



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-74
Meeting 25-16
June 11, 2025

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA ITEM 1

AGENDA ITEM

Award of Grazing Leases for five Conservation Grazing Units: Johnston Ranch (Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve); Lobitos (Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve); Harrington (La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve); Cloverdale Ranch (Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve); and Butano Farms (Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve)

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the final evaluation results of a Request for Proposals Process that is consistent with the 2023 Board-adopted Agricultural Policy, adopt a Resolution authorizing the General Manager to:

1. Execute an initial five-year conservation grazing lease with Pacheco Cattle for the Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit in Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve.
2. Execute an initial five-year conservation grazing lease with Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC for the Lobitos Grazing Unit in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve.
3. Execute an initial five-year conservation grazing lease with AGCO Hay LLC for the Harrington Grazing Unit in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.
4. Execute an initial five-year conservation grazing lease with Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC for the Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit in Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve.
5. Extend each of the foregoing leases, at the General Manager's discretion, for up to two (2) additional five-year terms, for total lease terms of 15 years each, based on tenant performance.
6. Execute a five-year conservation grazing lease with R. Dinelli Cattle Co. for the Butano Farms Grazing Unit in Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve.

SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) released a Request for Proposals (RFP) on January 14, 2025, to solicit proposals from qualified livestock operators to graze five (5) District conservation grazing units. After completing a thorough review and evaluation of the

proposals in alignment with the Board-adopted [Agricultural Policy](#), other pertinent District policies, and overarching goals regarding agricultural operations, the recommendations are as follows based on final scoring results of the RFP review committee:

Award the following leases for an initial 5-year term with a delegation of authority to the General Manager to approve up to two (2) additional 5-year extensions for each lease, based on tenant performance.

- Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit: Pacheco Cattle
- Lobitos Grazing Unit: Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC
- Harrington Grazing Unit: AGCO Hay LLC
- Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit: Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC

Award the Butano Farms Grazing Unit to R. Dinelli Cattle Co. for a 5-year term.

The District received a protest regarding the recommended award of the Lobitos Grazing Unit. In accordance with the protest procedure specified in the RFP and following a careful review of the underlying facts of the RFP process, the District issued a written decision on June 5, 2025, denying the protest. The protest is discussed in more detail below.

DISCUSSION

Over the past three years, the District has granted lease extensions to existing conservation grazing tenants whose grazing leases were expiring, including the leases for Lobitos (formerly Elkus-Lobitos-South Cowell), Harrington (formerly Driscoll Ranch), and Butano Farms, while the District developed a new Agricultural Policy (Ag Policy). The purpose of these extensions was to allow for public input and Board deliberation on the Ag Policy, which has established additional policy direction specifically on the structure, length, and selection criteria for agricultural leases, including grazing leases.

The Board adopted the Ag Policy on November 1, 2023 ([R-23-129](#)). Ag Policy AG-5 sets Board policy guidance on agricultural leases as follows: “*Structure agricultural leases to accomplish land management objectives and establish leases that promote conservation goals balanced with economically viable agricultural uses.*” Implementation measures under policy AG-5 provide policy guidance for the process of selecting conservation grazing tenants as described below:

- AG-5 (a): states that in the coastal protection area, after purchase of active agricultural lands, the land will be subject to continued use by the existing agricultural operator until the District sells the property or issues a RFP.

The tenants on all the grazing units considered for award, except for Harrington, were tenants whose tenancy on the land pre-dated District purchase. This is the first time that Johnston Ranch (purchased 2021), Lobitos (purchased South Cowell in 2023; Lobitos in 2010; UC Elkus in 2009), Butano Farms (purchased 2022), and Cloverdale Ranch (purchased 2022) have been made competitively available through an RFP process. Harrington (purchased 2006) was previously leased pursuant to a RFP process that occurred in 2013.

- AG-5 (b): states that after the acquisition of a property and the subsequent development of a Rangeland Management Plan, the District should solicit a RFP to enter into a long term lease.

All five leases under consideration have Board-approved Rangeland Management Plans (RMPs). RMPs serve as a point of action to pursue a new long-term lease that is based on land management goals and action items for achieving desired outcomes to maximize natural resource protection while supporting local agriculture through grazing grassland areas. The solicitation of RFPs provides a competitive opportunity for the District to identify and select the best qualified tenants to accomplish the goals and objectives under the RMP. RMPs for each Grazing Unit were adopted by the District as follows:

- Johnston Ranch: 2024
 - Lobitos: 2010 (Lobitos Ridge and UC Elkus) and 2024 (South Cowell)
 - Harrington: 2006
 - Butano Farms: 2024
 - Cloverdale: 2024
- AG-5 (c): states that the District will provide an open competitive process to compete for grazing leases after the expiration of the previous lease term.

All five conservation grazing unit leases are in their final year, prompting the District to issue an RFP for these five Grazing Units.

- AG-5 (d): states that leases will be structured to provide periodic options to renew or end the lease and have provisions for terminating a lease for poor performance. Starting after the adoption of the Ag Policy in 2023 conservation grazing leases are typically structured as 5-year term agreements with options to extend for two additional 5-year periods. Four of the proposed grazing lease awards are structured this way (Johnston Ranch, Lobitos, Harrington, and Cloverdale). The proposed grazing lease award for Butano Farms Grazing Unit is the exception and is for a single five-year term with no additional options with the reasons explained under the next bullet. This exception was clearly explained in the RFP.
- AG-5 (e): states that the lease term should be long enough to support the financial viability of the agricultural operation.

Lease terms are normally for 15 years if all options are exercised. This gives the rancher the time to develop and grow their operation. This is true for four of the proposed grazing lease awards (Johnston Ranch, Lobitos, Harrington, and Cloverdale). The proposed lease term for Butano Farms Grazing Unit is the exception and is a single five-year term with no additional optional terms. Butano Farms is being treated differently because the Board-approved Rangeland Management Plan recommends condensing portions of or all of the Butano Grazing Unit into the larger Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit to both improve agricultural operations and natural resource management. In five

years, the District intends to re-evaluate the management of Butano Farms and re-consider combining some or all of it with Cloverdale Ranch.

- AG-5 (f): states that the District should work with local organizations to make sure lease opportunities are well publicized, including to new/early career producers and agricultural workers.

The District conducted an extensive outreach process as part of the RFP, reaching out to many local organizations. Furthermore, the District translated the RFP materials into Spanish to allow for broader access.

- AG-5 (g): lists selection criteria, including local preference, DEI, tenant in good standing, and environmental sustainability in addition to the standard need for the ability to manage and operate the agricultural operation.

RFP criteria include a local preference for any proposer that lives or operates a business in San Mateo County, with a five (5) point allocation during the first phase of the evaluation (i.e., review of written proposals). Tenant in good standing only applies to grazers who are currently leasing the property for which they are competing and specifically applies to the Grazing Unit that they have been leasing (see bullet point below for detailed explanation on how points are given for this criterion).

- AG-5 (h): states that tenant performance should be factored into the award of leases.

This was included in two ways in the RFP. Tenant performance is considered during the first phase of the evaluation process as part of the written proposals, with tenants receiving between 0 to 5 points, which are assigned based on the tenant's prior performance evaluations as a District grazing tenant. Tenant performance is also considered during the second phase of the evaluation process as part of the Site Visit/Interview, for those tenants that reach the second phase, with tenants receiving 0 to 5 points based on their answer to an in-person question regarding their grazing operation on District lands. In both cases, the additional points can only be earned by existing tenants and add toward the total score earned for each phase of the RFP evaluation process.

In the Ag Policy, the Board directed staff to strike a balance between open competition to select the most qualified grazing tenant and favoring existing and local tenants (AG-5 (g) and (h)). The RFP structure reflects that policy direction. The process is competitive given that properties are put out for an open, competitive process at the end of each lease, and at the same time local ranchers receive a competitive edge over proposers outside of San Mateo County (5 additional points), and existing tenants in good standing receive a competitive edge over all other proposers for the property they are currently leasing (up to an additional 10 points). Therefore, if an existing tenant is deemed equally qualified as other proposers through the competitive process, the tenant will be scored higher than other proposers if they are a tenant in good standing. However, in keeping with the Ag Policy's balance, while points for local operators and tenants in good standing favor existing tenants, other candidates can still outcompete an existing tenant if they have a stronger proposal that is a better fit for the District's conservation grazing program.

and/or whose operation/business model will further the District's goals and objectives as detailed in the RFP.

RFP Posting and Outreach

Staff posted the RFP on the District website. In addition, staff informed District grazing tenants and numerous agricultural partners, including the following:

- San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- San Mateo County Farm Bureau
- Michael Oneil- Board Supervisor Ray Mueller's Office
- Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST)
- UC Cooperative Extension – Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Central Coast Rangeland Coalition (CCRC)
- Amah Mutsun Land Trust
- Puente de la Costa Sur (Puente)
- Center for Agroecology at UC Santa Cruz
- Kitchen Table Advisors
- Agriculture and Land-Based Association (ALBA)
- California Farm Link
- California Cattlemen's Association
- California Rangeland Conservation Coalition
- Sustainable Pescadero
- San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner's Office
- San Mateo County Agricultural Advisory Commission
- Pescadero Municipal Advisory Commission
- San Mateo County Farm Worker Advisory Commission
- Farm Worker Affairs Commission
- Ayudando Latinos A Sonar (ALAS)
- Rancho San Benito
- Acterra

Individuals who had previously requested notification for similar leases were also notified and ads were placed in the San Jose Mercury News and San Mateo County Times newspaper publications.

Selection Process

In accordance with the Ag Policy, District staff released a Request for Proposals (RFP) on January 14, 2025, to solicit qualified livestock operators to graze five (5) conservation grazing units (see Attachment 2 – Description and Map). There was strong interest in the grazing units and a mandatory pre-proposal informational meeting drew 42 individuals representing twenty-one (21) prospective operations. The District ultimately received eleven (11) proposals across the five available grazing units. Proposers were allowed to submit for up to three grazing units and were required to rank their preference. Of the eleven (11) proposals received by different operators, the District has worked with six (6) of the operators while the other five (5) are wholly new to the District. Of these five (5), four (4) are local, and one (1) is from outside of San Mateo County.

Table 1: List of Proposers and the Grazing Units of Interest for Each.

Proposers ranked the grazing units of interest by their preference as shown below. Blank cells indicate that the proposer did not submit for that specific grazing unit.

Proposer	Johnston Ranch	Lobitos	Harrington	Butano Farms	Cloverdale Ranch
AGCO Hay LLC			1st	3rd	2nd
Avila Cattle Co.		1st			
Cronin Ranch			1st	3rd	2nd
Hang'in P Cattle Company		1st		2nd	
Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC		3rd	2nd		1st
Najera-Tormey		1st			
Pacheco Cattle	1st				
Pomponio Ranch			1st	3rd	2nd
R. Dinelli Cattle Co.				1st	
Vince Fontana		1st			
Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC		3rd	1st		2nd

The selection process used a rigorous scoring system that assigned value to various goals and criteria outlined in the RFP, including applicants' experience, capacity, history, and knowledge, with an emphasis on natural resource management priorities as well as specific goals identified in the Ag Policy, including environmental sustainability; diversity, equity, and inclusion; local preference; engagement in the local community; and tenant in good standing.

The selection process was separated into two phases: (1) an evaluation of the written proposal submittals, and for proposers whose proposal was ranked in the top three (2) an evaluation of the proposer's grazing operations through interviews and site visits.

A five-person selection committee evaluated the proposals. The committee was comprised of three District staff and two external individuals (one from Santa Clara County Parks Department and one from San Mateo County Resource Conservation District) chosen because of their expertise, experience and background in rangeland and natural resource management, public lands grazing, livestock/ranch management, and other grazing RFP processes. The selection committee scored proposals according to the criteria set forth in the RFP.

All but one proposer, Cronin Ranch, qualified for local preference and five of the proposers received points for tenant in good standing. Tenant-in-good-standing points are only awarded to existing tenants when proposing for the grazing unit for which they currently have a lease. For example, if an existing tenant proposed on their current lease *and* on additional grazing units, they did not receive tenant-in-good-standing points for the grazing units where they are not existing tenants.

Only one proposal was received for Johnston Ranch; this proposal was submitted by the existing District tenant, Pacheco Cattle. Given the sole proposal, the District did not conduct an interview and site visit for this grazing unit. The three highest-scoring proposals for each of the remaining four units were invited to in-person interviews and site visits on ranches the proposers currently manage.

The interview/site visit evaluations included all five members of the selection committee who evaluated the proposer's understanding and willingness to conduct their grazing activities in a manner that will enhance the natural resource values, promote maintenance and improvements to the property, and work with the District to achieve recreational and resource management goals. Each interview/site visit was evaluated using criteria set forth in the RFP and scores for this phase of the evaluation were given independent of the written proposal submittals. The points from each phase of the selection process were then combined to arrive at each proposer's final numerical score and ranking.

The final scores and rankings from the selection process are shown in the following tables.

Table 2: Written Proposal Scores (Phase 1) (out of 95 points)

Proposer	Score for currently leased area*	Tenant in Good Standing Points	Score for a new lease area
AGCO Hay LLC	88.0	5	83.0
Avila Cattle Co.		N/A	67.5**
Cronin Ranch		N/A	61.7**
Hang'in P Cattle Company		N/A	50.7
Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC	87.7	5	82.7
Najera-Tormey		N/A	62.2
Pacheco Cattle	79.9**	5	N/A
Pomponio Ranch LLC		N/A	70.5
R. Dinelli Cattle Co.	67.6	5	N/A
Vince Fontana	65.6	3	N/A
Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC		N/A	87.1

*Includes points for existing tenant in good standing

**Includes one-point deduction for page overage

Table 3. Highest-scoring proposals by Grazing Unit after Phase 1 (Written Proposal)

Grazing Unit	Ranking					
	1		2		3	
Johnston Ranch	79.9	Pacheco Cattle	--	--	--	--
Lobitos	87.1	Willow Creek	82.7	Markegard	67.5	Avila
Harrington	88.0	AGCO Hay LLC	87.1	Willow Creek	82.7	Markegard
Butano Farms	83.0	AGCO Hay LLC	70.5	Pomponio	67.6	R. Dinelli
Cloverdale Ranch	87.7	Markegard	87.1	Willow Creek	83.0	AGCO Hay LLC

Table 4: Oral Interviews/Site Visits Scores for Phase 2

Proposer*	Score for currently leased area**	Score on tenant question^	Score for a new lease area
AGCO Hay LLC	88.6	4.8	83.8
Avila Cattle Co.		N/A	74.6
Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC	92.2	4.4	87.8
Pomponio Ranch LLC		N/A	73.2
R. Dinelli Cattle Co.	64.4	4.0	
Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC.		N/A	85.2

*Only the top three proposals for each grazing unit moved forward to interviews. Only one proposal (Pacheco) was received for Johnston Ranch, so site a visit and interview were not needed for that grazing unit.

** Includes points for a question related to current tenant operations that is only asked of existing tenants.

^ Final score is an average of all five evaluator scores for this question.

Table 5: Cumulative Scores and Final Ranking of Proposers (Phase 1 and 2)

Grazing Unit	Ranking					
	1		2		3	
Johnston Ranch	79.9	Pacheco Cattle	--	--	--	--
Lobitos	172.3	Willow Creek	170.5	Markegard	142.1	Avila
Harrington	176.6	AGCO Hay LLC	172.3	Willow Creek	170.5	Markegard
Butano Farms	166.8	AGCO Hay LLC*	143.7	Pomponio*	132.0	R. Dinelli
Cloverdale Ranch	179.9	Markegard	172.3	Willow Creek	166.8	AGCO Hay LLC

*AGCO Hay LLC declined Butano Farms, followed by Pomponio declining Butano Farms, leaving R. Dinelli as next in line.

