

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

OPEN SPACE VIEWS

Coastside Protection Program

Preserve Spotlight

St. Joseph's Hill Open Space Preserve

A Historic Partnership to Protect the Agricultural Heritage of the Coast

San Mateo County Farm Bureau Throws Support Behind Grand Preservation Effort



The San Mateo coastside is at risk of losing the precious rural and agricultural heritage that makes the coast such a special place to live and work. Inappropriate development and sprawl threaten

to increase traffic congestion, worsen air and water quality, and destroy the natural heritage and scenic beauty of our coastside. To local farmers who have harvested crops and formed the backbone of the community here for multiple generations, unchecked development also threatens scarce agricultural land on the coast.

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's proposal to protect the rural and agricultural heritage of the San Mateo coastline received a major boost in January when the San Mateo County Farm Bureau endorsed the District's *Coastside Protection Program*.

"The District's *Coastside Protection Program* will benefit and help preserve agricultural operations," said George Armanino, San Mateo County Farm Bureau president. "We look forward to working with our partners at the District to protect agriculture's physical

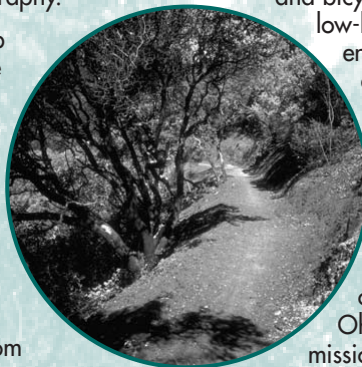
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Photo above: Artichokes. Photos on right are St. Joseph's Hill Open Space Preserve. MROSD Archives.

Although small in acreage at 268 acres (the fourth smallest of the District's 25 open space preserves), St. Joseph's Hill Open Space Preserve is big on views, variety, and history. The District ranger who is assigned this preserve and regularly patrols the area says "hill" is a good name for the preserve because it accurately reflects the topography.

A distinctive scenic backdrop to the Town of Los Gatos, the preserve's four miles of often steep trails wind its visitors toward the top of the preserve. From many trails at the preserve, visitors can enjoy views of the District's El Sereno and Bear Creek Redwoods Preserves, Lexington Reservoir, and the impressive Sierra Azul mountain range. From the eastern edge of the preserve, atop the hilltop vista of 1,253-foot St. Joseph's Hill, panoramic views of Santa Clara Valley can be seen, including views of Mt. Umunhum, Mt. Hamilton, Oakland, and San Francisco on a clear day.

St. Joseph's Hill also offers an interesting variety of recreational opportunities and environments. With the exception of the hiking-only Flume Trail, all of the preserve's trails are multi-use and are popular among hikers, runners, bicyclists, folks with dogs, and parents with heavy duty strollers (jogger-type). Although less used by equestrians, the preserve is also open to horses. There are a number of regional trails that provide access to St. Joseph's Hill and other nearby open space areas. Santa Clara County Park's Los Gatos Creek Trail provides a connection



from the City of San Jose directly into the Town of Los Gatos. From there, the Jones Trail connects the Town's Novitiate Park to St. Joseph's Hill, then to the County's Lexington Reservoir Park. The Serpentine Trail loop, lined with striking manzanita, and the Brothers Bypass loop are also popular with runners and bicyclists. In contrast to the dry, low-lying shrubs of the chaparral environment, the preserve also dons lush oak woodlands near the steep slopes and canyons.

The preserve and surrounding Los Gatos Creek area are also rich in history, and home to a colorful cast, including native Ohlone people, California mission founders, the Jesuits, and early settlers such as "Mountain Charley" McKiernan. For more information on the history of the area, refer to *Ghost Towns of the Santa Cruz Mountains*, by John V. Young, Western Tanager Press, Santa Cruz, California, 1984.



The purchase of St. Joseph's Hill was a joint project between the District and the Town of Los Gatos. Free copies of the St. Joseph's Hill trail brochure are available at the trailhead, or can be downloaded from the District's website at

www.openspace.org. For additional information, please contact the District at 650-691-1200, or info@openspace.org.

Skyline Ridge Tree Farm Restoration

The District is restoring a 14-acre area of a former Christmas tree farm on Skyline Ridge Preserve, in keeping with its goals to "protect and restore the natural environment."

The restoration plan calls for gradually removing the trees and replanting the area to achieve a natural mixed evergreen forest which will provide additional wildlife habitat, and protect Horseshoe Lake's water quality.

