

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

OPEN SPACE VIEWS

PRESERVE SPOTLIGHT Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve

A new staging area at the 366-acre Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve, located near the City of San Carlos, will be constructed this winter, providing enhanced preserve access. Thanks to a federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant, which covers 50% of the anticipated project cost, the District will demolish the former Hassler Health Home sewage treatment facility and construct a 20-car parking and staging area, including a wheelchair-accessible vault toilet restroom and a trailhead with District signboards.

Beginning early next year, the District will also construct three new trails totaling approximately 3.5 miles. The easy-access "connector" trail will link the new staging area with the easy-access, 0.8-mile Cordilleras Trail. The South Canyon Trail will extend from the Blue Oak Trail through the preserve's south canyon, connecting



Cindy Roessler

San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat, a state and federally listed species of concern

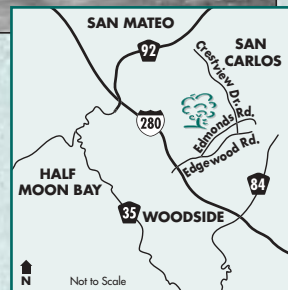
with the Polly Geraci Trail. The Ridgetop Trail will extend from the western end of the Hassler Trail, ascend to the ridge that adjoins San Francisco Water Department lands, and descend to the easternmost end of the Cordilleras Trail.

Existing highlights of Pulgas Ridge Preserve include the Cordilleras Trail. This trail leads visitors into a quiet, wooded valley and to a bench located near Cordilleras Creek, which flows with the arrival of winter rains. Across the creek, the one-mile Polly Geraci Trail ascends an oak-covered hillside to the top of the preserve and meets the paved Hassler Trail, which in turn connects to the Cordilleras Trail, creating an easy two-mile loop.

Pulgas Ridge Preserve also has wonderful biological resources. This preserve is home to nearly 100 native species of trees, shrubs, ferns, and flowers, including



Doug Vu



Western leatherwood (*Dirca occidentalis*) a special status plant species. The San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes annectens*), a state and federally listed species of concern, also makes its home here as evidenced by the large number of woodrat nests identified at the preserve.

(continued on page 12)

COASTSIDE UPDATE

Background photo Frank Crossman

VISITOR SATISFACTION SURVEY
SEE PAGE 11 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Coastside Protection Program Becomes a Reality

The "Certificate of Completion" for the District's Coastside Protection Program was recorded by the San Mateo Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) on September 7, 2004. The District's boundaries were officially extended to include San Mateo County south of the City of Pacifica to the Santa Cruz County line and from the former District boundaries west to the Pacific Ocean.



Frank Crossman

La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve

The District also recently fulfilled LAFCo's three conditions of approval of the program, including appointing an Ombudsperson, who will assist the District in maintaining positive relations with constituents and neighbors and respond to community concerns; re-districting—the process of redrawing the seven District ward boundaries in order to provide Democratic representation for coastside residents; and developing a process for amendments to the District's Good Neighbor Policy.

TEMPORARY TRAIL CLOSURES

El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve

As part of its Watershed Protection Program, the District has been implementing improvements to the trail system at El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve this past summer and fall. Work has focused on trail repairs and design upgrades, and on construction of new trail segments. In order to allow for adequate trail compaction of the new trail segments and to reduce erosion and sedimentation impacts to the upper San Gregorio Creek Watershed, **the following trails will be closed to all use for the 2004-05 winter season (usually between the months of November and April): Methuselah, Leaf, Virginia Mill, Giant Salamander, Gordon Mill, Timberview, Crossover, Lawrence Creek, Blue Blossom, Crosscut, Spring Board, Steam Donkey, and Manzanita Trails.**

SEASONAL TRAIL CLOSURES

Seasonal trail closures on all necessary preserves will be in effect this winter. Some trails may be re-opened to bicycle and equestrian use if there is enough consistent dry weather between storms, while others will



remain closed for the duration of the season. Occasionally, emergency closures may also take place as conditions require.

Although visitors may not be able to ride a favorite trail for a few months, cooperation is needed to help the District preserve vulnerable

trail surfaces and protect natural resources. When visiting the preserves this winter, or any time of the year, please look for trail closure signs and comply with all closures.

Frank Crossman

Winter runoff at Thornewood Open Space Preserve

MASTER PLANNING...

...Kicks Off at Sierra Azul and Bear Creek Redwoods Preserves

District staff have kicked-off a 15-month planning process to develop a resource protection and visitor use plan for the largest contiguous assemblage of land in District ownership. The Sierra Azul and Bear Creek Redwoods Preserves contain over a combined 18,000 acres and will be the focus of a community-based planning process resulting in a Master Plan that sets forth the future vision for these public lands.