Pacheco Cattle

The General Manager recommends executing a 5-year grazing lease with Pacheco Cattle on the Johnston Ranch grazing unit. Pacheco Cattle was the only proposer who submitted for the Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit. With a strong *Written Proposal Score*, it was determined that they did not need to participate in a second-round site visit or interview. Pacheco Cattle has been a tenant of the District for over thirteen years and in that time has demonstrated an excellent ability to manage grazing lands in accordance with District goals and policy. They have a proven record of maintaining and developing critical grazing infrastructure, working cooperatively with District staff,

and adjusting their grazing operations to align with natural resource considerations. As a multi-generational operation, they are an excellent example of the ongoing vibrancy of agriculture on the San Mateo County coast. Pacheco Cattle currently holds two other leases with the District, in addition to other private leases in San Mateo County.

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

The General Manager recommends executing a 5-year grazing lease with Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC on the Lobitos Grazing Unit. Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC., (WCLC) was the top-scoring proposer for the Lobitos Grazing Unit. Since November 2024, WCLC has been a District tenant on the Lone Madrone Grazing Unit (Lone Madrone). Already in their short tenure, they have completed several critical grazing infrastructure projects and have established impressive relationships with outside organizations to support their land management efforts. They received from the San Mateo County Weed Management Area a competitive grant to target the infestations of Distaff thistle at Lone Madrone with targeted spot-spraying and high-intensity, short-duration grazing; and they independently established a relationship with researchers at the University of Nevada Reno to pilot the cutting-edge technology of virtual fencing, which is currently being deployed at Lone Madrone to improve management of cattle grazing distribution. WCLC is co-owned by the sister-brother team, Elizabeth (Liz) Reikowski Duncan and Matthew Reikowski. Blake Duncan, Liz's spouse, is the third key partner in the operation. While the LLC is based out of San Benito County, Liz and Blake live in San Gregorio. Liz Reikowski Duncan and Matthew Reikowski are the third generation of a California cattle ranching family while Blake Duncan grew up on a large family cattle ranch in Nevada. The purpose in creating WCLC was to develop a land stewardship company utilizing livestock and conservation grazing to steward natural lands. In addition to their rich history of growing up on ranch land, each of these individuals have unique education and experience that together provides for a broad knowledge base of land management.

Protest

A protest was submitted by Vince Fontana on May 15, 2025 ("Protest") requesting that the District not award the Lobitos grazing lease to WCLC and instead award it to Mr. Fontana. In accordance with the protest procedure specified in the RFP and following a careful review of the Protest's contentions and the underlying facts of the RFP process, the District issued a written decision on June 5, 2025, denying the Protest (Attachment 3). The District concluded that the weight of the evidence did not support the Protest's allegations and did not show that the selection process was unfair or improper. The District also determined that Mr. Fontana's requested relief – to be awarded the Lobitos lease – could not be properly provided in accordance with the RFP. Accordingly, the General Manager recommends that the Lobitos Grazing Unit lease be awarded to WCLC.

AGCO Hay LLC

The General Manager recommends executing a 5-year grazing lease with AGCO Hay LLC for the Harrington Grazing Unit. AGCO Hay LLC was the top-scoring proposer for the Harrington (formerly Driscoll Ranch) Grazing Unit. AGCO is a family-owned operation comprised of Allan Renz and his parents Greg and Carol Renz. The Renzes have been District tenants at the Driscoll Grazing Unit since 2013 and over the last decade have demonstrated an exceptional ability to manage cattle in alignment with District goals and priorities. Working with District staff to ensure that natural resource concerns were always addressed, Mr. Renz has re-built fences, installed thousands of feet of water line, and installed/renovated stock troughs and tanks across the grazing unit. The Driscoll Grazing Unit has been significantly improved in AGCO Hay's tenure, both from a cattle management and natural resource management perspective. AGCO Hay LLC has proven

themselves to be proactive and thoughtful, always mindful of how their activities and cattle management further District goals. AGCO Hay LLC is the District's largest tenant, with private and public grazing leases across a multi-county region. They have invested in the local agricultural economy of San Mateo County by hiring two local employees and selling beef at local stores. Though they are based out of San Benito County, AGCO qualified for the local preference because it operates a grazing lease in San Mateo County.

Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC

The General Manager recommends executing a 5-year grazing lease with Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC for the Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit. Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC was the top-scoring proposer for the Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit. The Markegard Family have been tenants at Cloverdale since 2008 and have been District tenants since 2012 (on the Toto Ranch Grazing Unit). They have a strong track record working with the District to manage thousands of acres of San Mateo County coastal grasslands. Their unique business model (direct-to-consumer beef) and cattle management have made them proactive and engaged partners of the District. Cloverdale Ranch is a challenging property on which to manage cattle, with various wildlife and water quality constraints and one in which the Markegards have successfully navigated with understanding and ease. The Markegards are long-standing Coastside residents with strong agricultural roots in the community their direct-to-consumer meat business serves restaurants, farmers' markets, and grocery stores throughout the area. Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC also leases the Toto Ranch Grazing Unit from the District.

R. Dinelli Cattle Co.

The General Manager recommends executing a 5-year grazing lease with R. Dinelli Cattle Co. for the Butano Farms Grazing Unit. R. Dinelli Cattle Co. was the third-highest scoring proposer for the Butano Farms Grazing Unit. The District offered Reno Dinelli the lease after the two-highest-scoring proposers declined the opportunity. Mr. Dinelli has been the tenant of Butano Farms for over sixty years. Under his stewardship and management, the property boasts remarkable natural resources, including excellent stands of native perennial grasses and habitat for the federally endangered San Francisco Garter Snake. His recent shift to a seasonal bred heifer operation at Butano Farms means that the property benefits from ample rest periods and that he can adjust stocking rates often to match seasonal forage production. The R. Dinelli Cattle Co. is based out of Pescadero, San Mateo County, California. Although Reno Dinelli was not the highest scorer for the RFP process, District staff feels confident in recommending him for the lease award.

Lease Terms

The initial term for the Johnston Ranch, Lobitos, Harrington, and Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Units is five years with two optional five-year extensions at the District's sole discretion (for a total term of fifteen years). The General Manager evaluates the totality of the tenant's grazing operation to decide whether a tenant is in good standing to consider approving an extension term. Tenant performance is evaluated annually based on defined criteria. Factors used in evaluating grazing tenant performance include paying the rent on time, compliance with lease terms and the rangeland management plan, maintaining and making infrastructure improvements on schedule, adherence to stocking capacity limits, proper animal husbandry, meeting grazing residual dry matter targets (e.g., does not under or over graze pastures), and working cooperatively with District staff to meet conservation grazing goals.

The lease term for the Butano Farms Grazing Unit is five years. The single lease term will allow the District the opportunity to re-evaluate the management of Butano Farms. More specifically, the Board-approved Rangeland Management Plan for Cloverdale Ranch (which includes the Cloverdale Ranch and Butano Farms Grazing Units) recommended combining the two units for more efficient and effective management, which the District intends to consider at the end of the five-year term.

FISCAL IMPACT

The District lease rate for grazing properties is calculated by multiplying the number of Animal Unit Equivalents (AUE) grazing on the property by the total number of months grazed for the season/year to obtain the total Animal Unit Months (AUM). The AUMs utilized are then multiplied by the current AUM market rate to determine the total lease fee for the year. AUM rates are adjusted annually in July to reflect trends in the cattle commodity market. The AUM rate utilized by the District as of July 1, 2024, is \$23.93 per AUM.

Accordingly, the estimated initial annual lease rate for Grazing Units are as follows:

Ranch	AUM/year	AUM Rate (July 2024)	Annual Lease Fee
Johnston Ranch	366	\$ 23.93	\$ 8,758.38
Lobitos	863	\$ 23.93	\$ 20,651.59
Harrington	2016	\$ 23.93	\$ 48,242.88
Butano Farms	552	\$ 23.93	\$13,209.36
Cloverdale Ranch	1251	\$ 23.93	\$29,936.43
Total Annual Fees			\$120,798.64

The recommended action would have a positive fiscal impact of up to \$120,798.64 per year. However, these lease fees may not be fully realized in 2025-2026 (FY26) because AUM rates will be re-calculated July 1, 2025 as is the District's customary practice, and leases will not commence until November 1, 2025, partway through FY26.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

Johnston Ranch:

- **November 10, 2021:** The Board approved the proposed purchase from POST of the Johnston Ranch Uplands Property and adoption of a Preliminary Use & Management Plan ([R-21-132](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **December 11, 2024:** The Board adopted the Rangeland Management Plan for the Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit and amended the Johnston Ranch Uplands Use and Management Plan to reflect the adoption. ([R-24-156](#), [meeting minutes](#))

Lobitos: (comprised of the Lobitos Ridge, UC Elkus, and South Cowell Properties)

- **August 12, 2009:** The Board approved the proposed purchase from University of California Regents Elkus of the Elkus Ranch Uplands Property and adoption of a Preliminary Use & Management Plan ([R-09-23](#), [meeting minutes](#))

- **March 17, 2010:** The Board approved the proposed purchase from POST of the Lobitos Ridge Property and adoption of a Preliminary Use & Management Plan ([R-10-09](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **November 10, 2010:** The Board adopted the Rangeland Management Plan for the Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Ranch Uplands Grazing Unit; amended the Preliminary Use and Management Plans for Lobitos Ridge and Elkus Ranch Uplands Additions to the Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve to reflect the adoption; and authorized the General Manager to enter into a five-year grazing lease with Vince Fontana ([R-10-99](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **August 26, 2020:** The Board authorized the General Manager to enter into a new, two-year grazing lease with an option for a one-year extension at the Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands Ranch ([R-20-95](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **October 28, 2020:** The Board approved a partial purchase from POST of the South Cowell property and adoption of a Preliminary Use & Management Plan. ([R-20-122](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **August 10, 2022:** The Board authorized the General Manager to execute a two-year lease with one-year option with the existing tenant ([R-22-93](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **April 12, 2023:** The Board approved the purchase from POST of the remaining interest in the South Cowell property ([R-23-40](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **December 11, 2024:** The Board adopted the Rangeland Management Plan for the South Cowell Addendum to the Elkus-Lobitos Grazing Unit and amended the South Cowell Property Preliminary Use and Management Plan to reflect the adoption. ([R-24-156](#), [meeting minutes](#))

Harrington:

- **January 12, 2006:** The Board approved the proposed purchase from POST of the Driscoll Ranch Property and adoption of a Resource Management Plan and Preliminary Use & Management Plan ([R-06-07](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **November 13, 2013:** The Board authorized the General Manager to enter into a new five-year grazing lease with AGCO Hay LLC ([R-13-103](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **August 14, 2019:** The Board authorized the General Manager to extend the grazing lease with the existing tenant for an additional five years ([R-19-108](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **August 10, 2022:** The Board authorized the General Manager to execute a two-year lease with one-year option with the existing tenant ([R-22-93](#), [meeting minutes](#))

Butano Farms:

- **December 10, 2022:** The Board approved the phased purchase from POST of the Cloverdale Ranch Uplands properties and adoption of a Preliminary Use & Management Plan ([R-22-140](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **December 11, 2024:** The Board adopted the Rangeland Management Plan for the Cloverdale Ranch and Butano Farms Grazing Units and amended the Cloverdale Ranch Use and Management Plan to reflect the adoption. ([R-24-156](#), [meeting minutes](#))

Cloverdale Ranch:

- **December 10, 2022:** The Board approved the phased purchase from POST of the Cloverdale Ranch Uplands properties and adoption of a Preliminary Use & Management Plan ([R-22-140](#), [meeting minutes](#))
- **December 11, 2024:** The Board adopted the Rangeland Management Plan for the Cloverdale Ranch and Butano Farms Grazing Units and amended the Cloverdale Ranch Use and Management Plan to reflect the adoption ([R-24-156](#), [meeting minutes](#))

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Conservation grazing activities on the five grazing units described herein are included in Board adopted rangeland management plans or resource management plans for each grazing unit. Prior to Board adoption, the five RMPs were evaluated pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as follows:

Johnston Ranch, Cloverdale Ranch, South Cowell (Lobitos) Grazing Units: On December 11, 2024, the Board adopted the Rangeland Management Plans (RMPs) (Report R-24-156) for the Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit and Cloverdale Ranch and Butano Farms Grazing Units, and South Cowell Addendum to the Elkus-Lobitos Grazing Unit and determined that the actions identified in the RMPs were consistent with the Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program (OSMRP) (SCH #2021080129), adopted by the Board on September 22, 2021 (Resolution No. 21-32); and the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) to the Integrated Pest Management Program (IPMP), and EIR Addenda thereto, adopted by Board Resolution No. 14-37 on December 10, 2014.

Lobitos Grazing Unit: The Board adopted an IS/MND for the Elkus Ranch Upland and Lobitos Ridge Properties Rangeland Management Plan on November 10, 2010 (Report R-10-99, Resolution No. 10-37).

Driscoll Ranch (now Harrington) Grazing Unit: A Resource Management Plan was prepared for Driscoll Ranch that sets parameters for conservation grazing activities on the property and was incorporated into the Preliminary Use and Management Plan (PUMP) for Driscoll Ranch. The Board adopted an IS/MND on January 12, 2006, for the purchase of Driscoll Ranch and adoption of the PUMP that evaluated potential impacts of conservation grazing on the property consistent with the Resource Management Plan (Report R-06-07, Resolution No. 06-02).

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board approval, the General Manager will execute a conservation grazing lease with Pacheco Cattle, Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC., AGCO Hay LLC, Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC, and R. Dinelli Cattle Co.

Attachments:

1. Resolution Approving the Award of Grazing Leases for the Johnston Ranch, Lobitos, Harrington, Butano Farms, and Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Units
2. Map and Description of Conservation Grazing Units
3. Lobitos Protest Determination Letter

Responsible Department Head:

Brandon Stewart, Land & Facilities Manager

Prepared by / Contact person:

Matthew Shapero, Conservation Grazing Program Manager, Resource Management Specialist III

RESOLUTION 25-__

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
AWARDING GRAZING LEASES TO PACHECO CATTLE;
WILLOW CREEK LAND AND CATTLE, LLC; AGCO HAY LLC;
MARKEGARD FAMILY GRASS-FED LLC; AND R. DINELLI
CATTLE CO. (JOHNSTON RANCH, LOBITOS, HARRINGTON,
CLOVERDALE AND BUTANO FARMS GRAZING UNITS)**

WHEREAS, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (“District”) may, under the provisions of California Public Resources Code section 5540, lease property owned by the District; and

WHEREAS, the lease of the Johnston Ranch (Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve); Lobitos (Purissima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve); Harrington (La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve); Cloverdale Ranch (Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve); and Butano Farms (Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve) (collectively, “Grazing Leases”) for grazing and rangeland management purposes is compatible with park and open space purposes and in the public interest; and

WHEREAS, the District wishes to lease the Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit to Pacheco Cattle; the Lobitos Grazing Unit to Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC; Harrington Grazing Unit to AGCO Hay LLC; Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit to Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC; and the Butano Farms Grazing Unit to R. Dinelli Cattle Co., all on the terms hereinafter set forth.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Directors of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District does hereby resolve as follows:

1. The General Manager is authorized to execute the Grazing Leases on behalf of the District with Pacheco Cattle for the Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit; Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC for the Lobitos Grazing Unit; AGCO Hay LLC for the Harrington Grazing Unit; and Markegard Family Grass-Fed LLC for the Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit.
2. The General Manager is authorized to grant an extension of the foregoing Grazing Leases on the terms and conditions set forth in the Grazing Leases. The General Manager shall report any such extension of a Grazing Lease to the Board of Directors at the Board meeting immediately following the granting of the extension.
3. The General Manager is authorized to execute the Grazing Lease on behalf of the District with R. Dinelli Cattle Co. for the Butano Farms Grazing Unit.
4. The General Manager, with the concurrence of the General Counsel, is authorized to approve all other documents necessary or appropriate to execute any of the Grazing Leases and make minor changes to the Grazing Leases that do not materially amend the terms and conditions thereof.

* * * * *

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District on June 11, 2025, at a regular meeting thereof, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Secretary
Board of Directors

Jed Cyr, President
Board of Directors

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Hilary Stevenson, General Counsel

I, the District Clerk of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District by the above vote at a meeting thereof duly held and called on the above day.

