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**Public Workshop #2 Meeting Summary**  
**Sierra Azul/Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves Master Plan**

**PREPARED FOR:**

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

**SUBMITTED BY:**

EDAW and  
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## ***Appendices***

### **Appendix A: Meeting Materials**

- Agenda
- Key Contact Information
- Planning Process and Public Outreach Timeline
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Challenges and Opportunities Powerpoint Presentation

### **Appendix B: Break-Out Group Results**

- Flip Charts Recorded During Break-Out Exercise
- Maps Marked Up During Break-Out Exercise

## ***Introduction***

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is conducting a comprehensive planning process to develop a resource protection and visitor use plan for its two southernmost District Preserves.

Sierra Azul and Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves contain over 18,000 acres and are the focus of a community-based planning process to develop a Master Plan that sets forth the future vision for these lands consistent with the ecological values and mission of the District. The Plan will also establish key District policies to guide the implementation of future on-the-ground projects and clearly lay out a public use plan while maintaining the District's resource and open space protection goals. The final Master Plan and appropriate environmental documentation that meets the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements is targeted for completion in spring 2006.

The overall goal of the planning effort is to ensure that the Master Plan will:

- Develop a long-term vision for each Preserve
- Protect, restore and enhance natural, cultural and historic resources
- Provide opportunities for low-intensity recreation, interpretation, and education that are environmentally sensitive and compatible with the protection of existing uses and resources
- Maximize connections with nearby protected lands and regional trails
- Use a collaborative, community-based planning approach
- Include cooperating agencies and organizations in the planning effort, and be compatible with existing agency plans and policies
- Meet all legal, regulatory and policy requirements
- Ensure flexibility and adaptability to changing or emerging issues and opportunities.

## ***Workshop Overview***

The District held its second "Challenges and Opportunities Workshop" on Thursday, November 10, 2005 from 7:00 – 10:00 pm at the Los Gatos Neighborhood Center located at 208 East Main Street in Los Gatos, California.

The workshop was announced in the Fall 2005 Project Newsletter that was sent to over 3,000 neighbors, landowners, and stakeholders from various agencies, non-profit organizations and constituents. Notification of the workshop was also distributed in a media release and posted on the District Web site.

Approximately 100 people attended the workshop to learn the results of the resource data inventory, challenges and opportunities analysis, and to provide input for the planning process. The input received will assist the District in developing resource protection and visitor use plan alternatives for the Sierra Azul/Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves. The workshop was the second in a series of public meetings on the Master Plan.

## ***Workshop Presentation***

### **Meeting Introduction**

Pete Siemens, District Board Director and Chair of the project Ad Hoc Committee, opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees. He also introduced Board Directors Jed Cyr and Kenneth Nitz, the two other Ad Hoc Committee members who were present. Pete Siemens stressed that the Master Plan must be consistent with the District's mission statement:

*"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."*

### **Master Plan Overview**

Donna Plunkett of EDAW, the lead project consultant, provided an overview of the planning process and public participation program. Plunkett asked of the group how many had attended the last public workshop and was responded by a large display of hands. She noted that the District's Web site would continually be updated as the project progresses and serve as a source of information.

Plunkett oriented the participants to the handouts including the Agenda, Frequently Asked Questions, Key Contact Information, and Planning Process and Public Outreach Timeline, which she discussed in greater detail. The meeting handouts are located in Appendix A.

### ***District Mission as Framework***

Plunkett reiterated that the District's mission statement is the framework for the Master Plan. The Master Plan must comply with the mission; workshop

participants should keep it in focus when providing input later in the meeting.

### ***Planning Process and Timeline***

Plunkett reviewed the timeline, project milestones, and explained the level and type of public involvement at each phase. At the time of this meeting, the project is in its second quarter and the focus is to identify key plan issues, challenges, and opportunities. In the following quarter a set of alternatives will be developed that will identify implementation projects for resource protection, land management, and public access. Plunkett noted that the workshops, particularly this session, provide a great opportunity to exchange information and discuss issues and ideas that can be utilized in the development of alternatives and the final planning document.

### ***Alma College Report***

Plunkett reported that the first phase of the Alma College historic research is available tonight in report form for review at the table near the entry. She noted that the report prepared by Page and Turnbull, architects and experts in historic preservation, provides a useful research summary and early findings on the history of the Alma College site to help plan the future use and management of this location.

### ***Stakeholder Involvement Summary***

Plunkett then provided an overview of the previous public involvement that has included public comment through e-mails, the stakeholder questionnaire, as well as six land tours and four focus group meetings. She referred the group to the District's Web site for access to the latest project information or to submit a comment via e-mail. Comments can also be submitted by mail. She noted that the Stakeholder Questionnaire Results Summary that provided a snapshot of comments received in response to the Project Questionnaire as well as Comment Cards as of July 2005 was also available at the hand-outs table.