Participation by landowners, outdoor enthusiasts, and all stakeholders, who are interested in and/or have knowledge of these preserves, will be key to this planning process. The first public workshop is slated for early 2005. District staff and its consultant team look forward to hearing from you and partnering with all stakeholders to develop a quality, balanced plan to maintain the wild nature of these lands within this highly urbanized setting.

...Kicks Off at La Honda Creek Preserve

The master planning process for La Honda Creek Preserve is underway! On November 3, 2004, the District facilitated a public workshop in La Honda to begin identifying planning issues and community interests in the preserve. This information will be incorporated into a long-range vision for the preserve. At the next meeting, the consulting firm Design, Community & Environment will discuss resource management issues and will solicit ideas from the public about possible Master Plan alternatives for the preserve. **The next workshop is scheduled for Monday, December 6, 2004 and will take place at the La Honda Elementary School Cafeteria at 7:00 P.M.** Please contact the District for more information.



John Beall

Slender False Brome, a non-native weed

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

District Responds to Eliminate Non-native Weed Slender False Brome

Slender False Brome (*Barchypodium sylvaticum*) is a non-native weed, which has been identified at Thornewood Preserve in Woodside and the surrounding neighborhood. This is the only known location in California where this non-native weed has been identified. Over time, if left uncontrolled, this perennial bunch grass native to North Africa and Eurasia is likely to eliminate native plants and displace wildlife habitat in Woodside's redwood forest. Known to spread on its own without cultivation, this weed has spread to over 10,000 acres in western Oregon.

In an effort to avoid a potentially expensive and ecologically harmful problem, the District has proactively responded by working to remove Slender False Brome from Thornewood Preserve. The District, with the assistance of the California Conservation Corps and volunteer groups, hand pulled the grass from the edges of trails at the preserve. In addition, a non-hazardous herbicide has been applied to a 31-acre area of the preserve. The herbicide has a low toxicity to humans and wildlife and low potential for soil migration and absorption by other plants.

The District is also working in conjunction with the San Mateo County Weed Management Area to educate the public and adjacent landowners about this non-native weed.

As part of its outreach program, the District encourages anyone who believes the plant may be on their property, or knows of other locations where the plant may be identified, to contact the District.

Description: As a perennial plant, Slender False Brome is bright glossy green year round and has flat drooping leaf blades, which grow clustered in a bunch. The leaf blades are approximately 1/2-inch wide and, under close inspection, a fringe of short soft hairs along the leaf edges and surrounding the leaf sheaths at the base of the plant can be seen. If you would like assistance in identifying the plant, please contact the District. 🐛

Board of Directors

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As of press time, the new District wards had not yet been determined as part of the redistricting process. The reconfigured wards will be reflected in the next issue.

L. Craig Britton ♦ General Manager ♦ **Kristi Altieri** ♦ Open Space Views Editor

WORKING FOR OPEN SPACE

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

District volunteer Leighton Nakata has lived and spent time in places such as Australia, Italy, and Germany. This place, however,—the Bay Area—remains special to Leighton. He says you develop an attachment to the land. So, when Leighton returned from a six-month stay in Italy a couple of years ago, he decided he was interested in volunteering and reviewed opportunities available at the District. Initially, Leighton participated in community outreach projects and attended some of the Preserve Partners projects.



Volunteer Leighton Nakata pulls and clears broom near the Jacques Ridge staging area at Sierra Azul Preserve

Leaders assist District field staff in leading Preserve Partners projects. Leighton welcomed the opportunity to participate in this program. Two of Leighton's most memorable group projects included working with students from Colorado visiting on their spring break on fencing at the Red Barn in La Honda and pulling broom with the California Native Plant Society (CNPS), of which Leighton is also a member. Leighton really enjoys the vegetation management projects, particularly with his additional CNPS and the Friends of Edgewood County Park volunteer experience.

"The Preserve Partners and Crew Leader programs are special," Leighton says.

"There is a camaraderie that's rare in the high-tech world—you get to know the field crew really well, you learn a lot of skills..."

"There is a camaraderie that's rare in the high-tech world—you get to know the field crew really well, you learn a lot of skills, and it makes you realize all that goes into maintaining open space." When the District began hiring seasonal open space technicians (OSTs), Leighton applied for and obtained a position



Leighton Nakata, in the role of seasonal open space technician, takes a break from a habitat restoration volunteer project

with the Skyline field crew over this past summer. Leighton describes it as a "big jump" going from volunteer to seasonal open space technician. "The work is really hard," Leighton says. "I had poison oak for something like twelve weeks straight, and there were times all I wanted to do was quit. But the District's open space technicians are professionals—they have resource or construction backgrounds and a lot of knowledge and dedication—and I wanted to finish the season with them. It was a real pleasure working with such great staff."