Maria Soria, District Clerk

Description of Conservation Grazing Unit Lease Areas

Johnston Ranch

Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit contains 412 acres of grass-, shrub-, and woodland areas suitable for livestock grazing. On December 11, 2024 (R-24-156), the Board approved a Rangeland Management Plan for the grazing unit. In 2021, when the District and POST entered into a lease and management agreement for the Johnston Ranch, the lease with the existing POST tenant, Pacheco Cattle, was assigned to the District. The District formally took ownership of the Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit in May 2024. In anticipation of the new lease award, Pacheco Cattle has surrendered the final year of its lease. Therefore, the current lease expires October 31, 2025.

Lobitos Grazing Unit

The 1,210-acre Lobitos Grazing Unit contains approximately 933 acres of grassland areas suitable for livestock grazing. A Rangeland Management Plan was approved for the property in 2010 shortly after the Lobitos Ridge and UC Elkus Uplands Properties were acquired (R-10-09). At that time, the Board awarded a five-year grazing lease with one, additional five-year option to the pre-existing tenant, Vince Fontana. Due to performance issues, the Board authorized the General Manager in 2020 to offer a new lease with just a two-year term with an option for a one-year extension based on performance. In February 2024, in order to align the lease terms with the anticipated 2025 Request for Proposals process, District staff executed a new, two-year lease with Mr. Fontana, which expires October 31, 2025.

Harrington Grazing Unit

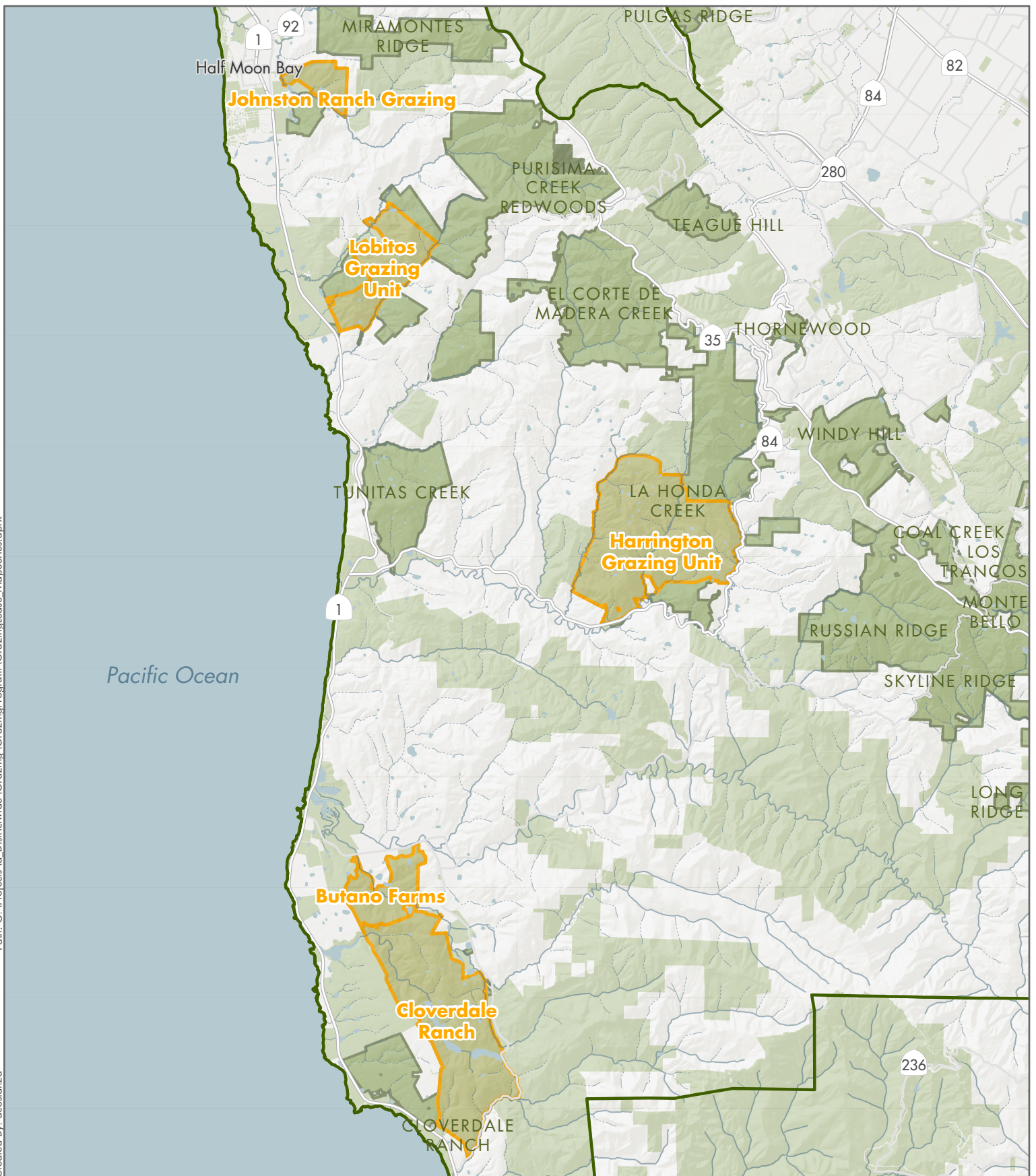
The 3,595-acre Harrington Grazing Unit contains approximately 2,611 acres of grassland areas suitable for livestock grazing. Sage Associates completed the Grazing Management Plan for the property in 2007 and it was subsequently approved by the Board as part of the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Master Plan in 2012 (R-12-83). The Board approved the selection of a grazing tenant for the grazing unit on November 13, 2013, after a competitive request for proposals process (R-13-103). In December 2013, the District entered into a five-year lease with the current AGCO Hay LLC. In August 2019, The District entered into an additional five-year lease with the existing tenant. In August 2022, the Board authorized the General Manager to enter into a new two-year lease with one-year option. In February 2024, in order to align the lease terms with the anticipated 2025 Request for Proposals process, District staff executed a new, one-year lease with AGCO Hay LLC, which expires October 31, 2025.

Butano Farms





The Butano Farms Grazing Unit has 443 acres considered suitable for livestock grazing. Koopmann Rangeland Consulting completed the Rangeland Management Plan for the property in 2022 and it was subsequently approved by the Board in December 2024 (R-24-156). When the Cloverdale Ranch was acquired by the District from POST, the District assigned the POST lease with the existing tenant, R. Dinelli Cattle Co. Reno Dinelli of R. Dinelli Cattle Co. had been leasing the grazing unit for several decades on a year-to-year basis. The lease that was assigned in May 2023 was year-to-year. That lease expired September 30, 2024. The current tenant has been in holdover tenancy since that time.

Cloverdale Ranch

The 3,375-acre Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit contains approximately 1,095 acres of grassland areas suitable for livestock grazing. Koopmann Rangeland Consulting completed the Rangeland Management Plan for the property in 2022 and it was subsequently approved by the Board in December 2024 (R-24-156). When the Cloverdale Ranch was acquired by the District from POST, the District assigned the POST lease with the existing tenant, Erik and Doniga Markegard. That lease expires September 30, 2025.



General overview of conservation grazing units

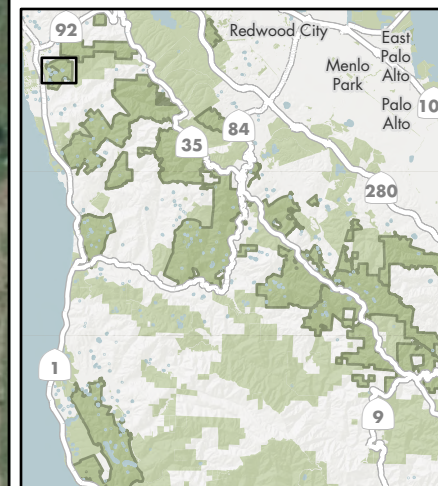
-  Grazing lease area
-  Other protected lands
-  Midpen preserve
-  MROSD Boundary

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
1/6/2025

























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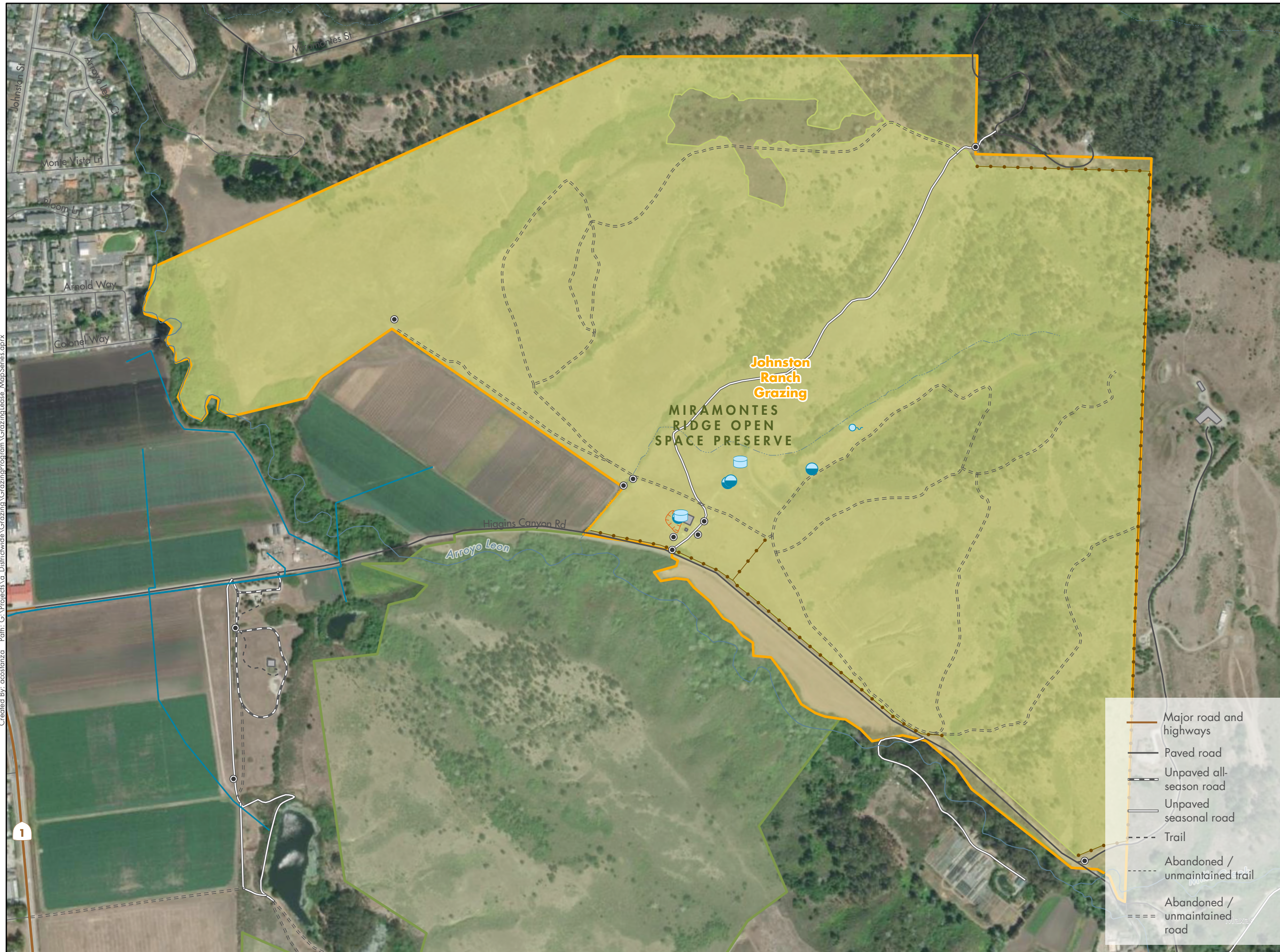




Johnston Ranch Grazing
















-  Grazing leases
-  Pasture
-  Preserve boundary
-  Corral
-  Gate
-  Fence
-  Natural barrier
-  Building
-  Spring
-  Water tank
-  Water trough
-  Waterline
-  Waterbody
-  Stream- perennial
-  Stream- intermittent








-  Major road and highways
-  Paved road
-  Unpaved all-season road
-  Unpaved seasonal road
-  Trail
-  Abandoned / unmaintained trail
-  Abandoned / unmaintained road

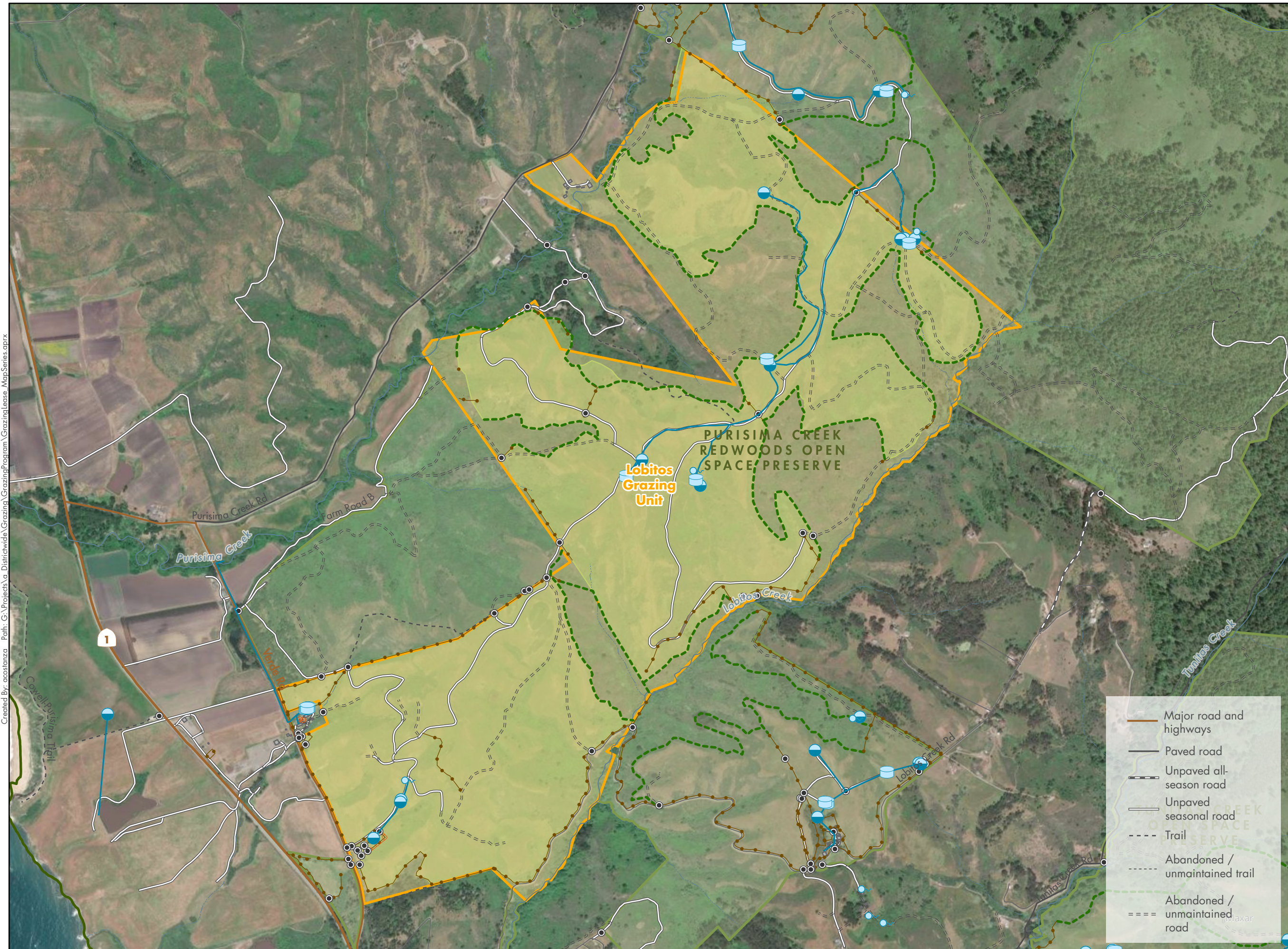




Lobitos Grazing Unit

-  Grazing leases
-  Pasture
-  Preserve boundary
-  Corral
-  Gate
-  Fence
-  Natural barrier
-  Building
-  Spring
-  Water tank
-  Water trough
-  Waterline
-  Waterbody
-  Stream- perennial
-  Stream- intermittent