The meeting was then turned over to Ana Ruiz, Project Planner for the District.

### **Challenges and Opportunities Analysis**

Ruiz began with a PowerPoint presentation (refer to Appendix A) that provided an overview of the District's Challenges and Opportunities Analysis. She explained that challenges are issues that can hamper or preclude the ability to implement specific ideas and opportunities instead can aid, enhance, or facilitate these efforts. Ruiz stated that by considering the Challenges and Opportunities one can begin to identify what is needed

and what is possible; what natural resources need protection; what resources need enhancement and what types of recreational opportunities can be provided and where. She then asked everyone to consider how the resource data can present a challenge for one idea, but also an opportunity for another.

Ruiz explained the methodology for the analysis, discussing in detail the sensitive physical resource maps used and the key information that was extracted from each map to identify the most critical Challenges and Opportunities. Challenges mentioned include:

- sensitive habitats and rare and endangered species
- invasive weeds and nonnative vegetation
- disposition of old and possibly historic structures
- public safety issues and exposure to hazardous materials
- limited public access due to existing site conditions
- sedimentation and erosion from trails and roads
- trail connections across Highway 17 and Bear Creek Road
- trail user conflicts
- maintaining consistency with District policies and goals

## ***Break-Out Group Session***

### **Purpose and Activity**

Ruiz introduced the Break-Out Group Session by providing an overview of the purpose, activity and desired outcomes. She stated that the purpose was to provide participants with the opportunity to review sensitive resource information, understand how challenges and opportunities for resource protection and public access are identified and provide input to aid the development of Plan Alternatives that would shape the Master Plan. She explained that each participant would participate in a facilitated small group. She asked that each small group designate a speaker that would later give a verbal summary of the group's key issues to all meeting attendees.

The small groups were directed to separate rooms to discuss one of the following focus areas:

- Bear Creek Redwoods (2 groups)
- Cathedral Oaks and Kennedy-Limekiln Areas of Sierra Azul
- Rancho de Guadalupe and Kennedy-Limekiln Areas of Sierra Azul
- Mount Umunhum and Loma Prieta Areas of Sierra Azul

Small groups were composed of approximately twenty persons, with the exception of Bear Creek Redwoods, which had two groups with approximately 25 persons in each group. A series of questions specific to each geographic region were provided to each group to facilitate brainstorming and to familiarize participants with the resource issues. A base map, aerial map, and composite map illustrating sensitive resources were provided for each break-out group. Participants were encouraged to make comments by marking up the maps; comments were also noted on flip charts. Each group had at least two facilitators to guide the discussion and record comments and questions.

## ***Summary of Comments***

The comments from the break-out sessions were compiled from the flip charts and maps and are presented in the following summary. Comments are sorted by focus area and the original maps and flip-chart pages from the break-out sessions have been digitally scanned and can be found in Appendix B. This summary is not intended to be a verbatim transcript of the individual sessions.

### ***Bear Creek Redwoods***

**Sensitive Resources:** Important historical and cultural resources identified by the break-out group were the Indian villages and horse stables.

Wildlife species identified by participants included the California Red-Legged Frog, Western Pond Turtles and newts. Participants recognized that Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve contains oak woodlands and areas with large, old growth trees. They also noted that Scotch Broom, an invasive species, has established itself in many open areas. The pond off Bear Creek Road is a concern because of algae and/or other potential infestation. The presence of wild pigs and their impact on sensitive habitat areas was an additional concern.

**Recreational Opportunities:** Participants discussed the need for recreational opportunities that fit the interests of the entire community. They encouraged

the District to implement creative design and management of trails to serve all users. Additional loop trails were requested specifically near the junction of Bear Creek Road and Hwy. 17. Others suggested separate trails be established for specific uses. They encouraged the District to coordinate with the Presentation Center, Santa Clara County and private landowners to connect trails. Participants suggested holding a workshop focused solely on trail design. Participants also proposed an unleashed dog area at the old vineyard near the Presentation Center.

Participants desire increased access to the Preserve and easier access from all directions. They discussed potential parking and staging areas. The old Christmas tree farm was noted as a possible parking/staging area. Others asked if parking at Bear Creek Stables would be possible. A key concern regarding access was safety when crossing Bear Creek Road. Participants suggested implementing measures to slow traffic near crossings, and the use of existing culverts to separate pedestrians/horses/bikers from vehicular traffic (e.g. Highway 17 near Lexington Reservoir).

Participants also suggested restoring the Alma College site and utilizing the facilities for educational purposes (e.g. visitor's center or museum).

