



# VIEWS

QUARTERLY NEWS ON OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION AND PROGRAMS • SUMMER 2008

## DISTRICT UPDATES

### District Selects New General Manager

The District's Board of Directors selected Stephen "Steve" E. Abbors as the District's new general manager, replacing Craig Britton who retired from the District in April. The Board sees Mr. Abbors as an outstanding person to carry forward the vision and mission of the District, and the Board and staff look forward to the future under his leadership.

"I am delighted and deeply honored to have this opportunity to work with the Board of Directors and staff of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and neighboring communities to carry forward the vitally important mission of preserving, protecting, and enjoying our environment," said Steve Abbors, newly appointed District General Manager. Steve has focused on weaving ecological principles into land management planning and further says, "as the impacts of climate become more apparent, protection and restoration of the land that supports all life by providing air, water, food, and other vital ecosystem services will become increasingly important to all of us."

*(continued on page 2)*

## PRESERVE SPOTLIGHT

### Monte Bello Open Space Preserve—The Beautiful Mountain

As its Italian name implies, Monte Bello Open Space Preserve is a "beautiful mountain." This 3,080-acre Preserve is rich with both history and natural diversity.

Monte Bello is home to the 2,800-foot Black Mountain. The Spanish explorers called Monte Bello Ridge and its high point Black Mountain the Sierra Morena, or dark mountain. Early American settlers to this area named one of their towns Mountain View because they had a view of Black Mountain and were "deeply affected by the loftiness and beauty of this great rock looming against western sky."<sup>1</sup>

George Morell, a wealthy newspaper publisher, originally owned the Black Mountain Ranch property. "Nature in the raw" is what led Mr. Morell to buy Black Mountain Ranch. Following is an excerpt from his essay, "History of Black Mountain and Monte Bello Ridge," written in 1959:

*This is a very primitive area, kept so because of its inaccessibility either by road or trail. On the Morell, Winship, Johnson properties no destructive mark of fire or axe can be found. The land remains much as it was a century ago. Wildlife abounds. A magnificent coyote chorus greets the rising moon from a bald promontory. Coons, wild cats and foxes seem to be everywhere.*

*Mountain lions have been in residence during most of the years since 1940, when I bought the ranch. Last year a female raised two cubs and exercised them almost daily within a quarter mile of the ranch buildings. It is hoped that the primitiveness of this core area, the Johnson, Winship, Morell ranches may be preserved. Wilderness areas such as this are becoming more rare and consequently more precious each year.*

*(continued on page 13)*

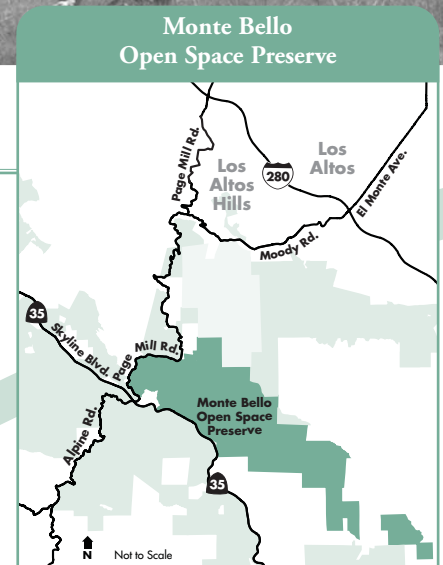
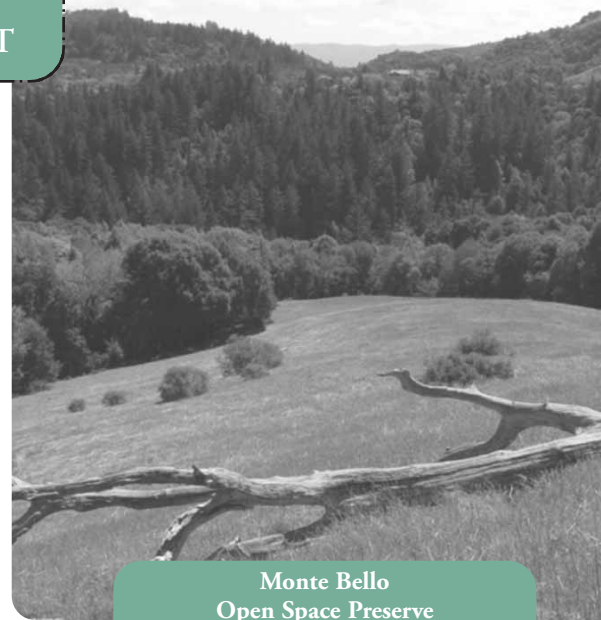