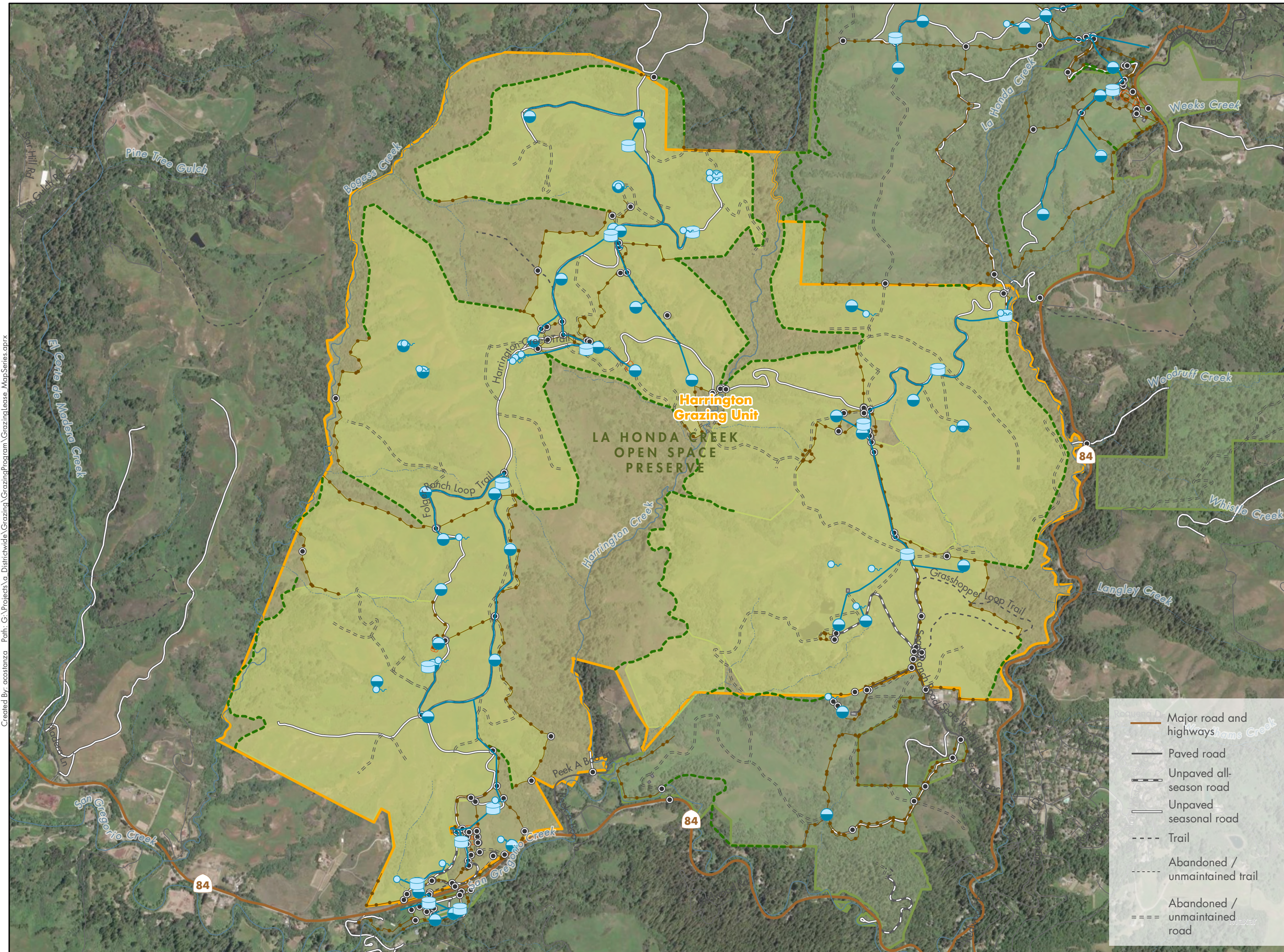
-  Major road and highways
-  Paved road
-  Unpaved all-season road
-  Unpaved seasonal road
-  Trail
-  Abandoned / unmaintained trail
-  Abandoned / unmaintained road



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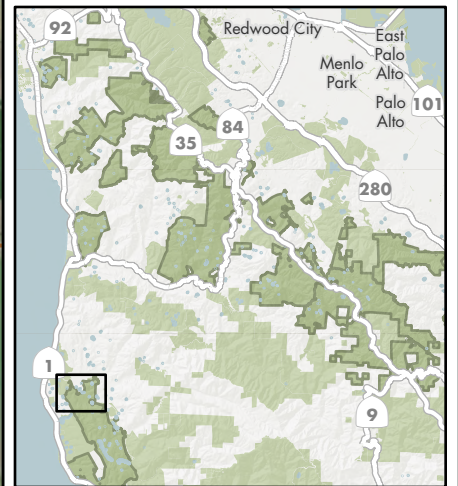


- Harrington Grazing Unit**
- Grazing leases
 - Pasture
 - Preserve boundary
 - Corral
 - Gate
 - Fence
 - Natural barrier
 - Building
 - Spring
 - Water tank
 - Water trough
 - Waterline
 - Waterbody
 - Stream- perennial
 - Stream- intermittent


















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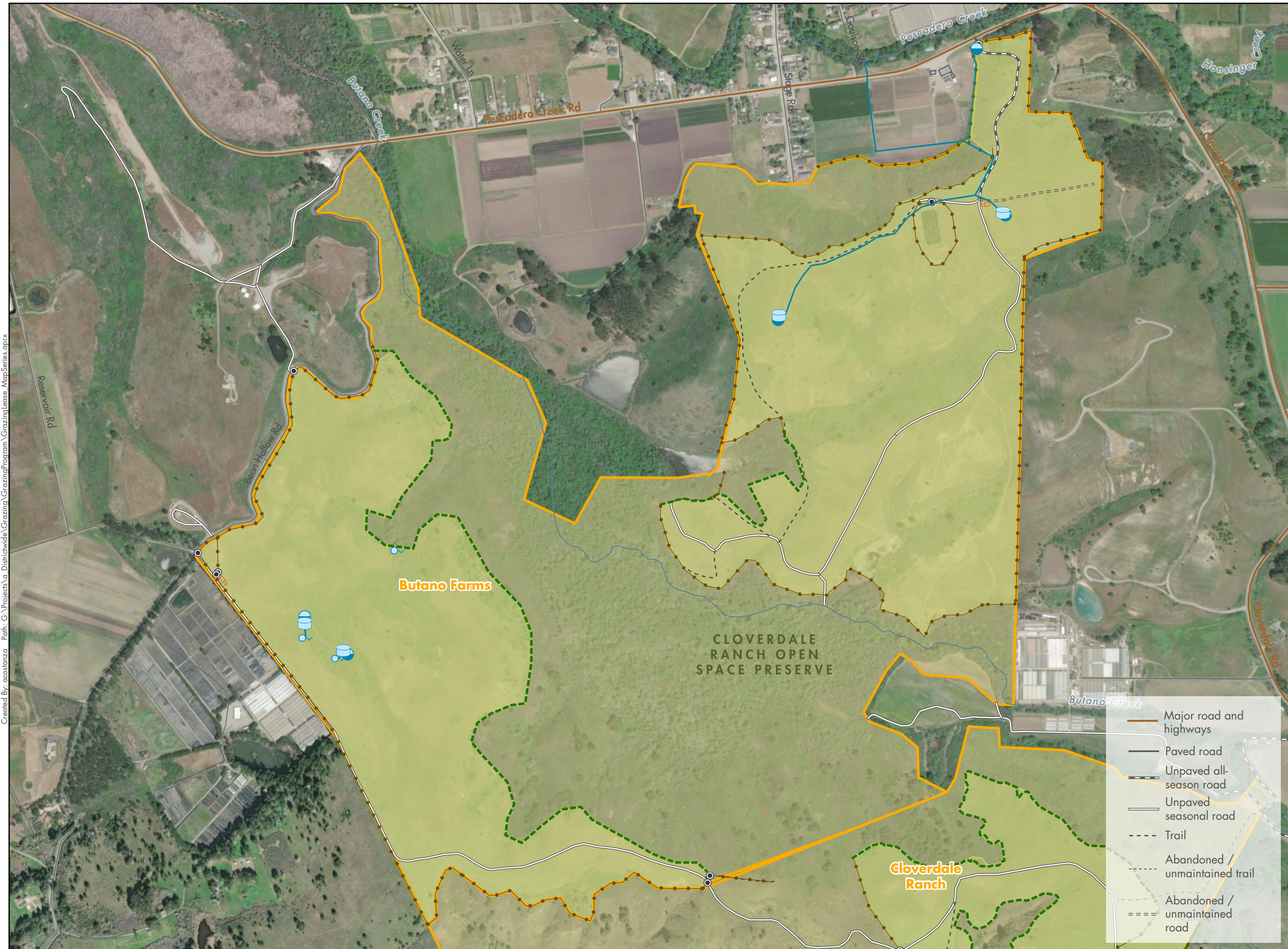
While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.



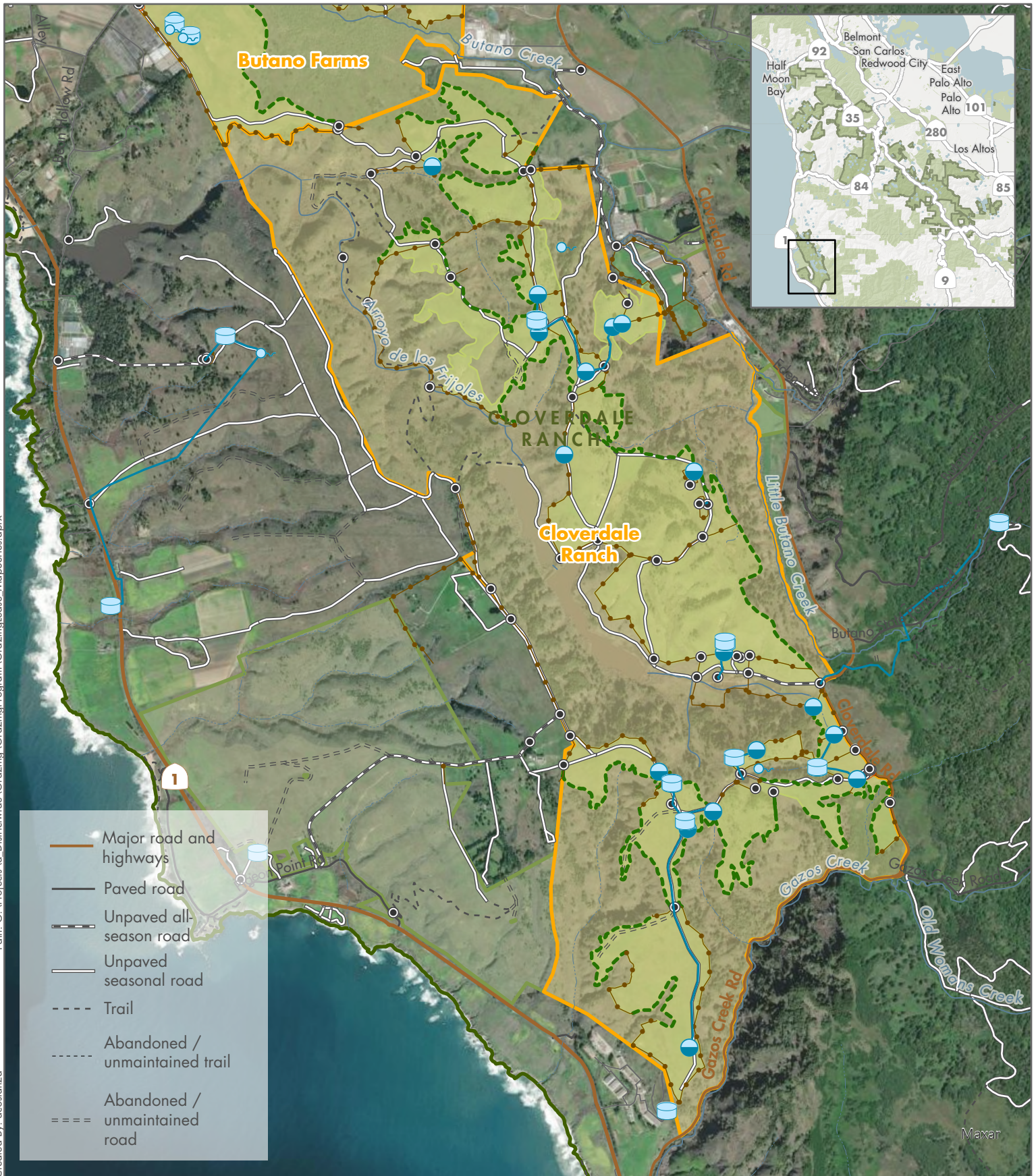
Butano Farms

-  Grazing leases
-  Pasture
-  Preserve boundary
-  Corral
-  Gate
-  Fence
-  Natural barrier
-  Building
-  Spring
-  Water tank
-  Water trough
-  Waterline
-  Waterbody
-  Stream- perennial
-  Stream- intermittent

-  Major road and highways
-  Paved road
-  Unpaved all-season road
-  Unpaved seasonal road
-  Trail
-  Abandoned / unmaintained trail
-  Abandoned / unmaintained road



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Cloverdale Ranch

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|-----------------|--|--------------|
| | Grazing leases | | Gate | | Spring |
| | Pasture | | Fence | | Water tank |
| | Preserve boundary | | Natural barrier | | Water trough |
| | Corral | | Building | | Waterline |

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
1/6/2025



Miles
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While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.



GENERAL MANAGER
Ana M. Ruiz

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Craig Gleason
Yoriko Kishimoto
Jed Cyr
Curt Riffle
Karen Holman
Margaret MacNiven
Zoe Kersteen-Tucker

June 5, 2025

Vince Fontana

VIA EMAIL: [REDACTED]

RE: Protest of Recommended Award – Elkus-Lobitos-South Cowell Conservation Grazing Lease

Dear Mr. Fontana,

This letter responds to the protest (“Protest”) you submitted regarding the recommended award of the Elkus-Lobitos-South Cowell Grazing Unit (“Lobitos”) lease, relative to the District’s Request for Proposals: Livestock Operator Leases on District Conservation Grazing Lands (“RFP”). The District issued the Notice of Recommended Award on May 8, 2024 and your Protest was timely transmitted to the District via email on May 15, 2024, within the protest period set forth in the RFP. A copy of the Protest is attached to this letter as Attachment 1.

The District received six proposals for the Lobitos Grazing Unit. Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC (“Willow Creek”) was the highest-ranked, Markegard Family Grass Fed LLC (“Markegard”) was the second-highest ranked, Avila Cattle (“Avila”) was the third-highest ranked and Vince Fontana (“Fontana”) was the fourth-highest ranked. The Notice of Recommended Award stated that the Lobitos lease was being offered to Willow Creek as the highest-ranked proposer for that grazing unit. A copy of the final RFP evaluation scores (“Final Scoring Summary”) showing each proposer’s scores and rankings is attached to this letter as Attachment 2.

As further described in Section B below, the Protest contains a number of allegations that the District’s RFP process was arbitrary or improper, and therefore, requests that the District award the Lobitos lease to Mr. Fontana.

A. Standard of Review

Grounds for protesting a qualifications-based solicitation are limited. Because the District retains discretion to evaluate proposals and proposers based on the District’s application of its policies and preferences, a protest contending that the District should have exercised its discretion in a different way is not a valid ground for sustaining the protest, absent a showing that the District exercised its discretion in an arbitrary or capricious manner. In that regard, the protestor has the burden of demonstrating that it is entitled to the requested relief. Allegations, arguments or conclusions that are not supported by evidence are not enough to sustain the Protest and there is no presumption that the District made errors, failed to follow procedures or engaged in misconduct. The protestor is required to provide sufficient, credible evidence of all allegations that it claims entitle it to relief. See

Cypress Security, LLC v. City and County of San Francisco, 184 Cal.App.4th 1003, 1010-1011 (1st Dist. 2010).