Restoration of the area began in summer 2003, when the District's Skyline field staff removed four acres of trees and repaired erosion gullies near the preserve's equestrian staging area. The regeneration process began in fall 2003, with the planting of oak acorns and native grass seed. The removal and replanting process will continue until the restoration plan is complete.

Two areas of the original Christmas tree farm continue to be privately operated under a lease agreement with the District.



View of the Tree Farm and Horseshoe Lake at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve



District Rangers Participate in Boy Scout Troop Resolution Plane Crash Commemoration



On November 22, District rangers from the Skyline field office participated in San Mateo Boy Scout Troop

42's *Resolution* plane crash commemorative outing at El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve. The *Resolution*, a DC-6 commercial airplane, was on its final leg of a flight from Sydney, Australia to San Francisco when it crashed into rugged and remote Corte Madera Canyon in October 1953. This tragedy, which claimed the lives of eight crew members and eleven passengers, including world-renown concert pianist William Kapell of New York, is still the worst aviation disaster in San Mateo County's history. Fifty years after this event, more than a dozen boy scouts from Scout Troop 42 visited the site to pay respect and show reverence to those who lost their lives in the crash.

District rangers made a presentation to the scouts and discussed what to do in the event of a disaster, particularly in a rough-terrain scenario. The rangers brought rescue gear and a wheel litter (a backboard with a wheel) and demonstrated how the equipment works and ways to perform a rescue. They also talked about how the District's field staff would respond if a similar accident occurred today. The scouts completed their commemorative outing with a hike near the crash site, where each scout read a piece of the story detailing the *Resolution's* ill-fated journey, and observed a moment of silence. The group also reviewed current laws regarding the preservation of historic sites. The scouts in Boy Scout Troop 42 received the Historic Trails Award patch for this project.



San Mateo Boy Scout Troop 42 Pays Respect to the "Resolution" Plane Crash Victims



Tree Above "Resolution" Trail Overview Area. Commemoration Included American Flag, Wreath, Scout Poster, Photograph of William Kapell and his Biography, and District Rescue Equipment

Old Page Mill Trail at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve Repaired and Open

As a result of the 1998 El Niño storms, two major landslides occurred on the Old Page Mill Trail, which begins just below Alpine Road and descends for 1.5 miles toward the west fork of Lambert Creek, at Skyline Ridge Preserve. The 60- and 40-foot long slides left very little trail width remaining, requiring that the multi-use trail be temporarily closed to ensure the safety of District visitors. Extensive repairs and improvements were made to the area, including installing a crib wall for the large washout, enlarging a culvert, adding drainage improvements to the trail to correct rainfall flow, and building up the trail surface. With the repairs complete, thanks to FEMA funding, the trail is once again open for visitor enjoyment.

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Working for Open Space

District staff and volunteers who work to preserve and protect natural and cultural resources

By Andrew Martin, Public Affairs Intern

Equipment Mechanic Operator (EMO) Mark Casaretto is a renaissance man in the truest sense. Dressed in his forest green jumpsuit and regulation District cap, those that don't know Mark would never guess that he had once donned a chef's smock and hat while working at a series of upscale restaurants.

Mark's culinary adventures began at Cañada College in Redwood City, where he earned an associate's degree in food technology. He went on to work for three years as a chef's apprentice at the Burlingame Country Club

in Hillsborough. After his apprenticeship, Mark worked in a variety of local and international restaurants, including a couple of restaurants in Switzerland.

In 1990, Mark put cooking on the back burner and began working as a seasonal park aide at San Mateo County's Huddart Park. He was later hired on as a seasonal Open Space Technician (OST) for the District, which led to a permanent OST position in 1992. He was promoted in 1997 to his current position as an EMO for the District's Foothills area.

As an EMO, Mark is responsible for maintaining a fleet of tractors, and smaller gas-powered devices such as chainsaws, weedwackers, and generators. He also maintains District trails and fire roads, holds equipment trainings for staff, and has served on the District's safety committee for the past eight years. When asked what he likes the most about his job, Mark says he values the camaraderie of his coworkers. "We've got a good crew here," he says. "That's what I enjoy."

When he's not busy ensuring District equipment is in top-notch condition, Mark likes to spend time with his wife Paula and their kids, Emily and Tony. Their favorite activities include hunting, fishing, and visiting the family's property near Boonville in Mendocino County.



