cultural sites over providing interpretation opportunities to the public, as archaeological sites are at more risk of damage by direct interpretation.</li> <li>- Prior to implementing interpretive programs, consultation with cultural resources specialists and descendants of local communities should take place.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The following are general locations and site types that provide good interpretive opportunities with minimal exposure to damage or destruction.                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Mt. Umunhum</i> - part of the Ohlone creation story; aids in interpreting Native American cosmology; former Almaden Air Force Station District</li> <li>- <i>Baylands Park</i> - opportunity to interpret monumental mounds</li> <li>- <i>Russian Ridge</i> - Silva Site provides opportunity to interpret Native American travel routes and gardens.</li> <li>- <i>Bedrock Mortar Sites</i> at La Honda and Monte Bello – These sites do not have associated deposits, and tend to be more indestructible.</li> <li>- <i>Rancho San Antonio</i> is good for interpreting foothill resource extraction and acorn harvest.</li> <li>- <i>Alma College</i></li> <li>- <i>Guadalupe Mines and town of Guadalupe</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>





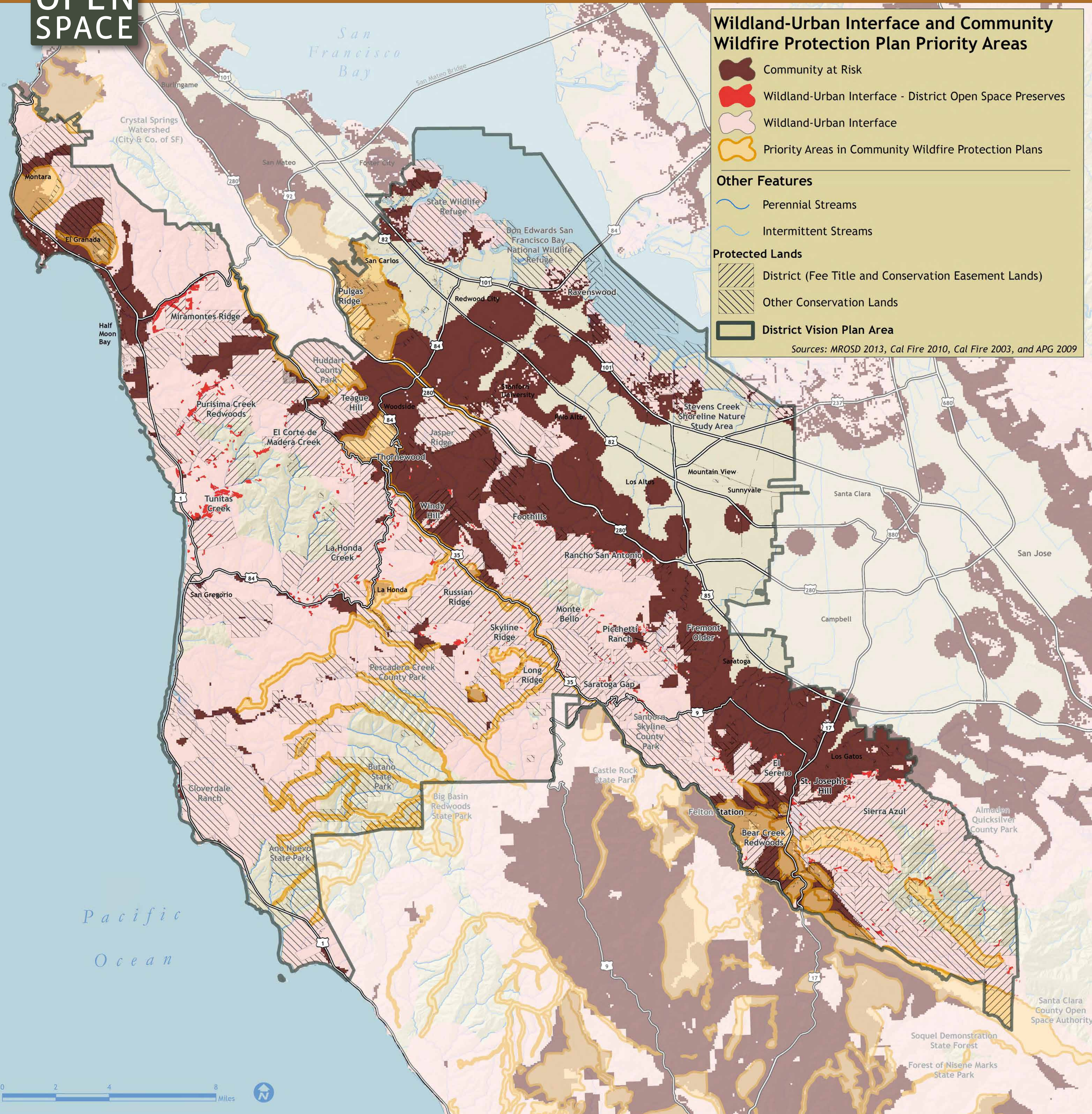
# Attachment 2: Subwatershed Rating







# Attachment 3: Wildland-Urban Interface and Community Wildfire Protection Plan Priority Areas



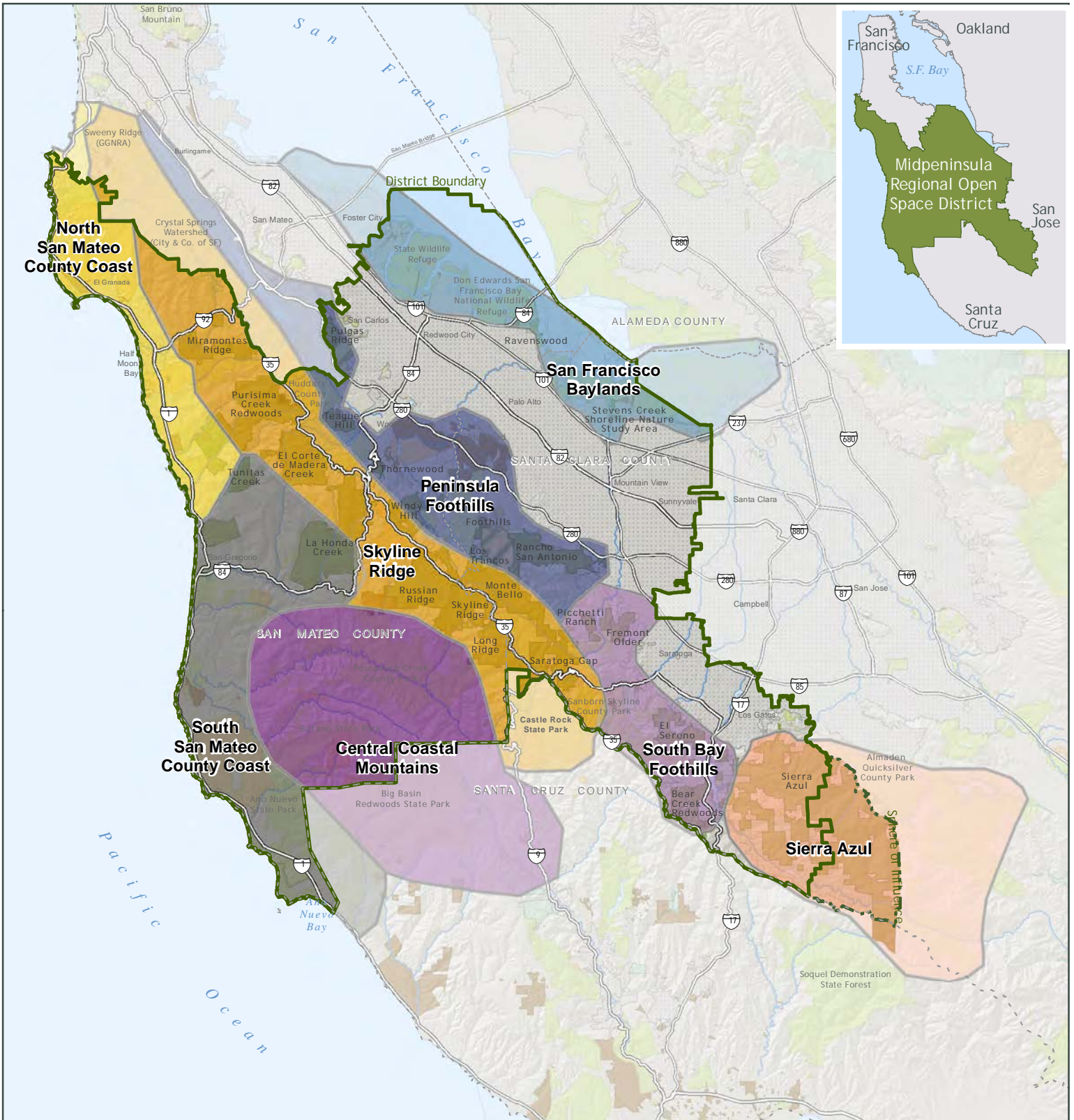