It also is important to note that a protest is not an opportunity to re-evaluate a proposal by introducing new information the protestor failed to submit with its proposal. Doing so would give protestors an unfair advantage by providing another opportunity to obtain an award after the District has concluded its evaluation. In addition, because a protest is directed at the RFP process itself, objections to District policy that have resulted in the RFP process are not relevant and will not be addressed.¹

Therefore, the primary questions in resolving the Protest are whether the District did any of the following in a way that prejudiced Mr. Fontana:

1. Did the District fail to follow the procedures specified in the RFP for conducting the solicitation?
2. Did the District fail to follow the methods for evaluating and scoring proposals specified in the RFP?
3. Did the District otherwise exercise its discretion in conducting the RFP in an arbitrary or capricious manner?

B. Analysis of Protest

The Protest contends that the District should not award the Lobitos lease to the top-scoring proposer, Willow Creek, and should instead award the lease to fourth-ranked Mr. Fontana, based on the following reasons:

1. The District's scoring of Mr. Fontana's proposal was arbitrary.
2. A District staff member was biased against Mr. Fontana.
3. The District did not provide Mr. Fontana with the score sheets submitted by each evaluation panel member ("Score Sheets").
4. Willow Creek has a conflict of interest that should disqualify it from being awarded the Lobitos lease.
5. The District denied Mr. Fontana's request for a 6-month extension of his current grazing lease if he were not awarded the Lobitos lease.

Before analyzing each of these allegations in detail, it is important to note that the Protest does not dispute the qualifications or evaluation of any proposer other than Willow Creek. The Protest does not mention the other two proposers who were ranked higher than Mr. Fontana for Lobitos, Markegard and Avila, nor does it dispute these proposers' scores or qualifications. As explained in Section C below, this fact is critical in determining whether the District could grant the relief that the Protest requests.

¹ For example, the Protest cites the District's Agricultural Policy and Coastal Service Plan in alleging that Lobitos should not have been part of the RFP process and that the District's management of Lobitos fails to comply with these policy documents. The Protest does not explain why these policy arguments are relevant to the RFP process. Because a protest only addresses issues related to the manner in which the District conducted the RFP process, these policy issues are not relevant to my determination. Furthermore, even if they could be interpreted in ways relevant to a protest of the RFP process itself, Mr. Fontana was required to raise these objections during the solicitation. See RFP Section IV.d., p. 12 ("Protests will not be considered for ... a dispute regarding the RFP requirements and/or specifications that could have been addressed by submitting a question and/or objection.")

Each of the above items is addressed in detail below, along with my determination of whether the Protest is sustained or denied for each item.

1. The District's scoring of Mr. Fontana's proposal was arbitrary (Protest Item #1)

The Protest contends that the District's scoring of Mr. Fontana's proposal was arbitrary. While not specifically argued, the suggestion is that the assigned scores were arbitrary because information submitted with the Protest demonstrates Mr. Fontana's qualifications to graze Lobitos. The Protest does not allege that the District failed to follow the evaluation process contained in the RFP.

The District's evaluation of proposals was conducted by five panelists, three internal District staff and two individuals from other local public agencies. The evaluation panel scored proposals using the criteria and process set forth in the RFP, with each section of proposals evaluated as either pass/fail or assigned points based on the content and presentation contained in the proposal. Additional details of the proposal evaluation were set forth in Attachment B to the RFP. Therefore, the criteria and process the District would use to evaluate proposals was clearly explained in the RFP, as was the basis upon which the District would award grazing leases:

"The District shall award one or more of the Grazing Lease(s) to the individual(s) or firm(s) whose proposal demonstrates an understanding and willingness to conduct their grazing activities in a manner that will promote maintenance and improvements to the property, enhance the natural resource value of the land, and work with the District to achieve the District's recreational and resource management goals." RFP Section III, p. 8.

Additional Evidence Cannot Be Introduced to Re-Evaluate Mr. Fontana's Proposal

The Protest transmits information, including various documents, that appear to be intended to supplement Mr. Fontana's proposal and demonstrate his qualifications. Evidence that Mr. Fontana is more qualified than other proposers, however, must have been submitted with his proposal to be evaluated. Allowing a proposer to supplement its proposal after the fact would give it an unfair advantage over other proposers.

To the extent that any portion of the Protest is intended to provide additional evidence of Mr. Fontana's qualifications to graze the Lobitos unit, it is improperly raised in the context of a protest. Mr. Fontana had the opportunity and should have included any relevant information about his qualifications and ability to perform in his proposal. This applies to the additional information in the Protest about Mr. Fontana's stewardship of Lobitos, and issues of predation, agricultural production and trails.

To the extent that Mr. Fontana was not aware that he could have submitted this information in his proposal or contended that the RFP requirements were not clear, the RFP precludes a protest on these grounds because he was required to obtain any clarification of the RFP's requirements during the question and answer period. See RFP Section IV.d., p. 12.

Additional Evidence Does Not Demonstrate That District's Scoring Was Arbitrary

To the extent that this additional information is intended to demonstrate that the District's scoring of Mr. Fontana's proposal was arbitrary or not in accordance with the stated RFP process, this contention is contradicted by the weight of the evidence, which supports the reasonableness of the District's scoring process and results.

Scoring Process and Results

In order to determine whether the District's scoring was arbitrary, I reviewed the District's Final

Scoring Summary, the template and criteria used by each evaluation panel member to score proposals (collectively “Proposal Scoring Template”) (Attachment 3), as well as the proposals submitted by Willow Creek and Mr. Fontana (Attachments 4 and 5). I also discussed the proposal scoring process with the District’s Conservation Grazing Program Manager, Matthew Shapero, who managed the RFP process.

As discussed with Mr. Shapero, all proposals were provided to each of the five evaluation panel members to review in accordance with the Proposal Scoring Template. Each evaluation panel member reviewed and scored each proposal independently, without conferring with any other evaluator. Scores were based on each evaluator’s judgment of how well each proposal addressed each section of the RFP submission criteria in the context of the District’s Conservation Grazing Program goals.

The evaluation panel received and scored eleven proposals. A comparison of first-round proposal scores reveals that proposers generally fell into two tiers, with four proposers scoring significantly higher than the remaining seven. The average score for the four top-tier proposers was 85.68 (including points allocated for tenant in good standing). The average of the lower tier scores (excluding an outlier low score of 50.7) was 65.85 (including points allocated for tenant in good standing). Mr. Fontana’s proposal score of 65.6 was almost exactly the same as the lower-tier average.

Mr. Fontana’s proposal scores do not demonstrate irregularities that might lead to skepticism about an evaluator assigning him arbitrary scores or being biased against him. The Final Scoring Summary shows that each evaluator assigned Mr. Fontana’s proposal a score in line with several other proposers. Moreover, the Final Scoring Summary shows that no evaluator assigned Mr. Fontana’s proposal the lowest score of any proposal they reviewed.

Finally, my independent review of both Willow Creek’s and Mr. Fontana’s proposals supports the evaluation panel’s scoring. A side-by-side comparison of these proposals illustrates why evaluators may have scored Willow Creek’s proposal higher than Mr. Fontana’s. The Protest’s contention that the evaluation of Mr. Fontana’s proposal was arbitrary is therefore not supported by the evidence.

Tenant in Good Standing Points

The Protest also claims that the District’s scoring was arbitrary because Mr. Shapero told Mr. Fontana “I gave everyone a 3” for rent payments. I discussed this issue with Mr. Shapero, who confirmed that this discussion and statement was not related to the RFP but had taken place more than a year prior to issuance of the RFP in the context of Mr. Fontana’s annual tenant evaluation process (“Performance Evaluation”).

With respect to the RFP scoring itself, points for being a tenant in good standing were assigned for overall tenant performance, not rent payments, and were based on the scores assigned during previous Performance Evaluations. An addendum to the RFP was issued on March 28, 2025, which contained the questions asked by proposers and answered by the District (“Q&A”) pursuant to the process set forth in the RFP. Q&A #5 provided as follows:

5. Q. Will the ten (10) points for tenant in good standing be automatically applied?

A. No. The tenant in good standing points will be applied on a scale of 0-5 points in two separate phases of the RFP process. In the first phase of the RFP (the written proposal), up to five points will be added to the proposal score based on previous tenant performance as documented in prior years' Performance Evaluations. For the second phase (the site visit), up to five points will be added to the site visit score, for existing tenants only, based on District's evaluation of the existing tenant's discussion of its history working with the District.

Mr. Shapero explained that the tenant evaluations assign tenants a numerical score across seven performance categories. Scores can range from 1 to 5 for each category with a score of 3 or higher signifying that a tenant is meeting District expectations in the performance of their grazing lease, and a score below 3 signifying that a tenant is not meeting District expectations. I have reviewed Mr. Fontana's tenant evaluations for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 grazing seasons, which show that Mr. Fontana received scores of 2.6 and 2.5, respectively. These scores signify that Mr. Fontana did not meet District expectations in the performance of his Lobitos grazing lease during these seasons.

As with Performance Evaluations, proposal scoring for being a tenant in good standing also was based on a scale of 1-5. Mr. Shapero confirmed that Mr. Fontana received three out of five points on the tenant in good standing section of the proposal scoring. Therefore, Mr. Fontana's previous Performance Evaluation scores were consistent with the District's assignment of points for tenant in good standing and with the stated RFP criteria. Therefore, this aspect of Mr. Fontana's proposal scoring was not arbitrary, and the Protest contains no evidence that would support a contrary interpretation.

Scoring Conclusion

A comprehensive review of the evidence surrounding the District's scoring of Mr. Fontana's proposal does not show that it was carried out in an arbitrary manner. The District scored Mr. Fontana's proposal in accordance with the criteria and using the process set forth in the RFP. The Protest contains no evidence that the District's process was arbitrary or unfair to Mr. Fontana. Therefore, the Protest's contention that the District's scoring of Mr. Fontana's proposal was arbitrary or improper is denied.

2. A District staff member was biased against Mr. Fontana (Protest Item #2)

The Protest contends that a member of the District's staff, Assistant General Manager, Brian Malone, has a bias against Mr. Fontana.² The Protest's sole basis for this allegation is a statement by a third party, Alan Phillips, that Mr. Fontana and Mr. Malone "developed an unspoken but rabid animosity toward each other." Protest p. 22. The facts in the Protest supporting Mr. Phillips' belief are that he previously represented Mr. Fontana's son in a criminal case regarding killing a mountain lion on District property, and that Mr. Malone knew Mr. Fontana was supporting his son. The Protest includes no additional facts that would show that Mr. Phillips' recollection is accurate or credible. The Protest also does not explain how, even if true, Mr. Malone's bias affected the District's evaluation of Mr. Fontana's proposal.

Nonetheless, I discussed this allegation with Mr. Shapero and Mr. Malone, both of whom confirmed that Mr. Malone was not a member of the evaluation panel that scored Mr. Fontana's proposal, and did not review or discuss Mr. Fontana's proposal with any evaluation panel member. Mr. Malone

² The Protest does not allege that any other District staff person or any member of the evaluation panel was biased against Mr. Fontana.

confirmed that he discussed the allocation of tenant in good standing points with Mr. Shapero, the only portion of the evaluation criteria not assessed by the evaluation panel. Mr. Malone stated that his involvement with this aspect of proposal scoring was to ensure that the points allocated to each tenant were consistent with previous tenant evaluations. In addition, Mr. Malone stated that he does not hold a bias against Mr. Fontana.

While the Protest does contain some facts that might support an inference of bias, it does not provide sufficient evidence for me to conclude that such a bias actually exists, especially since such an inference is rebutted by Mr. Malone's statements to the contrary. More importantly, however, there is no evidence that Mr. Malone's discussion of tenant in good standing points prejudiced Mr. Fontana in any way. As discussed above, Mr. Fontana's assigned points for tenant in good standing are consistent with the scores on his Performance Evaluations. Therefore, the Protest's contention that the District's evaluation of Mr. Fontana's proposal was arbitrary or improper due to bias is denied.

3. The District did not provide Mr. Fontana with Score Sheets (Protest Item #3)

The Protest contends that the RFP process for Lobitos was compromised because District staff "destroyed" or "disposed of" the Score Sheets. Based on this allegation, the Protest argues that the District should nullify the evaluations and scoring for Lobitos. This allegation is contained in a letter attached to the Protest from a third party, Nancy Fontana, who was not involved in the RFP, did not submit a proposal, and whose expertise is not stated. The letter contains a number of legal conclusions but provides no citations to any legal authority to support these conclusions.

As an initial matter, Mr. Fontana's request for the Score Sheets was governed by the Public Records Act ("PRA"). The types of records the District must retain is governed by record retention laws and the District's record retention policies. The PRA does not address which records the District is required to retain. Instead, it governs which records the District is required to disclose to the public, and which records are "exempt" from public disclosure.

The sole basis for the Protest's claim that District staff "disposed of" or "destroyed" the Score Sheets, "noting those documents were not subject to a Public Records Act request," are the District's two responses to Mr. Fontana's request for the Score Sheets.³ See Protest p. 19. Based on my review of the District's responses, dated April 30, 2025 and May 14, 2025, neither response states that the District has "disposed of" or "destroyed" any records. The District's responses expressly acknowledge the PRA request but state that the requested records are exempt from disclosure under the PRA because the District does not retain them in the ordinary course of business. Therefore, the allegations in Nancy Fontana's letter are based on a misinterpretation of the District's PRA responses.⁴

Based on my own review of the District's PRA responses and discussions with District legal counsel, the District has complied with its obligations under the PRA and records retention laws. As stated in the District's May 14th response, pursuant to the District's record retention policies and practices, the Final Scoring Summary, along with the RFP, proposals, and notices of ranking and award are retained in the District's files as the final record of the solicitation. The scores on individual sections of the Score Sheets are tabulated and incorporated into the Final Scoring Summary as the District's official

³ The letter identifies a range of documents relating to the RFP (*i.e.*, "all documentation, including but not limited to staff notes, notes of evaluators, drafts etc."). However, a review of Mr. Fontana's PRA requests as of the date of the Protest shows that he only requested the Score Sheets and the status of lease awards. Mr. Fontana did not request any of the other records identified in the letter.

⁴ Moreover, I have confirmed that, even though they are "drafts" and therefore exempt from disclosure, the Score Sheets have not been "destroyed" or "disposed of" because they were the subject of a PRA request.

record of its evaluation of proposals. Earlier drafts such as score sheets and evaluator notes are not retained by the District in the ordinary course of business. Therefore, these documents are not required to be retained by the District prior to a request for them under the PRA and are exempt from disclosure under the PRA as drafts. See Gov. Code §§ 60201, 7927.500.

The Final Scoring Summary is the District's official record of the solicitation. It allows proposers and the public to see how the District arrived at its award recommendations and to verify that awards comply with RFP requirements. The Final Scoring Summary not only shows the final scores for each proposer, but also shows the detailed scores assigned by each evaluation panel member to each proposal. This allows for a comparison of scores between proposers from each evaluator based on the submitted proposals. While a proposer may disagree with a particular score assigned to them by an evaluation panel member, individual score sheets, evaluator notes and similar drafts, are not necessary for a proposer to determine whether the District has acted arbitrarily or failed to follow the specified RFP process.⁵

In any event, the Protest does not explain why the District's determination that the Score Sheets are exempt from disclosure constitutes an arbitrary action, or a failure to comply with the RFP. Nor does the Protest provide any facts showing that Mr. Fontana has been prejudiced by his inability to review the Score Sheets. Mr. Fontana may have wanted the Score Sheets to support his position that he was entitled to a higher score for his proposal. That argument, however, is not sufficient to sustain the Protest. Mr. Fontana cannot substitute his judgment for the evaluators' judgment. The Protest fails to explain what other purpose the Score Sheets would have served, how Mr. Fontana's inability to review them constitutes a procedural defect in the RFP process, or why the Final Scoring Summary would not have shown any arbitrary scoring or procedural defect with the RFP.

