

# Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

# OPEN SPACE VIEWS

## PRESERVE SPOTLIGHT

## EL SERENO OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

**E**l Sereno Open Space Preserve is named for the 2,249-foot Mt. El Sereno, part of a prominent ridge located above the towns of Saratoga, Monte Sereno, and Los Gatos. A distinctive scenic backdrop to these cities, the 1,412-acre Preserve is largely characterized by chaparral habitat with some wooded areas near the creeks that traverse the preserve. Several small meadow areas also boast terrific views of Lexington Reservoir, Sierra Azul and St. Joseph's Hill Open Space Preserves, and the South Bay. Fragrant smells of the California bay laurel and common chaparral shrubs, including chamise, coyote brush, and yerba santa, often accompany the preserve's nearly six miles of wide, gradual trails open to hiking, and most to bicycling and equestrian use.

Although the "serene" Preserve has a lot to offer its visitors, providing public access and safety has been a challenge for the District since the Preserve was established. For years, public access to El Sereno had been limited to a two-vehicle roadside pullout at the end of Montevina Road. Now, the District has made progress toward providing greater public access to El Sereno Preserve and ensuring public safety. A recently approved road license agreement with preserve neighbors provides convenient walk in/ride in access to hikers and bicyclists wishing to visit the preserve from the urban fringe.



El Sereno Open Space Preserve

The District also recently purchased the 1.5-acre former Hayes property on Overlook Road. District ownership of this property has ended more than 20 years of problems associated with hindered access and



El Sereno Open Space Preserve

ensures that visitors can finally enter the preserve without difficulty. In the past, cars associated with the home located on the property were regularly parked on narrow Overlook Road, blocking access to the preserve and preventing passage of District patrol and maintenance vehicles. With the purchase of this property, the District can provide unrestricted access for District and other agency personnel, critical during medical or fire emergencies. Public safety will also increase in the area by eliminating the after-hours parties, menacing dogs off-leash, and illegal fireworks that had been associated with the property for decades. In addition, the District now has the ability to establish a ranger residence at the home on the property, which will allow for more frequent patrols of the area, after-hours call out, and increased emergency response.

The purchase of this property also includes the opportunity to develop

a trailhead and a small parking area (up to six permit parking spaces) and includes a segment of the Overlook Trail that is surrounded, in part, by the Preserve. District staff is also working to enhance the Preserve by installing directional signs at all trailheads and trail junctions, and officially naming the trails.

A trail map for El Sereno Preserve is available on the District's Web site at

[www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org), or by contacting the District office at 650-691-1200. When visiting El Sereno, please be aware the Preserve is bordered by private property. Your help in respecting the Preserve boundaries and staying on designated trails is greatly appreciated. 🦋

## SAVE THE DATE

Join the District to Celebrate Preservation of 50,000 Acres of Open Space!

Saturday, June 4, 2005  
10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Celebrate "50,000 acres in the green" at Stevens Canyon Ranch, the century-old ranch property in the Cupertino foothills that marks this significant milestone in the District's 33-year history.

Enjoy a docent-led hike along the existing ranch roads, learn about the rich history of the area, and meet District staff and Board members. Lunch will be provided.

**Directions:** Guests will be shuttled to the event site. On-site parking is not available; event access will be provided by shuttle only.

Parking will be available at Stevens Creek County Park in the Sycamore parking lot. Take Interstate Highway 280 to Foothill Expressway. Follow Foothill Blvd. southwest (toward the mountains) approximately 5 miles to the Sycamore parking lot entrance on the left. (Foothill Blvd. changes into Stevens Canyon Road as it crosses McClellan Road.) Look for event parking signs.

R.S.V.P. to 650-691-2150 ext. 4. 🦋

## Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve Picchetti Winery Seismic Upgrade

This June, work will begin on the historic Picchetti Winery building, originally constructed in 1896, to comply with new seismic ordinances adopted by Santa Clara County. The District received a \$50,000 grant from the California Heritage Fund Grant Program and a \$66,000 grant from the Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission to implement improvements to the winery building, which include strengthening and anchoring the roof, walls, and floor to better carry and resist lateral forces in the event of an earthquake. Improvements will also be made to the winery entrances to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Following completion of this seismic upgrade, the District's field crew will make additional access improvements to the paths that lead to the winery to further ensure they comply with ADA standards.

## Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve



District contractor prepares to install the new vault toilet restroom at Pulgas Ridge Preserve.