Photo above: Monte Bello Open Space Preserve

*Recommended Hike or Ride, and Place to Stay—page 13*

## FIELD NOTES

### Trail Work at Fremont Older

Two trail improvement projects are scheduled for summer 2008 at Fremont Older Open Space Preserve. The first project, to reroute a steep portion of the Woodhills Trail near Hunters Point, will be implemented in phases throughout the summer. The second project, scheduled for late summer, will replace a culvert adjacent to Regnart Road. Temporary trail closure signs will be posted at the project location and information will also be available on the District's Web site.



Fremont Older Open Space Preserve

Stretcher Smith

### Leaf Trail—Now Open

A new 1/2-mile, single-track section of the Leaf Trail that reroutes a badly eroding former logging road is open. The new section connects the North Leaf Trail to the South Leaf Trail on the western edge of the Preserve; the former alignment is now closed for restoration as part of the Watershed Protection Program for the Preserve. Enjoy the new trail this summer.

### District Launches Resource Management Grant Program

#### Call for Proposals

The District is pleased to announce the opportunity for individuals, students, teachers, groups, and/or organizations to submit proposals for grant funding consideration.

The District's Resource Management Grant Program supports research and education to further its mission of protecting and restoring the natural environment, while also advancing scientific understanding of natural processes for the greater scientific community. A key goal of the grant program is to develop and strengthen local partnerships with researchers from academic institutions and non-profit organizations.

#### Annual Budget

Funding for any single project may not exceed \$5,000 per year. Multi-year projects will be considered, however, funding may not exceed \$25,000 over five consecutive years.

#### How to Apply

Contact Grant Coordinator Gretchen Laustsen at 650-691-1200, or visit the District's Web site [www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org) to obtain grant application materials and additional information.

District staff will begin reviewing proposals on Friday, June 27, 2008. 🌿

### El Corte de Madera Creek Trail Updates

#### El Corte de Madera Creek Trail

The eastern segment of the Preserve's namesake trail, the El Corte de Madera Creek Trail, will be temporarily closed in late summer for stream channel restoration and new bridge construction. The trail is expected to reopen by late fall 2008.

#### Giant Salamander Trail

This trail is scheduled to undergo a road-to-trail conversion and stream channel restoration along its western section. These trail upgrades will be complemented by a series of new bridges. The trail, temporarily closed since fall 2007, is expected to reopen in late summer 2008.

Before heading out on the trails this summer, please see the Trail Conditions page at [www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org) for a complete listing of trail conditions, seasonal closures, and periodic updates, or call the Trail Conditions Hotline at 650-691-2150 (enter Option 3) or the District office at 650-691-1200.

## DISTRICT UPDATES *(continued from page 1)*

Steve Abbors began his professional career as a naturalist with the East Bay Regional Park District, and in 1984 accepted a position with the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). Since that time, he's served in various capacities at EBMUD, most recently as Manager of Watershed and Recreation. Bringing a wealth of experience, knowledge, and a lifelong interest in the natural environment to the position of general manager, Steve will largely be responsible for day-to-day operations of the District and efforts to continue the legacy of nearly 56,000 acres of unspoiled open space preserved in the Midpeninsula region.

A graduate of California State University, East Bay, Steve holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in Biological Sciences. Away from work, he is an avid hiker, having walked over 1,300 miles this past year. He has a lifelong interest in plants and animals and their relationship to the environment and has studied them extensively in the field throughout California and the southwest

deserts. He is an amateur nature photographer, and also grows grapes and makes his own wine. Although an East Bay native, Steve and his wife recently moved closer to the District offices; they have two grown daughters.

"I am particularly pleased to be part of the Open Space District for personal reasons as well," Steve Abbors shares. "The landscape and the people who live and work on it reflect important aspects of my own family background, as my family has a long history of farming and connection to the California coast." 🌿



Steve Abbors, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District General Manager

*(continued on page 14)*

## WORKING FOR OPEN SPACE

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

### Kristi Britt, Public Affairs Specialist

As part of the District's commitment to the community, the Public Affairs department is expected to be responsive to the public and a reliable source for information. As the Public Affairs Specialist, Kristi Britt has a lead role in ensuring the accuracy, pertinence, and timeliness of that information.