Therefore, the Protest's contention that the District should nullify all evaluations and awards for Lobitos due to the Score Sheets not being disclosed is denied.

4. Willow Creek has a conflict of interest that should disqualify it from being awarded the Lobitos lease (Protest Item #4)

The Protest contends that Willow Creek has a conflict of interest because one of its members holds a "management position" with the District based on a grant for a study at Lone Madrone, another District property on which Willow Creek operates pursuant to a grazing lease.

I discussed this allegation with District staff, in particular whether anyone associated with Willow Creek holds any position with the District and whether Willow Creek has received a grant from the District for any work on the Lone Madrone grazing unit. No individual associated with Willow Creek has an employment position with the District in any capacity. In addition, the District has not provided any grants to Willow Creek. Willow Creek has applied for and received grants from other agencies to conduct studies on Lone Madrone, but these grants were not made by the District. Willow Creek's only association with the District is as a grazing tenant on its Lone Madrone grazing unit.

The Protest does not explain why a grazing operator would have a conflict of interest for one grazing unit simply because it also grazes another District property or because it has independently applied

⁵ This especially appears to be the case here because Mr. Fontana never requested any other records of the solicitation that would have allowed him to analyze whether the scores on the Score Sheets were arbitrary. He did not request any other proposals, or the scores assigned to any other proposer. Therefore, he would have had no way of comparing his scores to any other proposer's. It is difficult to see what use the Score Sheets would have to Mr. Fontana other than to bolster his claim that he should have received more points than what the evaluators had determined.

for and received grants from other agencies. Therefore, the Protest's contention that Willow Creek has a conflict of interest, and therefore should not be awarded the Lobitos lease, is denied.

5. The District denied Mr. Fontana's request for a 6-month extension of his current grazing lease (Protest Item #5)

The Protest states that the District denied Mr. Fontana's request, during the RFP's question and answer period, for a six-month extension to his current grazing lease at Lobitos. The Protest does not explain how this relates to the RFP process itself or the Protest's requested relief. Q&A #16 provided:

16. Q. Would District allow for a 6-month extension for cow/calf operations on current leases, in the event they are not awarded new leases?

A. No, the District cannot extend current leases because the new leases being awarded in this RFP process commence immediately upon the expiration of the current lease (i.e., October 31st). Therefore, extending a current lease would interfere with the new lessee's occupancy of the Grazing Unit. Given the variety of operations that our District tenants have (e.g. spring-calving cow/calf, fall-calving cow/calf, direct-to-consumer, seasonal stocking) there is no single date that might minimize impacts to an outgoing operator. Operators are expected to adjust their operations to account for the established lease term.

The District's response is clear that no proposer would be allowed to holdover under its existing lease because it would interfere with the occupancy of the new tenant. The RFP established the schedule for commencement of new grazing leases, and I confirmed with Mr. Shapero that the District did not deny this request for Mr. Fontana while allowing it for another proposer. The Protest fails to explain how this decision resulted in an unfair RFP process, and any contention that this decision supports the Protest's requested relief is denied.

C. Protest's Requested Relief

The Protest requests two different, and contradictory, types of relief. First, the Protest requests that the District award the Lobitos lease to Mr. Fontana. Second, the Protest requests that the District invalidate all Lobitos awards. Each relief is addressed below.

Award Lobitos Lease to Mr. Fontana

As stated in Section B above, the Protest does not contend that the District's evaluation of either Markegard or Avila was improper or arbitrary and contains no evidence or grounds for determining that the Lobitos award should not be made to Markegard or Avila. The Protest does not explain why the District should award the lease to Mr. Fontana when both of these proposers were more highly ranked than Mr. Fontana for Lobitos. The RFP states that the District will recommend award of leases for each grazing unit to the highest-ranked proposers. Only if those proposers are the highest-ranked for multiple grazing units will the District consider awarding a lease to a lower-ranked proposer. See RFP Section III.c., p. 10.

In this case, even if I had determined that Willow Creek should be disqualified due to a conflict of interest, the appropriate recommendation would not be to award Lobitos to Mr. Fontana, but to award it either to Markegard or Avila. Therefore, the Protest's requested remedy that the Lobitos lease be awarded to Mr. Fontana is denied.

Invalidate All Evaluations and Awards for Lobitos

While not requested in the body of the Protest, the Nancy Fontana's letter states that the District should nullify all evaluations and awards for Lobitos because of the letter's erroneous belief that the District had destroyed the Score Sheets. The Protest does not explain how this requested relief aligns

with the request to award the Lobitos lease to Mr. Fontana. If all awards for Lobitos were invalidated, the result would not be an award of Lobitos to Mr. Fontana, but no award to any proposer.

The RFP does provide that the District reserves the right to choose not to award a lease for any grazing unit. *See* RFP Section III.c., p. 10. But because the District's process was not improper or arbitrary, there is no basis to grant the Protest's requested relief to invalidate all evaluations and awards for Lobitos. Therefore, this requested remedy is denied.

D. Conclusion

The District's process for selecting a tenant for the Lobitos Grazing Unit followed the procedures specified in the RFP, including the methods for evaluating and scoring proposals. The selection procedure was fairly administered and did not favor or prejudice any proposer. The proposer that received the highest score by the District's evaluation committee for Lobitos was Willow Creek, who the General Manager recommends for award of the lease.

Pursuant to the procedure set forth in the RFP, I have determined that the Protest is denied. My determination is not appealable. I recommend that the result of the District's evaluation committee, and corresponding General Manager's recommendation, be upheld. The District's General Manager will recommend awarding the Lobitos Grazing Lease to Willow Creek at the June 11, 2025 meeting of the Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

/s/ Stefan Jaskulak

Stefan Jaskulak, CTP, CPFO
Chief Financial Officer – Director of Administrative Services

CC: Lucy White, [REDACTED]
Ana Ruiz, General Manager

Attachments: Att 1 Protest
Att 2 Final Scoring Summary
Att 3 Proposal Scoring Template
Att 4 Willow Creek Proposal [Redacted]
Att 5 Vince Fontana Proposal [Redacted]



May 15, 2025

Matthew Shapero

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

5050 El Camino Real

Los Altos, CA 94022-1404

RE: PROTEST BY VINCE FONTANA FOR LOBITOS GRAZING LEASE

Dear Mr. Shapero:

Thank you for this opportunity to Protest the recent RFP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vince Fontana Jr.', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Vince Fontana Jr



PROTEST BY VINCE FONTANA FOR LOBITOS GRAZING LEASE

To Whom It May Concern:

I am protesting the award of Lobitos Grazing Unit to Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC. My Protest includes several factors related to the RFP and Midpen. The Guiding Documents for Midpen are: *San Mateo County Farm Bureau's MOU, Midpen's Coastside Protection Program inclusive of the Service Plan, and Final Environmental Impact Report | FEIR are throughout this document

Following are issues inclusive in my Protest.

1] Lobitos Should Not Have Been In The RFP | Operator At Time of Acquisition

I have been managing cattle grazing on private lands for 50 plus years, and on publicly owned lands for 20 years. My first grazing lease was on Elkus property in the mid 1970s, then I started grazing Beffa property, and Bob Marsh property. In the 1980s POST started purchasing those properties, which were combined to create Lobitos Grazing, then Midpen purchased the Lobitos Grazing Unit, where I was the continuing operator,* and where I continue to be.

My management and sustainable practices on the Cowell Property with previous owners the Marsh Family, was shown by the invasive weed control and eradication of the coyote brush. The stock pond, which is wildlife friendly, was constructed by Bob Marsh, Bob Aranimi and me, in the mid 1980s.

As a proven good tenant of Lobitos, I, Vince Fontana, should have the continued right to lease Lobitos. My ranching practices and stewardship have maintained and developed Lobitos to high standards. Lobitos is known to be the best maintained pastures owned by Midpen, both at acquisition and currently.

Ranching on grazing lands has been my life and livelihood, on Lobitos for the entire 50 years of my career. My goal has always been to create the best grazing lands possible, with the best management practices. The rewards of my dedication to optimizing the potential of Lobitos, have lasted decades and many will last for decades to come. There are both stewardship and financial implications, for me to leave Lobitos.

It is a break in the Coastal Culture to change tenants in an arbitrary method with an unnecessary RFP.

****FEIR Mitigation Measure AGR-3g: Amend the Draft Service Plan to include the following policy:***
When acquiring lands in agricultural use, the acquisition shall be subject to continued use by the owner or operator until such time as it is sold or leased pursuant to the use and management plan adopted for the property...

***MOU AGRICULTURE Mitigation AGR3g:** When acquiring lands in agricultural use, the acquisition shall be subject to continued use by the owner or operator until such time as it is sold or leased pursuant to the use and management plan adopted for the property. All agricultural land which is not needed for recreation or for the protection and vital functioning of a sensitive habitat will be permanently protected for agriculture and, whenever legally feasible, the District will offer for sale or lease the maximum amount of agricultural land to active farm operators on terms compatible with the recreational and habitat use. Lands that do not have significant recreation or sensitive habitat values and which can clearly support productive agricultural operations will generally be offered for sale while other agricultural lands will generally be offered for lease.

2] The RFP is Flawed

a] Supervisor Ray Mueller

A message was read by Mike O'Neill, from Supervisor Ray Mueller, at the Farm Bureau meeting on May1, 2025. The message referred to a letter Supervisor Ray Mueller sent to Midpen on April 1, 2025,

"...expressing concern regarding the ranking system used in the RFP Process for agricultural leases on District owned land. Supervisor Mueller in the letter expressed concern that the current process under ranks legacy farming and ranching on the Coast. He also expressed the current process also undervalues the investment that ranchers and farmers have made in their herds, property and business.*

Agriculture has forged vital current and historical links to the Coastsides and San Mateo County. Agriculture has preserved Open Space on the Coast. There have been many concerns expressed about RFP ranking system Mid-Pen is using from community stakeholders. Unfortunately, that concern has now been born out and the Supervisor is dismayed that Mr. Fontana has lost his lease and is concerned that other legacy farmers and ranchers may as well in the future.

While the Supervisor is aware that Mr. Fontana has expressed public criticisms of the Mid-Peninsula Open Space District-management practices and policies, the encouragement of free speech is vital for citizens to respect and work with the District as a public agency. The decision to end Mr. Fontana's lease also may be viewed as having a chilling effect on criticism and first amendment rights related to the district.

For a rancher whose family has ranched the coastsides for a hundred years to lose their lease and livelihood at least at face value risks undermining the trust that the community has in the

district. The supervisor hopes that the District *will take this comment into consideration as it evaluates other legacy farmers and ranchers.*

► **See Attachments 1 & 2 Supervisor Ray Muller**

b] RFP Q&A

In the Question period of the RFP, I asked if it were possible to get a 6 month extension on my lease to disperse my herd. Midpen's answer was no. After 50 years of my dedicated grazing operation, I was denied any flexibility by Midpen in supporting my financial demise in a rapid removal of my herd. This puts huge stress on my operation. As a rancher I have invested my heart and soul into developing and maintaining Lobitos. From the first days of invasive weed control and fencing, to constructing the pond in the 1980s with Bob Marsh and Bob Aranimi, to this present time providing the best feed, environment, and care for my cattle, and optimizing benefits to the land and resources.

c] Scores and Leases Status

I requested the score[s] for my Proposal on April 23, 2025, twenty days after it was submitted. After receiving no answer, I made a second request of the score[s] on April 28, 2025. Also requesting the status of the lease awards. I had gotten a phone call from a local rancher that Lobitos had been awarded.

On April 30, 2025 I received Midpen's reply to my April 23, 2025/ April 28, 2025 requests,

"This letter responds to your Public Records Act (PRA) requests received by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) on April 23, 2025 and April 28, 2025. Your April 23rd request seeks records pertaining to the evaluation of your proposal for the District's 2025 Grazing Lease Request for Proposals (RFP), and your April 28th request seeks information regarding the status of leases that are the subject to the RFP, which the District interprets to mean records relating to the District's ranking of proposers and negotiation of grazing leases.

The requested records are exempt from disclosure under Gov. Code §§ 7922.000 and 7927.500. These records pertain directly to the District's ongoing RFP process. Disclosure of these records would reveal specific, confidential details about an active solicitation, thereby potentially impairing the District's selection and negotiation process. The District will produce non-exempt records responsive to your request after it completes its evaluation of, and negotiations with, the selected proposers. In addition, certain records may be exempt as drafts that the District does not retain in the ordinary course of business. See Michaelis, Montanari & Johnson v. Superior Court, 38 Cal. 4th 1065, 1072-1077 (2006); see also Times Mirror Company v. Superior Court, 53 Cal.3d 1325, 1338 (1991); Evid. Code §1040; Labor and Workforce Development Agency v. Superior Court, 19 Cal.App.5th 12 (2018).



These determinations were made by Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager and Egan Hill, Assistant General Counsel.”

► ***See Attachment 3 Midpen April 30, 2025 Email***

d] Lease Awards and Protest

i] May 4, 2025 research discovered that Liz Reikowski Duncan, of the awardees Matthew Reikowski, Liz and Blake Duncan of Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC, is in a management position with Midpen with a grant for a Grazing Study of Lone Madrone Grazing Unit and Big Dipper/Mindego Grazing Unit.

“Liz Reikowski Duncan ... She co-owns Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC (WCLC), a land stewardship company she founded in 2018 with her brother, Matthew Reikowski, and her husband, Blake Duncan.

WCLC specializes in targeted rotational grazing, a method that enhances native grassland health while maintaining profitable cattle operations. Their work includes managing grazing leases on public lands, such as those overseen by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, including the Lone Madrone and Big Dipper/Mindego grazing units.

This creates a Conflict of Interest, and should disqualify Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC.

ii] Awards | Protest

A Midpen Memorandum went out to “Interested Parties” on May 8, 2025 [Thursday]

Re: Final award for the MROSD RFP, “Livestock Operator Leases on District Conservation Grazing Lands”

There is no mention of the Protest period of 5 days, and the date that would be, if that includes weekend days or not. An email was sent to Midpen on May 9, 2025 requesting the date the Protests are due. Another request sent May 12, 2025, with a reply by Matthew Shapero on the same date, that the date was May 15, 2025. I made a third request for my Proposal scores on May 12, 2025 to Matthew Shapero, I received a reply on May 14, 2025 from Maria Soria stating, “individual score sheets that would show the scores assigned for each section of the RFP are drafts that are not retained by the District.”

May 14, 2025 at 8:56am a response to my request for my scores from Midpen. Leaving me without the Scores per sections of the RFP:

“RESPONSE: Request For Vince Fontana Proposal Score[s]

Good morning Mr. Fontana,

Scores assigned by each evaluation panel member for Mr. Fontana’s proposal are set forth in the Proposal Submissions and Scoring Summary spreadsheet (Final Scoring Summary) provided to Mr.



Fontana on May 8, 2025. Pursuant to the District's record retention policies and practice, the sum of scores for individual sections of a proposal are tabulated in the Final Scoring Summary. The Final Scoring Summary, along with the RFP, proposals, and notices of ranking and award are retained in the District's files as the final record of the solicitation. Therefore, individual score sheets that would show the scores assigned for each section of the RFP are drafts that are not retained by the District in the ordinary course of business and are exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act.

Thank you,

Maria

Maria Soria, MMC, CPMC

*District Clerk/Assistant to the
General Manager"*

► ***See Attachment 4 Midpen Email May 14, 2025***

Not having the section scores for my Protest, puts me at a disadvantage to respond specifically to score issues. This type of non-response, is indicative of Midpen responses.

► ***See Attachments 5 & 6 Midpen Proposers & Scorers***

Midpen sheets revealed in excel document sent on May 8, 2025, "Per your PRA request dated on April 28, 2025, attached please find the document responsive to your request." Showing "Final Scoring Summary" Highest Scores. The excel document included sheets that revealed information we were seeking. 1] Proposers 2] Scorers. Which included me and my total score [without section scores].