## New Parking and Staging Area Just Around the Bend

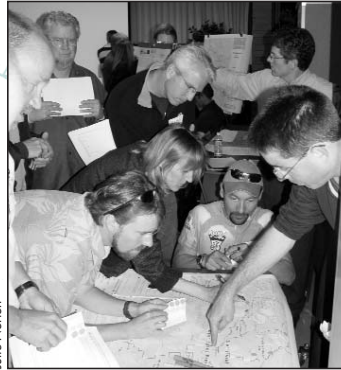
The District is putting the finishing touches on a new 23-car parking and staging area at Pulgas Ridge Preserve. Thanks to a federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant, this parking area located near Edgewood Road on the border of the City of San Carlos will be officially open and ready for public use this summer. The staging area includes a wheelchair-accessible vault toilet restroom and a trailhead with District signboards, and provides convenient access to preserve trails.



## New Trail Construction Begins

In April, the District's field crew began construction of two new trails, an easy-access "connector" trail that will link the new staging area with the easy-access Cordilleras Trail, and the South Canyon Trail that will extend from the Blue Oak Trail through the preserve's south canyon, connecting with the Polly Geraci Trail. The District will also be working with a contractor to construct the 2.4-mile Ridgetop Trail, which 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. Construction of the three new trails will total approximately 3.5 miles. The "connector" and South Canyon Trails are scheduled to be completed by fall 2005, and the Ridgetop Trail by spring 2006.

## Sierra Azul & Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves Master Planning Update Huge Turnout for First Public Workshop



Workshop participants review and comment on preserve maps.

The District held its first public workshop for the Sierra Azul-Bear Creek Redwoods Master Plan project on April 4, 2005 with more than 100 members of the public in attendance. The workshop focused on the exchange of information with the public, explaining the master planning process, and presenting background data on each preserve. The public provided their input by describing what they've seen, and where they enter and travel within the preserves. The next public workshop is tentatively scheduled for summer 2005. The District will present summaries and maps highlighting key challenges and opportunities for land

management and future visitor use based upon input and property information collected to date.

## Public Site Tours Available

To help prepare the public for upcoming discussions, the District has scheduled a limited number of site tours through some of the closed areas of the preserves in late May and early June. **Space on the tours is limited and is available on a first-call, first-serve basis.** For tour details, including dates, and information on how to reserve your space on a tour, visit the project Web site at the address noted below.

## We want to hear from you!

If you haven't shared your ideas or suggestions with District staff yet, visit the project Web site to provide your comments via the Master Plan User Questionnaire.

For more information on the Sierra Azul-Bear Creek Redwoods Master Plan project, please visit the project Web site at [www.openspace.org/plans\\_projects/sierra\\_azul\\_bear\\_creek\\_mp.asp](http://www.openspace.org/plans_projects/sierra_azul_bear_creek_mp.asp).

## BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

The District's Board and staff are committed to establishing and maintaining good relations with residents and neighbors. As a good neighbor, the District makes efforts to provide: public access, property signs, public participation and information, and education. The District is in the process of updating its Good Neighbor Policy, a policy that addresses neighbor relations. The policy currently in effect was first adopted in 1988 and then amended in 1996. When the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) approved the Coastside Protection Program, one of the conditions was to update this policy for the entire, newly enlarged District.

District staff and Board members are meeting with various neighborhood groups and associations. Stay tuned for information about three facilitated public workshops to be held in fall 2005. After hearing from the public, the District's Legislative, Finance, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) will meet and review the input received and will then draft policies to be presented to the full Board for their consideration. Our goal is to provide extensive opportunity for the public to be involved in shaping the revised policies, and we want to hear from you. Write a letter, send an email to [info@openspace.org](mailto:info@openspace.org), or complete the Good Neighbor Policy survey at [www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org). It is our hope to make it easy for you to actively contribute and our desire to work together cooperatively in the future.

## WORKING FOR OPEN SPACE

DISTRICT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WHO WORK TO PRESERVE  
AND PROTECT NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Michael Bankosh

Foothills Area Maintenance & Resource Supervisor



Kristi Altieri

Foothills Area Maintenance & Resource  
Supervisor, Michael Bankosh

The District's maintenance staff is charged with the important task of ensuring the public has a safe and enjoyable visit to open space. To help support the growing needs of maintaining 50,000 acres of open space and to better organize the field crew's involvement with the District's resource management program, the District recently created a new position entitled Maintenance & Resource Supervisor for each of the two field offices.