Mark Casaretto on an Excavator Finishing Work on a Culvert Installation Project



Mark Casaretto, Equipment Mechanic Operator

Coastside Protection Program

(continued from page 1)

and economic integrity on the coast, and we call upon San Mateo's Local Agency Formation Commission to approve the District's application."



The Farm Bureau, a membership organization founded in 1948 that serves the agricultural interests in San Mateo County, announced its

commitment to work cooperatively with the District on January 19 in order to "protect the economic and physical integrity of agricultural lands on the San Mateo coast."

The County's agricultural industry, which can be traced back to early Irish, Italian, Japanese, and Portuguese immigrants who grew artichokes and Brussels sprouts along the coast, contributed an estimated \$620 million to the local economy in 2001. Yet over the years, encroaching sprawl and economic conditions have compelled many local farmers to sell their land and give up a way of life that has sustained generations of families.

The *Coastside Protection Program* intends to halt this threat to coastal farming by purchasing agricultural easements—property agreements that are designed to keep land available for farming and ranching. The Farm Bureau has given its stamp of approval to this plan along with the District's pledge to sponsor legislation permanently removing the District's power of eminent domain in the Coastal Protection Area and to consult the Bureau on any proposed open space recreation and public access that could affect agricultural operations. The *Coastside Protection Program* is one of the best ways to guarantee preservation of the coast's precious agricultural land.

The Farm Bureau joins hundreds of organizations and individuals who have come forward to support the *Coastside Protection Program* since October 2003, when the District submitted its application to the San Mateo Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). The San Mateo LAFCo is expected to hold public hearings on the Program in mid-March.

Photo above: La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. MROSD Archives.

Field Notes

(continued from page 2)

Missing Belmont Hiker Found Alive by District Ranger

In January, District ranger and maintenance staff from the Skyline and Foothills field offices, in coordination with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue team, participated in an extensive search of the steep canyons of Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve for a missing Belmont woman. District staff searched the trails and surrounding areas on foot and on all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), while the Sheriff's Office responded with the air squadron, K-9 units, and mounted patrol.

District Skyline Ranger Chris Barresi found the missing woman alive, despite spending two nights in near-freezing temperatures at the preserve with little or no warm clothing, food or water. Having become disoriented and "turned around," the woman was found within a half-mile of her car walking on a single-track trail that parallels the North Ridge Trail. Barresi saw her coming up the trail, asked her name for confirmation, and wrapped her in blankets. "Two nights like that and no one was expecting to see her walk up the trail," Barresi said. She was treated at Stanford Hospital for exposure, hypothermia, and dehydration.



Skyline Ranger Chris Barresi

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

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Updates on Your Open Space District

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Outdoor Activities in open space and . . .

be sure to visit us on our web site for preserve
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Wild Things

The Hills are Aglow

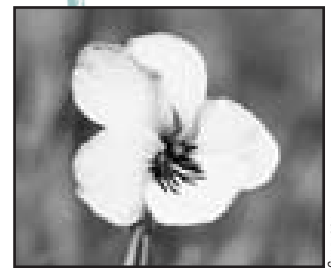
Wildflower season is about to “jump-up” around the corner. Soon the grasslands of Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve will be covered with wildflowers, including the Johnny-jump-up, sometimes called the California golden violet. *Viola pendunculata* is a beautiful wild pansy that annually sprouts up from perennial roots. The bright green, heart-shaped leaves appear on branched stems after rains begin in foothill grasslands. As early as February, a single-stalked, yellow-orange flower covers the grassy hillsides and oak woodlands of Skyline area preserves, including Monte Bello, Los Trancos, Long Ridge, and Russian Ridge. It has also been spotted as far south as the Sierra Azul Open Space



Callipe Silverspot Butterfly

Preserve, located near the Town of Los Gatos. The bright face of the flower has brown-purple stripes on the bottom petal that guide butterflies into the nectar.

The caterpillars of the Callipe silverspot butterfly (*Speyeria callippe callippe*) eat the Johnny-jump-ups. This butterfly's population has declined as its limited range on the San Francisco peninsula has decreased, and it is now listed as an endangered species. Recently, there has been a small surge in the population of the Johnny-jump-up, an additional benefit to prescribed burning at Russian Ridge Preserve. These burns assist in the removal of the dead grass thatch, which inhibits the germination of wildflowers. Although it is not known if the Callipe silverspot butterfly occurs at Russian Ridge, selective burning of the grasslands produces larger populations of spring flowers and potentially a lush habitat for butterflies.



Johnny-Jump-Up



Johnny-Jump-Ups

The mission of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District 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.”