These scores make no sense. Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC [WCLC] has extremely limited experience with a score of 87.1, whereas my score is 65.6. First Round - WCLC scores from reviewers 1-5 were 1] 88.5 2] 84 3] 90 4] 86 5] 87- Vince Fontana scores reviewers 1-5 were 1] 54 2] 77 3] 66 4] 58 5] 73. I question who the reviewers were and details of their decisions.

In a case where Midpen rated ranchers for rent payments with the scores 1 to 5. I got a 3. I questioned why I got a 3 when I had always paid my rent on time. Matthew Shapero replied, "I gave everyone a 3." This is discriminatory and/or arbitrary scoring.

After 50 years of good stewardship, Matthew Shapero, made one phone call to me stating, "Sorry you did not have a high enough score to move forward."

► ***See Attachment 7 Midpen Awards***



Nancy Fontana made a statement questioning the integrity of the RFP process.

► ***See Attachment 8 Nancy Fontana Statement***

3] Vince Fontana Good Stewardship

My stewardship at Lobitos has been consistent for 50 plus years, I have never been found by Midpen to have faulted on any issue. The problems between Midpen and me are communications, and the lack of responses from Midpen. As a rancher my first loyalty is to the land and cattle grazing, in all cases trying to respect the plans of Midpen.

As a rancher, there are innumerable things that are incorporated into good practices, and the timing of those things. Lobitos, was my grazing operation, Midpen purchased it and found no deficiencies in it at acquisition. The weed abatement practices I implemented are reflected in the lands there today. In my operation I always have a long-term vision, and address the lands to optimize grazing potential. Most things I do are simply intuitive, in a constant analysis of the situation, the weather, cattle, grass, soil, the date/time of year, etc. I take action accordingly, and try to be proactive to achieve the best long-term results in the most efficient way. Having been raised by a farmer, raising Brussel Sprouts and Artichokes near Lobitos, I know a lot about the soil, and get optimum results from my practices.

I have been penalized for being proactive, for doing things that needed to be done. I saw a star thistle issue on a Saturday when I was out searching for cows after a predator issue, on Sunday I went back and sprayed the star thistle, with a targeting spray for invasive weeds. On Monday I called at 8:30 to notify Louis Reed of possible predator issue, and that I had sprayed five-star thistle plants on Sunday. One year later Louis Reed said that I had been penalized for not having gotten prior approval to spray. So I was penalized for being proactive, minimizing the carbon footprint by limiting trips to the ranch, and stopping an invasive weed before it spread.

I saved the Lobitos pond on January 1, 2023, the pond was breaching, I dug the spillway deeper to allow more water out, and tarped the levy. I notified staff on New Years Day, but they were unavailable. Their first response was January 3, 2023, from Louis Reed. After several phone calls and discussions with Louis Reed, he advised me that Resource Department had to see it first, and they would not be out for several months. He said that livestock ponds are not a priority, and that they had a lot of cleanup work to do. On April 1st, I suggested that I could repair the pond, that my tractor was broken, but I had reached out and gotten price of \$1500-2000 for the repair. I also suggested that the repair needed to be done no later than July, avoiding the need to compact the levy. There was no response. Later when my tractor had been repaired, I said that I could do the repair for nothing. In October I reached out that the pond had to be repaired for the availability of water. I was told not to touch it, because they were dealing with FEMA. That if I touched it FEMA would not give them any funds. As of this date in 2025, the pond has not been repaired and now has greater repair work needed.



There was a marijuana issue at Lobitos a few years ago. I called Brian Malone to let him know. The following year I mentioned to him that it was not cleaned up. The third year Doug Edwards and I called the Sheriff. The Sheriff's department pulled 4000 plants out of the Lobitos Creek.

The legacy rancher is invaluable in managing agricultural lands. I have been integral to the culture of agriculture for more than 50 years.

4] Predator Issue Limiting Agricultural Potential

Lobitos is particularly vulnerable to predator attacks, due to the fact that it is bordered by Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. In 2004 I had zero stock losses, the problem began in 2007 and has escalated each year, in 2023 a loss of 12%, then 2024 a loss of 20% of my stock, 12 out of 60.

Due to predator issues, at the Big Dipper in 2010 I changed my operation from Stocker to Feeder Cows to try and cope with the losses. When I presented the problem, Midpen responded that they were experimenting with the lion issue - at my cost. In the recent Proposal I changed my operation from Calf/Cow to Stocker to try and limit my losses. On another point, Ranchers should have means of protecting themselves and their stock against predators, including their Second Amendment Right, which has been denied by Midpen, or be assisted in some form. Who more would need a gun that a lone rancher on vast last lands? ... especially surrounded by Public Lands with massive growth conducive to predator access and protection. Predators will always exist but they need to be managed.

Vince Fontana Podcast with California Cattlemen Foundation

S3 E7: PREDATORS - Mountain Lions with Vince Fontana in Half Moon Bay – April 8, 2024

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/s3-e7-predators-mountain-lions-with-vince-fontana-in/id1583268115?i=1000651829041>

FEIR | As in Agricultural Guideline G.3.3

For district-owned lands, the plan shall describe the crop and/or livestock potential for the property together with the management actions required to protect existing agricultural production (e.g., growing seasons, water requirements, pesticide, manure, and waste management) and the agricultural potential of the land.

USDA | Options to manage predations include those recognized by the USDA

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/operational-wildlife-activities/protect-livestock-from-predators>

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE | USDA

Operational Activities: Protecting Livestock From Predators



Predation Management Options

Livestock producers that use an integrated predator management program, consisting of nonlethal and lethal techniques, are most effective at reducing livestock loss. Husbandry practices and other actions taken by producers can limit the impacts of predation...

The WS National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research and investigational activities on a wide variety of wildlife damage issues. </national-wildlife-programs/nwrc> NWRC support of predation management includes significant resources devoted to maintaining existing tools as well as the development of new methods. Current include investigations of chemical reproductive inhibitors, development and testing of alternative mechanical capture methods, and projects that evaluate nonlethal methods.

5] Predator Issue Creating Financial Hardships / Feasibility

Predators are destroying the coastal agricultural industry. In 2005 I had the Big Dipper Lease and had zero losses to predators, by 2018 I had an 8% loss in my Stocker operation. I went to Midpen and asked what I could do, and what they could do to help fix the predator problem. Midpen never responded. The next year I cut my Stocker operation from 100 down to 50, operating at 50% of the herd, but with 100% of the expenses. I decided that if I were reimbursed for the losses I could continue. If I were not reimbursed, I would have to make a business decision. Again, I got no response from Midpen. I did not graze Big Dipper for two years due to the predator issue. That second year Midpen notified me that the Board would not be renewing my lease. I reapplied for the lease, I was one of two bidders. Brian Malone said that Susan Wiedeman had not advertised to get more bidders, so they cancelled the RFP process and reissued it six months later.

Like the Big Dipper, Lobitos has reached the point of being a financial challenge due to predation. Despite continual requests for what I could do to protect my herd, and what plans Midpen had to address the problem, there has been no response. The supposed mitigation measure for Midpen to pay for losses only exists in theory. With my 20% loss at Lobitos in 2024, Midpen paid 5%, so 15% remains. The issue goes beyond even the compensation, watching your herd get attacked and killed by the ever increasing predators, and losing an escalating portion of your business operation each year, is devastating. With Rent at \$15,000 for 18 months, losses of \$20,000 on 12 head, I have a combined loss in 18 months of \$38,000.

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT | Wednesday, April 9, 2025 - 5:00 pm | Mountain Lions at 30 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cW044g5cXu0>



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING | MOU

BETWEEN THE SAN MATEO COUNTY FARM BUREAU

AND MID PENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

As per the MOU Midpen is obligated “to protect and encourage viable agricultural use of land, and preserving agricultural operations... Farm Bureau and the District desire to work together cooperatively to support and preserve agricultural operations and to protect the economic and physical integrity of agricultural lands... to preserve and encourage viable agricultural operations, and avoid adverse effects on agriculture.”

6] Agricultural Production

Agricultural lands are specifically identified in District lands separate from Open Space, as a cultural and productive asset identifying the character of the San Mateo Coast.

Cattle grazing is a huge asset to coastal lands. It creates firebreaks, creates open spaces which are safer sanctuaries for other wildlife, it adds an economic hub for the community, and most importantly it delivers a product which feeds, clothes, and has numerous other benefits.

SERVICE PLAN Guideline G.3.2

Improvements or public uses located upon open space lands other than agriculture shall be located away from existing prime agricultural lands and Unique Farmlands or Farmlands of Statewide Importance as shown on Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency. All trails and other public facilities should be located so as not to fragment agricultural operations unless no feasible alternative is available...

SERVICE PLAN Guideline G.3.3

In the case of District lands adjacent to agricultural production, the agricultural production plan shall develop site-specific measures to prevent activities on District lands from interfering with adjacent agricultural production.

7] Trails

In my proposal I changed my entire operation from Calf/Cow to Stocker, related to the predator issue, but also to help work with Midpen’s plans. Calf/Cow needs a longer period of time of use on the ranch. There are issues with calving and motherly instincts which could have negative, or harmful, effects on the cattle and/or the public.

VINCE FONTANA PROPOSAL Operating Plan addresses issues of operations, including trails.

► **See Attachment 9 Vince Fontana Operating Plan**



8] Alan Phillips Review

Alan Phillips, former legal counsel for Vince Fontana in matters related to Midpen, and currently personal advisor. A review related to the RFP, Brian Malone, and extension request is attached.

► ***See Attachment 10 Alan Phillips review of the RPF process and extension request***

Conclusion

In conclusion of this Protest of the RFP, I hope that there will be considerations that I continue to be the leaser at Lobitos. This Protest is not just for me, it is for the Agricultural Culture of the Coast.

Note: Confidential Financial Documentation will be under separate cover separately as an adjunct to the VINCE FONTANA PROPOSAL

**ATTACHMENTS**

- 1] Letter from Supervisor Ray Mueller to Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District - April 1, 2025**
- 2] Message from Supervisor Ray Mueller read by Mike O'Neill at Farm Bureau Meeting - May 1, 2025**
- 3] Midpen Brian Malone response to Vince Fontana's requests sent to - April 30,2025**
- 4] Mipen Maria Soria response to Vince Fontana's request – May 14, 2025**
- 5] Midpen Maria Soria response to April 28, 2025 request for Scores – Proposers – May 8, 2025**
- 6] Midpen Maria Soria response to April 28, 2025 request for Scores – Scores – May 8, 2025**
- 7] Midpen Lease Awards**
- 8] Nancy Fontana Statement regarding the RFP**
- 9] VINCE FONTANA PROPOSAL Operational Plan**
- 10] Alan Phillips email review of the RPF process and extension request**

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Ray Mueller
Board of Supervisors, Third District

County Government Center
400 County Center, 1st Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063
650-363-4569

April 1, 2025

Ana Ruiz, General Manager
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, CA 94022

Dear General Manager Ruiz:

I write to you in response to the communications I have received from concerned coastside residents. They have raised the concern that Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has released an RFP to select tenants on district property and that the RFP does not adequately consider the value-add that the land stewardship of existing tenants in good standing bring to the district. I respectfully request that you do consider those benefits and include additional value to the RFP scoring matrix as you move forward in this process.

As you are aware, the proliferation and ability for current agriculture and ranching tenants to sustain operations has been declining in recent years. The costs involved in production and distribution have increased; competition with larger markets has brought on added burdens; and improvements related to climate adaptation, sustainable land management, and safe and healthy worker conditions may all be costly. Overall, it is a challenging endeavor to maintain a successful enterprise, let alone considering the challenges involved and the time it takes to develop such an operation from scratch.

The County of San Mateo has made a commitment to its agriculture and ranching producers and workers to support safe and healthy work environments, to promote healthy harvests, to reduce red tape where possible, to minimize environmental impact for future generations, and to pursue policies and infrastructure investments that ultimately protect San Mateo County's agriculture and ranching industry for years. I value the partnership and vision that our two organizations share regarding the above goals, and I urge you to take the value of long-established tenant relationships and agriculture operations into consideration when grading during the RFP process. We must stabilize this sector of our economy, and not risk destabilizing successful operations. In doing so, the district will demonstrate our shared values of investing in San Mateo County farmers, ranchers, and stewards of our open space.

Sincerely,



Ray Mueller
San Mateo County Supervisor
District 3





5/1/25, 3:54 PM

AT&T Yahoo Mail - Re: Mid Pen Tonight

Re: Mid Pen Tonight

From: Ray Mueller (rmueller@smcgov.org)

To: michael.j.oneill@sbcglobal.net; menlo.mueller@gmail.com

Date: Thursday, May 1, 2025 at 03:14 PM PDT

My name is Mike O'Neill, and I am speaking on behalf of Supervisor Ray Mueller, who is unable to attend tonight.

The Supervisor regrets that he must make this statement but feels compelled to speak candidly to the Mid-Peninsula Open Space District.

On April 1, 2025, Supervisor Mueller sent a letter to Mid Pen expressing concern regarding the ranking system used in the RFP Process for agricultural leases on District owned land.

Supervisor Mueller in the letter expressed concern that the current process under ranks legacy farming and ranching on the Coast. He also expressed the current process also undervalues the investment that ranchers and farmers have made and will make in their herds, property and business.

Agriculture has forged vital current and historical links to the Coastside and San Mateo County. Agriculture has preserved Open Space on the Coast. There have been many concerns expressed about RFP ranking system Mid-Pen is using from community stakeholders. Unfortunately, that concern has now been born out and the Supervisor is dismayed that Mr. Fontana has lost his lease and is concerned that other legacy farmers and ranchers may as well in the future.

While the Supervisor is aware that Mr. Fontana has expressed public criticisms of the Mid-Peninsula Open Space District-management practices and policies, the encouragement of free speech is vital for citizens to respect and work with the District as a public agency. The decision to end Mr. Fontana's lease also may be viewed as having a chilling effect on criticism and first amendment rights related to the district.

For a rancher whose family has ranched the coastside for a hundred years to lose their lease and livelihood at least at face value risks undermining the trust that the community has in the district. The supervisor hopes that the District will take this comment into consideration as it evaluates other legacy farmers and ranchers.

[Get Outlook for iOS](#)

about:blank

1/2



GENERAL MANAGER
Ana M. Ruiz

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Craig Gleason
Yoriko Kishimoto
Jed Cyr
Curt Riffle
Karen Holman
Margaret MacNiven
Zoe Kersteen-Tucker

April 30, 2025

Vince Fontana

VIA EMAIL: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Fontana,

This letter responds to your Public Records Act (PRA) requests received by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) on April 23, 2025 and April 28, 2025. Your April 23rd request seeks records pertaining to the evaluation of your proposal for the District's 2025 Grazing Lease Request for Proposals (RFP), and your April 28th request seeks information regarding the status of leases that are the subject to the RFP, which the District interprets to mean records relating to the District's ranking of proposers and negotiation of grazing leases.

The requested records are exempt from disclosure under Gov. Code §§ 7922.000 and 7927.500. These records pertain directly to the District's ongoing RFP process. Disclosure of these records would reveal specific, confidential details about an active solicitation, thereby potentially impairing the District's selection and negotiation process. The District will produce non-exempt records responsive to your request after it completes its evaluation of, and negotiations with, the selected proposers. In addition, certain records may be exempt as drafts that the District does not retain in the ordinary course of business. *See Michaelis, Montanari & Johnson v. Superior Court*, 38 Cal. 4th 1065, 1072-1077 (2006); *see also Times Mirror Company v. Superior Court*, 53 Cal.3d 1325, 1338 (1991); Evid. Code §1040; *Labor and Workforce Development Agency v. Superior Court*, 19 Cal.App.5th 12 (2018).

These determinations were made by Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager and Egan Hill, Assistant General Counsel.