Kristi graduated from San Jose State in 1993 with a bachelor's of science degree in Business Administration, with a concentration in marketing, and held two jobs out of college before coming to the District. The first of these jobs was a "one-dimensional"—year stint working in inside sales for a computer hardware company. Moving closer toward her interest in marketing, Kristi then worked as a marketing associate for a company that produced particle size analyzers. While the type of work was more to her liking, the "personal connection" with the company she worked for, and the people she worked with, was missing.

Kristi joined the District in 1996 after she happened across a newspaper recruitment ad for a Public Affairs Assistant. Being native to the area and having an affinity for nature, the transition to working for an Open Space District came easily. When hired, Kristi was one of only two people in the department. Sometime after the 5-year mark and following a long gap in department managers, it became apparent that Public Affairs was growing and, after going through a competitive hiring process, Kristi was selected as the new Public Affairs Specialist.

In her position, Kristi oversees the writing and production of most of the



*Kristi Britt, Public Affairs Specialist*

District literature and print material, including preserve maps, brochures, and the *Open Space Views* newsletter. She especially enjoys some of the more creative aspects of her job, and notes the most significant and personally meaningful project she has worked on to date is the creation of the District's only trail guide book, *Peninsula Tales and Trails*, alongside author David Weintraub. In addition to being the liaison for both the writer and publisher, Kristi selected and captioned every photo in the book, reviewed the manuscript prior to it going to the publisher, checked all facts, and wrote the Preface. Kristi says she was fortunate for this "once in a lifetime opportunity."

Kristi's coworkers describe her as both professional and approachable with an engaging smile, so it is fitting that she is the person you will most likely find leading dedication events or other public gatherings that might include a mayor, a ribbon, or a plaque. Currently you will find her in the midst of the implementation process of the District's new logo, another challenging, involved, and yet personally rewarding project.

Kristi credits her parents and her grandfather, whom she refers to as a "refined outdoorsman," for her love of nature and the outdoors. She recalls summers spent at Lake Shasta with her family where her grandpa would lead them on exploration hikes to see what they could find. When Kristi puts down her dreaded red editing pen and goes home, she is greeted by her husband Bill, their two black cats Willow and Shadow, and two dogs, Dagny, a border collie, and River, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. 🌿

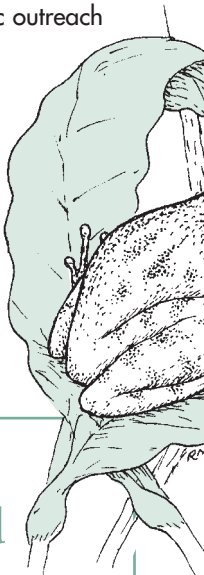
## 2008 User Profile Survey

We are requesting your assistance by participating in an on-line District survey that will help the District learn more about its constituents and preserve visitors, and will further explore the trends and activities of the increasingly diverse Bay Area. Your participation in this survey will provide District staff with valuable data and usable knowledge about its visitors, and will aid the District in guiding its public outreach and programs.

Take a moment to complete the 2008 User Profile Survey on the District's Web site:

[www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org).

The information collected will remain confidential. 🌿



## Automobile Break-Ins and Visitor Safety

There has been a recent increase in the number of automobile break-ins at various District preserves, including Rancho San Antonio, Purisima Creek Redwoods, and Skyline Ridge. District rangers caution visitors to lock their vehicles and store valuables out of sight or take them along on the trail.

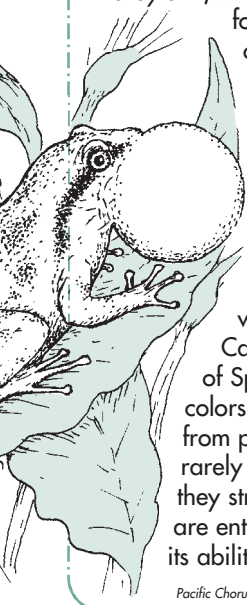
We appreciate your help in keeping these areas safe. Please report any incident of theft or other suspicious activity by calling the 24-hour Ranger Dispatch at 650-903-6395. 🌿

The District's 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.

## Summertime at the Ponds

We typically think about ponds and aquatic critters during the winter and spring months when the rain is falling and adult newts and frogs are moving. Summer is also a crucial time for young life in ponds, and presents a good opportunity to discuss the “who’s who” of this natural community as well as the “do’s and don’ts.”