It was through the Preserve Partners program, where volunteers participate in outdoor service projects, including trail construction and maintenance and resource management projects, that Leighton discovered it was outdoor field work that he really enjoyed most. About this time, the District began a training for new Crew Leaders. Volunteer Crew

Coming Soon!

The District's Web Site Will Have a New Look

This past spring, the District embarked on a project to re-design and re-engineer the structure of the Web site to increase efficiency and provide District information to the public in a more "user-friendly," visually appealing, and effective manner.

Informational elements of the site will be enhanced. For example, the "Your Preserves" section will emphasize each preserve in greater detail, featuring preserve highlights, a list of activities available on-site, and engaging photographs. New features will also be found on the site, including the Photo Gallery, activity ideas for the various user groups, and open space planning projects.

Please visit www.openspace.org as the new site will be launched soon.

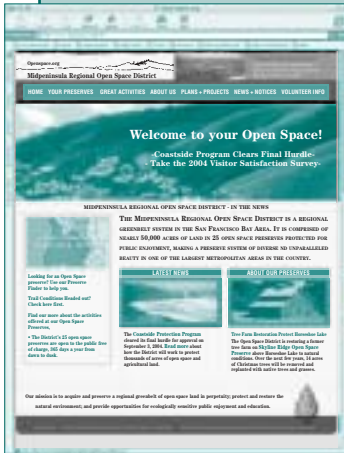
Visitor Satisfaction Survey

The District has designed a survey to enable constituents to provide feedback on a number of District issues and priorities. Gathering and analyzing this feedback will assist the District in confirming the success of and/or determining the need for adjustments to current public outreach and District programs.

Take the Visitor Satisfaction Survey on the District's Web site. Surveys can be submitted any time up until February 28, 2005. We greatly appreciate your feedback!

A highlight of Leighton's OST stint included building steps on the Soda Gulch Trail at Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve. The crew used local materials for the job, milling redwood on site from 400- to 500-year-old redwood trees that had naturally fallen. Leighton compared the high quality work on this project to work in the 1930s on Mt. Tamalpais.

Leighton was recently recognized at the District's Annual Volunteer Recognition Event and was presented with the Crew Leader of the Year Award. With the seasonal work now behind him, he misses the outdoors and the friendships he developed, and the Skyline crew shares the sentiment. Lead Open Space Technician Stan Hooper shared at the event that he would welcome Leighton back anytime. Leighton is back consulting in the high-tech world—at least until the next intriguing opportunity comes his way.



Our 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.

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

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Pull out and save your schedule of winter *Outdoor Activities* in open space and . . .
 be sure to visit us on our Web site for preserve maps, volunteer opportunities, and more.
www.openspace.org

PRESERVE SPOTLIGHT Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve (continued from page 1)

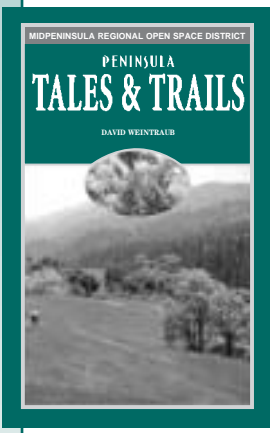
Dog Access: Leashed dogs are welcome on all trails at Pulgas Ridge Preserve. This preserve is also the only location on District lands where visitors can let their dog off-leash to explore. There is a 17.5-acre off-leash area in the center of the preserve, accessible from the Cordilleras Trail, the Polly Geraci/Hassler Trails, and the Blue Oak Trail. While you and your dog are in this area, be sure to have a leash in your possession and keep your dog under voice control at all times. Dogs must be kept on leash to and from the off-leash area.



Leashed dogs are allowed at many District preserves

The open space preserves provide permanent sanctuaries for native plant and wildlife species. As this preserve contains sensitive flora and fauna, it is important that all visitors do their part to help protect these special resources. You can help by following the basic guidelines for dog access posted at the preserves and in the District's *Dog Access Guidelines* brochure. Free copies of the trail brochure are available at the trailhead, on the District's Web site, or by contacting the District.

Peninsula Tales & Trails is Now Available



The District's first-ever trail guide book, produced in commemoration of the District's 30th Anniversary, is now available. This book is a comprehensive guide to the magnificent, unspoiled public open spaces in the San Francisco Midpeninsula area. *Peninsula Tales & Trails* features 38 selected routes in 22 of the open space preserves and

also offers fascinating facts about trail-building, mountain lions, coast redwoods, and behind-the-scenes open space preservation.

The price for *Peninsula Tales & Trails* is \$19.95 per book (not including tax). The trail guide book will be available for sale at the District office, online, and through selected bookstores nationwide.

For additional information . . .

- on any of the topics featured in this issue of *Open Space Views*, including:
 - Free trail maps
 - Master planning workshops—how you can be notified and participate
 - *Dog Access Guidelines* brochure
- please visit the District's Web site: www.openspace.org, or call 650-691-1200.