



MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

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DISTRICT AWARDS GRAZING LEASE AT SKYLINE RIDGE PRESERVE

-- Cattle Grazing to Return to Former Big Dipper Ranch Area --

LOS ALTOS, CA [December 13, 2007] – The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District’s Board of Directors announced at its meeting last night the award of a grazing lease for the former Big Dipper Ranch at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve to local rancher Vince Fontana.

Mr. Fontana is a local operator with years of experience and familiarity with coastside ranching in San Mateo County, and his proposed grazing operation is consistent with the District’s resource management objectives including maintaining and enhancing the diversity of native plant and animal communities and managing vegetation fuel for fire protection. Reintroducing cattle grazing at Skyline Ridge will also further the District’s goals to help sustain the local agricultural economy and foster appreciation for the region’s rural agricultural heritage. In October 2007, the District Board of Directors adopted an amendment to the Comprehensive Use and Management Plan for the Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve to reintroduce grazing on the Preserve.

The former Big Dipper Ranch encompasses 720 acres. About 240 acres of land in and around the ranch is rolling hillside grasslands, which have been grazed by cattle beginning in the 1920s. The grazing season will typically run from February through the end of June, and the cattle will be monitored and rotated between pastures to enhance range conditions and promote growth of native wildflowers and grasses. The grazing lease will run for a five-year term, with the possibility of extending the lease an additional five years.

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Created by voters more than 35 years ago, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has successfully protected and managed over 55,000 acres of open space. The public enjoys the District’s diverse and beautiful preserves 365 days a year. The District is an independent, non-enterprise, California special district whose mission is to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.
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