Summertime is when the spring-born eggs and larvae must race against the dry season changes in the pond in order to grow to adulthood. By early summer, the chubby tadpoles of the threatened (U.S. Endangered Species Act) red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*) will be eating and hiding among pond vegetation for four to five months, and eventually be seen feeding on the pond surfaces and banks. From early to mid-summer, the tadpoles of the pacific chorus frog (*Pseudacris regilla*)—formerly known as the pacific treefrog—will be growing and hanging out by edges of the ponds. Sometime around the middle of summer, the female western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) will amble away from the ponds and head upland to bury its eggs, a process that will result in hatchlings in about 12 weeks. In late summer, the knife-finned larvae of the California newt (*Taricha torosa*), a California Species of Special Concern, will begin showing its magnificent colors of browns, yellows, and oranges as it transitions from pond-life to spend more time on land. Although we rarely see the small aquatic youths of these species, as they struggle with their summer of transformation, they are entirely dependent on the safety of pond water and its ability to support micro-organisms for their food.



Pacific Chorus Frog, Illustration by Bob Moncrieff



Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve

One of the first rules of thumb when visiting any natural resource is to not upset the habitat or any of the creatures within. One potential disturbance to the stability of pond life, and an all too familiar sight, is the well-intentioned individual collecting critters for later discovery and education at home. Unfortunately, most pond organisms will not survive in a home setting and some, including the California newt, are poisonous making them unsafe for handling.

On the flip side of collecting is ‘dumping,’ or introducing creatures where they don’t belong. Several familiar species found at District ponds, including the predatory largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) and green sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*), are actually non-native and pose a significant threat to native life. Over time, these unwelcome fish consume inhabitants such as frogs and their eggs, considerably reducing the number of native pond species. The ‘dumping’ of exotic or pet store variety turtles and frogs is equally detrimental to the native pond community.

As you venture out this summer, if you find yourself at the edge of a pond or other water source, be aware of where your feet are situated as you stop to observe. There is life at the tip of your toes; the ground you step on may be a frog’s home or a newt’s favorite place to come to eat. 🐸

## San Mateo County’s Measure O—June 3, 2008 Ballot

Measure O is an initiative on the June 3, 2008 San Mateo County ballot to increase the sales tax by 1/8<sup>th</sup> of a cent for 25 years to secure dedicated tax-based revenues to support the parks and recreation related activities of San Mateo County, the cities located within the County, the Ladera and Highlands recreation districts, and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

The revenue, projected to raise approximately \$16 million per year (at 2002 median per capita income figures), would be allocated to jurisdictions per a formula. The revenue must be used for park and recreation related functions but each jurisdiction will have the authority to spend the funds according to their need. Funds could be spent on maintenance, operations, activities and programs, capital improvements or acquisition, and jurisdictions could vary how the money is spent over the life of the tax.

A two-thirds approval by those voting in the election is required for Measure O to pass. The estimated annual cost per person is \$18.10.

### What This Means for the District

If passed, Measure O is expected to provide approximately \$634,000 a year for 25 years to the District. Some of the projects that could be supported through this Measure include:

- Implementation of the Master Plan for La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, including design and construction of trailhead parking, restrooms, signage, and fencing.
- Development of new interpretive trails, regional trails, and trail connections, including a new section of the Bay Area Ridge Trail.
- Increasing resources for habitat restoration projects and habitat protection for endangered species such as the California red-legged frog, San Francisco garter snake, and Southwestern pond turtle.
- Protection and restoration of historic structures on open space preserves, such as the red and white barns at La Honda Creek Preserve.
- Development of a trail system in the newly purchased Mindego Ranch, a 1,047-acre property with unparalleled views, which will be incorporated into Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.

For more information about the effects of this Measure: go to the County Elections Office’s Impartial Analysis of Measure O, which can be viewed at [www.shapethefuture.org/elections/June2008/impartialanalyses\\_june08.asp](http://www.shapethefuture.org/elections/June2008/impartialanalyses_june08.asp). In addition, the District has posted the Analysis on its Web site at [www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org). 🐸

## Monte Bello Open Space Preserve

Monte Bello Preserve encompasses the upper Stevens Creek watershed; the Stevens Creek corridor is considered to be one of the finest watersheds in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The Preserve is a mixture of open grasslands with stunning canyon views and pockets of dense woodlands, with mixed evergreens. In the grassland, a visitor is likely to see raptors and turkey vultures soaring overhead, or a coyote or bobcat hunting for rodents in the fields.