# Attachment 4: Areas of Potential Climate Resiliency







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### Attachment 5: Open Space Subregions

- |  |                              |  |  |
|--|------------------------------|--|--|
|  | Central Coastal Mountains    |  | MROSD Preserves                          |
|  | North San Mateo County Coast |  | Other Protected Open Space or Park Lands |
|  | Peninsula Foothills          |  | Land Trust                               |
|  | San Francisco Baylands       |  | Watershed Land                           |
|  | Sierra Azul                  |  | Other Public Agency                      |
|  | Skyline Ridge                |  | Private Property                         |
|  | South Bay Foothills          |  | Developed Land                           |
|  | South San Mateo County Coast |  | MROSD Boundary                           |
|  |                              |  | MROSD Sphere of Influence                |

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
(MROSD)



July, 2013  
Miles 0 2.75 5.5




While the District strives to use the best available digital data, this data does not represent a legal survey and is merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.





Attachment 6: Scenic Resources

Land Ownership

-  MROSD Preserve
-  Other Protected Open Space or Lands
-  Trusts, Private Watershed Lands, & Conservation Easements
-  Other Public & Institutional Lands
-  Private Property

-  Scenic State Highway
-  Scenic County Corridors
-  Scenic State Corridors

Scenic Resources Identified by MROSD Staff

-  Scenic Viewpoints/Areas
-  Scenic Trails/Roads