**Use Conflicts with Sensitive Resources:** Participants discussed the fact that there are a number of private residences in the area that must be respected. For some of the smaller access roads, residents are responsible for maintenance and are not in favor of public access via these roads.

Participants want the "wild nature" of this focus area maintained. Other participants noted that more vegetation along the creek beds would help prevent sediment and other pollutants from entering the water.

**Bear Creek Stables:** Most participants expressed interest in keeping the Bear Creek Stables, and would like for them to remain operational. They noted that the stables have been there for over 85 years and consider them a historic resource. They noted that the Stables are a valuable community resource as there are few places to board horses in the Bay Area.

Participants noted that the current managers have implemented a number of projects on the property to protect and enhance the environment. They suggested the District negotiate a longer lease, and work with the property managers to implement more long-term improvement projects.

**Note:** To review a complete listing of all the comments recorded on the flip charts and maps for this group, please see Appendix B, Break-Out Group Results.

### ***Cathedral Oaks and Kennedy-Limekiln Areas-Sierra Azul***

**Sensitive Resources:** Participants noted potential conflicts between the operation and/or sale of the existing quarry with open space users. They noted potential impacts on water quality, traffic and air quality. Participants noted that this focus area is remote and currently not crowded – they would like to maintain this level of use.

Significant ecological resources noted in this area include its biodiversity, due to a wide array of ecotypes along Priest Rock Trail.

**Recreational Opportunities:** Participants suggested that the District spend time and energy locating new trails in Sierra Azul. Primitive and natural looking trails that connect to other destination points including nearby parks were desired. Specific suggestions for a trail connection to Soquel Demonstration Forest and Almaden Quicksilver County Park were mentioned. Some participants suggested that access should remain limited to hikers and horses at Rattlesnake Gulch / Highland Road.

Participants mentioned the need for more public parking along Kennedy Road. Another suggestion was to clear the poison oak out of a section along Hicks Road to create a small picnic area.

Participants also requested that the District make trail maps available at all trailheads with information including level of difficulty, percent grade and distance of trails.

**Use Conflicts with Sensitive Resources:** Where appropriate in remote areas of the Preserves, participants suggested installing a restroom to prevent users from going off trails and negatively impacting sensitive habitats.

**Existing Limekiln Trail:** Participants suggested that the District cease pruning vegetation along the existing trail and return it to more of a natural / overgrown appearance.

**Note:** To review a complete listing of all the comments recorded on the flip charts and maps for this group, please see Appendix B, Break-Out Group Results.

### ***Rancho de Guadalupe and Kennedy-Limekiln Areas-Sierra Azul***

**Sensitive Resources:** Participants noted that the area was once natural grasslands and suggested the District develop strategies to restore grasslands in this area. They also noted that star thistle and oats are invasive plants of concern for this focus area. Another participant wanted to know if the

existing creek beds are constrained by trails, roads and other resources in the Preserve.

**Recreational Opportunities:** Participants suggested developing connections to other key trails and mentioned that the District may need to secure access easements to cross privately owned property.

Participants also discussed staging and access. They suggested a staging area below the dam at Josh Ridge and Kennedy. Another suggestion was to add more parking at the Kennedy trailhead. Other suggested locations for potential parking/access include Little Pond (off Pheasant Road), Bald Mountain, Montevino Road and Hicks Road between Almaden and Umunhum Roads and locations near Pheasant Road and in the Rancho de Guadalupe area. Another suggestion was to provide equestrian staging at Priest Rock. Participants suggested installing a restroom facility along Kennedy Trail where users currently have designated an informal restroom.

One participant asked if trails could be realigned to maximize tree cover, which would help cool trails when weather is hot.

**Use Conflicts with Sensitive Resources:** Participants suggested keeping staging areas small to minimize impacts to sensitive plant and habitat areas. It was also suggested that the District provide educational materials to aid users in identifying which areas are sensitive and how to protect them. A concern for potential fires in the open grassland areas was expressed.

**Existing Priest Rock Trail:** Participants discussed the alignment, features and access along the Priest Rock Trail as well as the Limekiln Trail and others in the vicinity. They mentioned that slides along these trails could be a problem. Other participants suggested providing connections to these trails from other parts of the Preserve (e.g. back side of rock quarry and back side of St. Joseph's Hill).

**Note:** To review a complete listing of all the comments recorded on the flip charts and maps for this group, please see Appendix B, Break-Out Group Results.

### ***Mount Umunhum and Loma Prieta Areas-Sierra Azul***

**Sensitive Resources:** Participants suggested looking at rare plant communities rather than just individual species. The presence and locations of sightings of wildlife species such as osprey and feral pigs were noted. The historical significance of the Air Force base and the facilities located on top of Mt. Umunhum were recognized. One participant asked if there were any remaining facilities that needed to be removed for safety reasons.

