

La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Master Plan Workshop #2 Summary

On December 6, 2004, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District held the second in a series of community workshops as part of the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Master Plan. The Master Plan will define the long-term vision for public use and access to the 2,042-acre Preserve, and will provide management guidelines for the Preserve's natural resources and facilities.

Approximately 50 people attended Workshop #2. According to a show of hands, roughly half of the attendees had been at Workshop #1, and about half were new to the Master Plan workshop process. The workshop began with roll call and an introduction by Deane Little, Chair of the MROSD Use and Management Committee. Next, Matt Freeman of the MROSD briefly reviewed the District's mission and its goals in developing a Master Plan for the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. Then David Early of Design, Community & Environment, the lead consultant for the Master Planning process, gave a brief overview of the Master Plan process and reviewed the evening's agenda.

David Early summarized a number of issues that will be addressed in the Master Plan:

- The Master Plan will identify potential trail connections to surrounding properties, including the Driscoll Ranch to the south, a potential segment of the Bay Ridge Trail, and possible alignments for both north-south and east-west trails traversing the Preserve itself.
- There will likely be no change in the current 10-car permitted limit for parking at the Allen Road entrance. This is a private road and the District has made a commitment to the area's residents to bring in no more than 10 round-trips per day.
- The Master Plan will implement the District's mission to protect and restore sensitive resources and special-status species, through a variety of strategies including educational opportunities, resource conservation areas, fuel management, and management of invasive and exotic species.
- The Master Plan will also incorporate specific measures to protect water quality, with a particular focus on preventing or minimizing erosion and siltation in Preserve creeks.

To provide context for planning future trail use, David Early explained the District's existing Trail Use Policy for La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (as well as six other District Preserves), which was adopted by the District's Board of Directors in 2000. This policy states that the Preserve's trails will be used for solely for hiking and equestrian use; however, bicycle use will be considered on regional trails—such as the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

Following the presentation, workshop participants broke up into seven groups to review and discuss options for addressing dog access, equestrian use, staging areas, grazing issues, protection of sensitive resources, and use of historic structures on the Preserve. As at Workshop #1, each group was led by a trained facilitator from the consultant team or the District. Facilitators recorded their group's policy suggestions on large sheets of paper. After 45 minutes of small group discussion, participants reconvened as a large group and heard seven "reports back" by one spokesperson selected from each group.

Small Group Results

There was a strong consensus among the seven groups about several issues: Specifically, all groups favored some limited amount of on-leash dog access, and a smaller number of groups suggested allowing off-leash dogs in fenced areas only. In addition, all groups supported reintroducing grazing to the Preserve, but also cautioned that it should be carefully managed to avoid impacts to sensitive resources such as riparian areas. All groups also agreed that equestrian use of Preserve trails would be appropriate, and also equestrian use should be limited to certain trails and/or seasons to avoid conflicts with hikers and damage to wet or steep trails. Another area of broad agreement was the desire to see the restoration and use of the Log Cabin, although groups suggested different uses ranging from a hikers' hut to an environmental education center. All groups expressed a desire for a north-south trail connection within the Preserve, and two groups also specifically identified the need for an east-west connection. Finally, there was general consensus among the groups that the District should offer minimal signage or information about the locations of sensitive areas such as the albino redwoods or Native American sites on the Preserve, in order to prevent damage or vandalism.

Regarding potential staging area locations along Highway 84, the Red Barn and/or Gate LH 07 emerged as the most feasible locations if improvements were made. However, other groups had strong concerns about the safety of both of these locations.

Mr. Early summarized the small group feedback and described the next steps in the Master Plan process. During December and January, the consultant team will review the input from the community workshops and will analyze this information in conjunction with the Preserve's natural resources to develop Master Plan alternatives. These alternatives will be presented at a future community workshop, to be held in the Spring. In response to a request from workshop participants, the District will schedule a walking tour of the northern part of the Preserve some time in the spring of 2005. Interested workshop participants signed up for the tour during the workshop, and other interested individuals should contact Matt Freeman at (650) 691-1200.