only trail, are multi-use and open to hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists. Trail highlights, particularly pleasant in the summer as they incorporate welcome moments of shade, include the Stevens Creek Nature Trail, a 3-mile loop with self-guided interpretive signs along the way. The trail descends into the



Monte Bello Open Space Preserve

Karl Gohl



Monte Bello Open Space Preserve

Deane Little

forested canyon, continues along the creek, and heads back up through grasslands. The Canyon Trail, the spine of the Preserve trail system, is popular among bicyclists and equestrians. This old road descends 400 feet from Page Mill Road, where it is beautifully canopied with oak woodland, down through cool forests into Stevens Creek Canyon.

before you return via the same way you came or, for the more adventurous, take the Indian Creek Trail to the Canyon Trail. From here, head right, following the Canyon Trail all the way back to the parking area.

### Recommended Stay:

Whether visitors are looking for a stopping place on their backpacking trip from the valley to the coast, or simply looking for a relaxing local overnight stay filled with stargazing, the Black Mountain Backpack Camp is the only site on District lands where visitors can “sleep under the stars.” On clear days, campers can see beautiful sunsets and sunrises, or watch the fog roll in from the coast. Four single campsites and one group site are available for one or two overnight stays throughout the year. To make a reservation and obtain a permit, visitors must contact the District in advance. 🐾

<sup>1</sup> Essay “History of Black Mountain and Monte Bello Ridge,” written in 1959 by George Morell

The Preserve is also home to landscape features that are associated with the San Andreas fault zone. Stevens Creek follows the San Andreas Fault through the Preserve. From the vista point at the beginning of the Stevens Creek Nature Trail, views stretch for miles down the canyon to Mt. Umunhum and Loma Prieta, the site of the 6.9-magnitude “Quake of ‘89.” Along the Canyon Trail, a significant sag pond, or depression—a fault zone feature—can be admired.

Approximately 15 miles of trails are available for adventure at Monte Bello Preserve. The majority of trails, with the exception of about 1.5 miles of hiking

### Recommended Hike or Ride:

A recommended hike or ride of approximately 5 miles round trip features the Canyon Trail. From the main Monte Bello parking area, take either the multi-use or hiking only trail segments to the Canyon Trail. From Canyon Trail, take the Bella Vista Trail and the Old Ranch Trail, which will bring you to the top of Monte Bello Ridge and on to Black Mountain. Here you can pause to catch your breath, enjoy the famous views, and refuel

“Approximately 15 miles of trails are available for adventure at Monte Bello Preserve. The majority of trails are multi-use and open to hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists.”

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Stephen E. Abbors ♦ General Manager ♦ Kristi Britt ♦ Open Space Views Editor ♦ Renée Fitzsimons ♦ Outdoor Activities Editor



## Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

330 Distel Circle  
Los Altos, California 94022-1404  
Phone: 650-691-1200 • Fax: 650-691-0485  
E-mail: [info@openspace.org](mailto:info@openspace.org)  
Web site: [www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org)

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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)



### DISTRICT UPDATES *(continued from page 2)*

## The District Has a New Logo! *Open Space Views* Has a New Look

For the third time in the District's 36-year history, the District has a new logo! You can expect an updated graphic design and a consistent new look.

The original logo design was an abstract design developed to represent the then five wards of the District, each of which had an elected Board Director to represent voters in a specific geographic area. The District now has seven wards, which, among other reasons, necessitated the logo being updated.

The District's second logo, created in 1991, consisted of two separate entities that were used for different applications; one was an elongated mountain logo design with forested trees in the backdrop and the other patch design depicted a meadow in the foreground and two hawks soaring in the sky, with the foothills as a backdrop. The need for a consistent, modern brand identity drove the decision to replace the dated logo design with a new graphic image.



Recently approved by the Board, the new image is an abstracted snapshot of open space. The 'snapshot' depicts foothills or wilderness, wildlife habitat, vegetation, water, and recreational trails. The intent of the logo design is to create a symbol that captures the essence of what the District is all about: protecting and preserving the wilderness areas and wildlife habitat, while providing trails for public recreation and education. It was also important to create a symbol that people would remember and associate with 'open space.' Developing a logo from the bird's eye view (with the wing breaking the border of habitat) helps make the design memorable while simultaneously suggesting open space.

*Open Space Views* has been gently updated to incorporate the new logo and its colors into the design. The District's Annual Report (fall issue) will come to you in 4-color. Look for the new logo design in coming months on District stationery, vehicles, field staff uniforms, volunteer and docent program uniform items, giveaways, and more. 🌿