**Recreational Opportunities:** Participants provided numerous suggestions for possible trail alignments in this area. One participant mentioned a trail dedicated by President Roosevelt to the Ohlone Indians might serve as a possible public trail. Participants suggested a trail connection from Mt. Umunhum to the Soquel Demonstration Forest. Another suggestion was to keep the monolith intact on Mt. Umunhum. Participants mentioned an existing trail from Mt. El Sombroso to Mt. Thayer that is overgrown and needs maintenance. A Skyline to Sea trail opportunity was discussed. A desired trail connection from Cathedral Oaks to Loma Prieta was also expressed.

A suggestion was made to make all trails multi-use especially in remote areas. Some felt that the existing road would be a good candidate for a multi-use trail. Others felt that dog access must be controlled and prohibited in some areas. Participants suggested building trails around private landowners in the area. Another suggested continuing work with the San Jose Water Company to coordinate access to Sierra Azul from surrounding neighborhoods through the Water Company's right-of-way. Another suggestion was to provide areas to camp along the longer trails.

Participants also discussed staging areas. One suggestion was to use existing fire breaks. Suggestions included using existing fire breaks, or the peak of Loma Prieta, Soda Springs Road, or an area north of Mt. Bache as potential staging areas.

Another recreational opportunity mentioned was access to the summit for hang gliding and biking.

**Use Conflicts with Sensitive Resources:** Participants indicated a possible conflict between dogs and wildlife in the area.

**Access Road:** Participants suggested preserving the existing road in the current configuration and then adding narrow trails along the road. Others noted the current challenges with neighboring property owners and wanted to see the road realigned to allow easy public access and use. Participants did not want to see the road paved.

**Note:** To review a complete listing of all the comments recorded on the flip charts and maps for this group, please see Appendix B, Break-Out Group Results.

### ***Additional Comments Received***

This section provides a summary of the general comments received from all of the groups on topics that were not directly related to a particular area of focus.

- Request that District provide a designated liaison to address trail-related issues
- Inquiries as to the relationship between the General Plan and the Timber Harvest Plan, specifically, would the timber-harvesting plan of the San Jose Water Company have any impacts on potential trail design?
- Enforced smoking prohibition
- Concern over possible intent of District to minimize public access to the preserves
- Inquiry as to the number of residents living within the Preserve
- Request for District coordination with local sheriff to prevent illegal activities within the Preserve
- Suggestion that increased use (i.e., more trails) in remote areas would help prevent illegal dumping

## ***Group Roundtable***

At the conclusion of the break-out group sessions, the participants returned to the main room. Designated speakers from each group made a short presentation to the whole group regarding the identified key issues.

## ***Conclusion and Next Steps***

Ana Ruiz closed the meeting with a reminder of the upcoming steps in the Master Plan process. In the next few months, the team will review the input from the workshop and analyze the information in conjunction with the Preserves' natural resources as well as the District's mission statement.

The planning team will collect additional data and begin to develop the alternatives. The next public workshop, planned for 2006, will present the plan concepts and alternatives for review. Ruiz accepted final questions from the group, which included the following with answers provided in italics:

- Do you show the San Jose Water Company on the maps?  
*Yes, it is shown on the maps.*

- What is the status of Mount Umunhum access and clean-up efforts?

*Onsite contamination and public safety hazards need to be removed or safely contained. We are happy to report that the area is now on the national 'clean-up' list. The U.S. Department of Defense is currently conducting subsurface investigations to determine if any below ground remediation is needed. The District is also concerned about the buildings that remain on the site, since many contain asbestos and materials coated with lead-based paint. We encourage you to become a part of the Friends of Mount Umunhum group to support the effort to get federal and/or state resources to implement the cleanup of the site. Contact the District if you would like to be added as a member of this group.*
- Will the Master Plan show specific trail alignments?

*The Master Plan will be conceptual. Specific trail alignments will be identified during the implementation phase of the Master Plan.*
- Is the District reviewing the San Jose Water Company proposal for logging plans?

*The District is reviewing the proposal and will provide San Jose Water Company with comments.*
- What is the District doing to eliminate illegal drug crops in the Preserves?

*The District is working in concert with local Sheriff's Departments, Campaign Against Marijuana Plantation (CAMP), and other local park agencies to eliminate illegal drug crops on District Lands. District Rangers regularly patrol preserves, monitor suspicious activities, hike remote locations with Sheriff's Department personnel, and assist in the eradication and removal of gardens when they have been detected. Additionally, District Rangers provide critical support to allied agencies by providing maps, directions and information about District Lands.*
- More public access to the Preserves will help eliminate illegal dumping and illegal activities.

*Yes, we welcome your help in reporting these types of activities.*