Michael Bankosh recently assumed the Maintenance & Resource Supervisor position for the Foothills area. Michael has been with the District for about ten years, working his way from a seasonal to a permanent Open Space Technician (OST), then to the lead, and now to his supervisory role. The Maintenance & Resource Supervisor is distinct from the Maintenance & Construction Supervisor in that it will focus on resource related projects such as vegetation management and site restoration, as opposed to larger capital improvement projects. The position will also provide field support for Deer Hollow Farm located at Rancho San Antonio Preserve and for volunteer projects at Foothills area preserves. Michael will supervise two OSTs, one lead OST, the Farm Maintenance Worker, and several seasonal employees.

Michael became involved in the District's resource management program early in its history, working on selective removal of non-native eucalyptus trees at Pulgas Ridge Preserve. He remembers feeling excited about the program and motivated by the enthusiasm demonstrated by other District staff, and looks forward to the opportunity to impart some of that same excitement and motivation to other field crew staff. One of Michael's goals as the Maintenance & Resource Supervisor is to create a framework for the program to grow successfully, while ensuring staff have the opportunity to contribute their ideas in a meaningful way and one in which they feel a sense of ownership for projects in which they are involved.

Although coordinating resource management projects in the field for the crew is a fundamental part of his job, ongoing

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## A MESSAGE FROM CONGRESSMAN MIKE HONDA

Greetings Friends,

As a preserver of our local open space lands, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District recognizes the need to protect this precious resource in perpetuity and to provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public access and enjoyment.

A project I have been interested in is the cleanup of the former Almaden Air Force Station atop Mt. Umunhum, located in the District's Sierra Azul Preserve. I have memories of visiting the summit as a college student in the 1960s and had the opportunity to tour the site again in 2001. Mt. Umunhum offers spectacular panoramic vistas, from Monterey Bay to Mt. Diablo to San Francisco, and provides a place of extraordinary perspective for South Bay visitors, only a few miles from San Jose, the nation's 11th largest city. In 2001 and 2002, I worked in collaboration with the Open Space District and other local officials to identify cooperative opportunities to obtain a cleanup to open the mountaintop to the public for low-intensity recreational use. In 2002, our offices were successful in including language identifying Mt. Umunhum as a top priority project in the Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) program. This year, as the Open Space District redoubles its efforts to identify federal funding and obtain a line-item appropriation for the cleanup, I remain interested in their efforts and look forward to remaining informed of their progress.

Our open space is much like all natural resources, limited. Recently, the House of Representatives voted to approve H.R. 6, the Energy Policy Act of 2005. I voted against this legislation for several reasons.

Many of the provisions in this bill not only endanger natural resources such as our public open spaces and wildlands, but they also accelerate industry's access to them for mining, drilling, and extraction. One such provision would exclude drilling fluids, used in the exploration and extraction of oil and natural gas, from being considered drinking water pollutants under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Protecting our water supply is one of the primary reasons that previous energy bills have stalled or been held up by Members of Congress.

Under another provision of H.R. 6, the steward of our federal lands, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), would be stripped of its ability to properly review drilling permits on public lands by limiting their review time to only ten days. As a local land steward, the Open Space District recognizes the need for proper review and use of public lands.

While the above threats may cause alarm, they are only part of a bill and a broader policy agenda that fundamentally seeks to shift the use of our public lands from conservation and preservation to the wholesale auction of our precious and limited natural resources. I will continue to fight in Congress for protection and preservation of open space lands, to defeat legislation such as H.R. 6, and to identify a long-term solution for our energy needs.

Regards,

Congressman Mike Honda  
Member of Congress, 15<sup>th</sup> District

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Pull out and save your schedule of summer *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](http://www.openspace.org)

## WORKING FOR OPEN SPACE (continued from page 11)

maintenance of District lands, including brushing and repairing trails, building fence and retaining walls, and general facility maintenance, is equally important. Michael looks forward to the challenge of new projects, from site review to determining equipment needs, ensuring the field crew has what they need to get the job done, incorporating fire training for staff when reducing fuel load

is needed, and collaboratively working with the Maintenance & Construction Supervisor and field crew.

During his 10-year tenure with the District, some of Michael's favorite memories include working with trail building contractor Gene Sheehan on construction of the Zinfandel Trail (Picchetti Ranch Preserve), and the Cora Older and Seven Springs Trails (Fremont Older Preserve).



Michael works to clear a downed tree.



Michael works with trail building contractor to realign the Toyon Trail at Fremont Older Preserve.

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.