Regards,

/s/ Maria Soria, District Clerk

5/14/25, 11:10 AM

Gmail - RESPONSE: Request For Vince Fontana Proposal Score[s]



Lucy White <lucywhitedesign@gmail.com>

RESPONSE: Request For Vince Fontana Proposal Score[s]

1 message

Maria Soria <msoria@openspace.org>

Wed, May 14, 2025 at 8:55 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Good morning Mr. Fontana,

Scores assigned by each evaluation panel member for Mr. Fontana's proposal are set forth in the Proposal Submissions and Scoring Summary spreadsheet (Final Scoring Summary) provided to Mr. Fontana on May 8, 2025. Pursuant to the District's record retention policies and practice, the sum of scores for individual sections of a proposal are tabulated in the Final Scoring Summary. The Final Scoring Summary, along with the RFP, proposals, and notices of ranking and award are retained in the District's files as the final record of the solicitation. Therefore, individual score sheets that would show the scores assigned for each section of the RFP are drafts that are not retained by the District in the ordinary course of business and are exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act.

Thank you,

Maria

**Maria Soria, MMC, CPMC**

District Clerk/Assistant to the

General Manager

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
5050 El Camino Real, Los Altos, CA 94022**(650) 625-6544 Direct**openspace.org**From:** Lucy White <[REDACTED]>**Sent:** Monday, May 12, 2025 1:44 PM**To:** Matthew Shapero <mshapero@openspace.org>**Subject:** Fwd: Request For Vince Fontana Proposal Score[s]<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=3ce51b0739&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f:1830847130476960071%7Cmsg-f:1832112030733965870&...> 1/2



Proposer	Johnston Ranch	Lobitos	Harrington	Butano	Cloverdale
AGCO Hay LLC			1	3	2
Avila Cattle Co		1			
Cronin Ranch			1	3	2
Hang'in P Cattle Company		1		2	
Markegard		3	2		1
Najera Tormey		1			
Pacheco	1				
Pomponio			3	2	1
R.Dinelli				1	
Vince Fontana		1			
Willow Creek		3	1		2

FIRST ROUND

Proposer	1	2	3	4	5	Average with tenant in good standing	Average w/o tenant in good standing
AGCO Hay LLC	93	89	90	75	93	88.0	83.0
Avila Cattle Co	94.5	95	70	64	74		57.0
Crosin Ranch	87.5	85	65	47	64		81.7
Foran NP Cattle Company	42.5	46	59	47	59		50.7
Marksgard Family Grass Fed LLC	91.5	83	96	81	88	87.7	82.7
Najera Tomery	62	53	77	57	62		52.2
Pacheco Cattle	79.5	87	85	71	77	79.9	
Pomponio Ranch LLC	84.5	77	78	59	74		70.5
R Dinella Cattle Co.	68	79	66	58	67	67.6	
Vince Fontana	54	77	66	59	73	65.6	
Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC	88.5	84	90	85	87		87.1

*Includes one-point deduction for page limit overage

*Includes one-point deduction for page limit overage

*Includes one-point deduction for page limit overage

SECOND ROUND

Proposer	1	2	3	4	5	Average with tenant	Avg. tenant question	Average w/o tenant
AGCO Hay LLC	95	91	94	69	94	88.6	4.3	83.8
Avila Cattle Co	65	78	89	67	90			74.8
Marksgard Family Grass Fed LLC	93	95	100	78	95	92.2	4.4	87.8
Pomponio Ranch LLC	68	75	85	53	85			73.2
R Dinella Cattle Co	63	58	69	51	71	64.4		
Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC	93	84	95	87	90			85.2

COMBINED	With tenant	W/O tenant
AGCO Hay LLC	176.8	196.8
Avila Cattle Co		142.1
Marksgard Family Grass Fed LLC	178.9	170.5
Pomponio Ranch LLC		143.7
R Dinella Cattle Co	132.0	
Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC		172.3



Memorandum

To: Interested Parties; File
 From: Matthew Shapero, Conservation Grazing Program Manager
 Date: May 8, 2025
 Re: Final award for the MROSD RFP, "Livestock Operator Leases on District Conservation Grazing Lands"

Eleven (11) proposals were received on April 3, 2025 for the RFP. Paper proposals were scored and the three (3) highest-scoring proposers for each Grazing Unit were selected to participate in a Site Visit/Interview. Site Visit/Interviews were scored and final, cumulative scores calculated. The final ranking for each Grazing Unit is as follows:

Grazing Unit	Rank I	II	III
Johnston Ranch	Pacheco Cattle		
Lobitos	Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC	Markegard Family Grass Fed LLC	Avila Cattle Co.
Harrington	AGCO Hay LLC	Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC	Markegard Family Grass Fed LLC
Butano Farms	AGCO Hay LLC	Pomponio Ranch LLC	R. Dinelli Cattle Co.
Cloverdale Ranch	Markegard Family Grass Fed LLC	Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC	AGCO Hay LLC

Leases were offered to and accepted by the highest-ranking proposers on the Johnston Ranch, Lobitos, Harrington, and Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Units. For the Butano Farms Grazing Unit, the lease was offered to the highest-scoring and second-highest-scoring proposers, both of whom declined. Ultimately, the third-highest-scoring proposer, R. Dinelli Cattle Co., accepted the lease.

Thank you,

Matthew Shapero
 Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
 Conservation Grazing Program Manager

The Request for Proposals (RFP) process for the Lobitos Ranch has been compromised by Mid Peninsula Regional Open Space District staff (Staff). As such the evaluations & award should be nullified.

It is vital that all documentation, including but not limited to staff notes, notes of evaluators, drafts etc., be maintained until any Respondents' time-frame for right to protest has passed and any statute allowing recourse through the Courts has passed. These documents provide vital information regarding the evaluation process as well as the thoughts, considerations and concerns expressed by evaluators, and the premise on which they made their final evaluation decision.

The information contained in any document related to the RFP and subsequent decisions should be maintained should those documents and notes be the subject of a Discovery request during litigation.

Staff indicated they disposed of (destroyed) the notes, identified as "drafts" of evaluators, noting those documents were not subject to a Public Records Act request. Staff knew the requests for the documents were made on behalf of a Respondent to the RFP and potential protestor or litigant. Please refer to a message from Maria Soria, dated May 14, 2025 and that of Brian Malone dated April 30, 2025.

The District's position undermines a potential protestor or litigant's ability to assure the right to a fair process. Giving staff the authority to destroy any type of documentation when there is an open, ongoing RFP process is questionable at the very least, and undermines the public's trust in the fairness of that process, which brings into question Staff's intent, as well as that of the District.


Nancy Fontana

05-15-2025
Date



1] 2025 Vince Fontana Proposal | Operating Plan

2025 Vince Fontana Proposal Operating Plan

This proposal and grazing plan are directed at the needs and wants of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District "District," which incorporates rotational grazing on the Lobitos Grazing Land "Lobitos." I am working within the guidelines of the Farm Bureau MOU, relative to recreational activities coexisting with livestock grazing, in order to meet District goals.

There are particular points related to Lobitos that have prompted me to change my entire operation from cow/calf, to stocker operation, at a cost. The main issues are water, invasive weeds, trail, liability, and predators.

By changing Lobitos to a stocker operation, I believe, will fit District's operations and needs addressing grazing goals, and for my business to continue. My plans are to advance my ranching business into the future, my grandson Hunter Fontana, sixth generation in my family to be significantly involved in agriculture and my operation.

The issues related to water, invasive weeds, trail, liability, and cattle conflicts, will be addressed to the best of my ability, describe following:

1. **Water.** The new water system has yet to be proven. A stocker operation will have less pressure and impact on the water system, due to the fact that 80-90% of the cattle will be off the property in July, cattle will return in October / November, leaving the heated summer months with few or no cattle, reducing the need for water.
2. **Invasive Weeds.** Invasive Weeds can be addressed more readily with stockers than they can with a cow/calf operation.
3. **Trail.** Stockers will fit District trail maintenance and needs requirements, with more positive and less impact on the trails. My plan is to start grazing with 400-500 lb stockers in the summer, and remove them at approximately 750-800 lbs in the fall. Stockers with those weights and sizes, and with months off the land, would have less negative effects on District trails, than cows weighing 1200-1500 lbs on a year round grazing program. The stockers will also reduce the impact of walking on the trails in the wet season. This will reduce the cost and/or need for maintenance by District. Also with no, or small number of cattle, the District maintenance work can be done without cattle interference.



4. Liability. Cow/calf operation creates a higher risk of negative public and/or maintenance worker interactions with cows, due to maternal protection instincts, and larger cattle and bulls. A cow will approach each interaction with maternal instincts at the forefront. On Driscoll and Mindogo District leases cattle are fenced off from most trails, or trail areas are closed during calving season. The Lobitos lease has the trail going through the center of property, also as close as 200 feet from the watering troughs, therefore negative interactions with people and dogs with cows is inevitable. Also, with a cow/calf operation, there are breeding bulls with weight up to 2000 lbs which can have negative interactions with the public or maintenance resulting in injury or even death. My concerns with having the wrong type of cattle on Lobitos with a cow/calf operation creates a liability issue that I cannot afford. With a stocker operation 99% of these interactions would not occur. Rotational grazing with a cow/calf operation entails a significant amount of maneuvering the herd, especially in keeping the mother and calf together. Stocker operations, the rotational operation has an easier flow and runs more smoothly. Rotations have more potential, than simply grazing cows, of interference from the public in both operations, but significantly less with a stocker herd. Being Lobitos is such an open environment between livestock and the public, I feel that a stocker operation is the only option for this District Unit.

5. Predators. Lobitos lease has a history of interactions with lion losses which created very costly financial losses for me. I have addressed, met, discussed, and argued with District staff and Fish and Game, solely with the objective of addressing wildlife and livestock industry. Lobitos is particularly vulnerable to predator attacks due to the fact the it is surrounded by Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. My calf/cow operation at Lobitos has become almost unaffordable, where I had a successful operations on that land, long before it was purchased by District. A Stocker operation is the last thing that I can try to help lessen my losses.

Predators are threatening livestock and the livestock industry. The issue should be discussed openly to seek solutions that protect the livestock businesses. Like invasive plants that have negative impacts on the use and quality of lands, predators left entirely unmanaged have negative impacts on the livestock industry and our food supply. I hope that District, Fish and Game, and Land Foundation monitor the situation and consider changes in policy to help the agricultural industry gain trust in them. Wildlife protection and Livestock preservation need a balance that creates a safe, productive, and diverse area.

As explained above, 2025 Vince Fontana Proposal is based on a stocker operation.



5/15/25, 8:26 AM

Gmail - Re: Updated documents



Lucy White <lucywhitedesign@gmail.com>

Re: Updated documents

1 message

Alan Phillips

Mon, May 5, 2025 at 5:47 PM

Reply-To: Alan Phillips

To: Lucy White

Cc: Nancy Fontana

Lucy: I have closely reviewed MROSD emails, and yours, and I respond as follows::

1. You may know that in years past, I represented Greg Fontana in a criminal case regarding the killing of a lion on MidPen property; this case was spearheaded by Brian Malone who laid claim as the self-appointed guru of land management over MidPen property. The case had no merit and Greg accepted a plea of guilty to a DMV misdemeanor. Brian Malone knew that Vince Fontana was supporting Greg, and Vince/Brian developed unspoken but rabid animosity toward each other. This attitude by a quasi-public officer (Malone) has no place in the bidding process. Malone should recuse himself.

2. Whether or not an extension of Vince's lease is viable, litigation in the the court system could easily extend to over 6 months; while expensive, it may be the only option. That said, please know that I am over 80 years of age and am not capable in the courtroom any longer, although happy to help when/where able. Vince knows this. I would suggest Vince explore an action for accounting and declaratory relief to compel MidPen/Malone to recuse himself from the bidding process. I believe an action for accounting allows damages for attorney's fees

Your observations are spot-on.

/s/ Alan

Alan M. Phillips

On Monday, May 5, 2025 at 03:00:01 PM PDT, Lucy White <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Alan -
BJ -

Changes on the last two pages

III] RFP Process and Lease Awards**2. Communications and Lease Awards**

Lucy

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=3ce51b0739&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-a-r-1378931371903050432%7Cmsg-f:183133004633309770...> 1/1

ATTACHMENT 2

ATTACHMENT 3

Proposer	Johnston Ranch	Lobitos	Harrington	Butano	Cloverdale
AGCO Hay LLC			1	3	2
Avila Cattle Co		1			
Cronin Ranch			1	3	2
Hang'in P Cattle Company		1		2	
Markegard		3	2		1
Najera Tormey		1			
Pacheco	1				
Pomponio			3	2	1
R.Dinelli				1	
Vince Fontana		1			
Willow Creek		3	1		2

FIRST ROUND

Proposer	1	2	3	4	5	Average with tenant-in-good-standing	Average w/o tenant-in-good-standing
AGCO Hay LLC	93	89	90	75	93	88.0	83.0
Avila Cattle Co	64.5	65	70	84	74		67.5
Cronin Ranch	67.5	65	65	47	64		61.7
Hang'in P Cattle Company	42.5	46	59	47	59		50.7
Markegard Family Grass Fed LLC	91.5	83	95	81	88	87.7	82.7
Najera Tormey	62	53	77	57	62		62.2
Pacheco Cattle	79.5	87	85	71	77	79.9	
Pomponio Ranch LLC	64.5	77	78	59	74		70.5
R.Dinelli Cattle Co.	88	79	86	58	67	67.6	
Vince Fontana	54	77	86	58	73	65.6	
Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC	88.5	84	90	86	87		87.1

*Includes one-point deduction for page limit overage

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SECOND ROUND

Proposer	1	2	3	4	5	Average with tenant	Avg. tenant question	Average w/o tenant
AGCO Hay LLC	95	91	94	69	94	88.6	4.8	83.8
Avila Cattle Co	85	78	83	67	80			74.6
Markegard Family Grass Fed LLC	93	95	100	78	95	92.2	4.4	87.8
Pomponio Ranch LLC	68	75	85	53	85			73.2
R.Dinelli Cattle Co.	63	68	69	51	71	64.4		
Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC	90	84	95	67	90			85.2

COMBINED	With tenant	W/O tenant
AGCO Hay LLC	176.6	166.8
Avila Cattle Co		142.1
Markegard Family Grass Fed LLC	179.9	170.5
Pomponio Ranch LLC		143.7
R.Dinelli Cattle Co.	132.0	
Willow Creek Land and Cattle LLC		172.3

ATTACHMENT 3

Highest scorers (ROUND 1)

Johnston Ranch
Lobitos
Harrington
Butano Farms
Cloverdale Ranch

1	2	3	4
79.9 Pacheco Cattle			
87.1 Willow Creek	82.7 Markegard	67.5 Avila	62.2 Najera Tormey
88.0 AGCO Hay LLC	87.1 Willow Creek	82.7 Markegard	70.5 Pomponio
83.0 AGCO Hay LLC	70.5 Pomponio	67.6 R. Dinelli	61.7 Cronin
87.7 Markegard	87.1 Willow Creek	83.0 AGCO Hay LLC	70.5 Pomponio

Highest scorers (COMBINED)

Johnston Ranch
Lobitos
Harrington
Butano Farms
Cloverdale Ranch

1	2	3	4
79.9 Pacheco Cattle			
172.3 Willow Creek	170.5 Markegard	142.1 Avila	62.2 Najera Tormey
176.6 AGCO Hay LLC	172.3 Willow Creek	170.5 Markegard	70.5 Pomponio
166.8 AGCO Hay LLC	143.7 Pomponio	132.0 R. Dinelli	61.7 Cronin
179.9 Markegard	172.3 Willow Creek	166.8 AGCO Hay LLC	70.5 Pomponio

ATTACHMENT 3

ATTACHMENT 3

Conservation Grazing RFP Selection Committee RFP Scoring Table

Proposer _____
Selection Committee Member Number (e.g. 1-5) _____

Section	Alloted Points	Score	Scoring Criteria
1. Introduction			
a. Cover page	Required		Contain all elements i-v
b. Table of contents	Required		Includes a table of contents
2. Business Information			
a. Statement of Experience	10	Required	i. Business name and address (headquarters and other office locations if applicable) (no points)
		__ / 2	ii.. Description of organization's structure, principals, employees, client base, etc., to demonstrate the stability and strength of the business (Scale 0-2)
		__ / 2	iii.. Description of organization's agricultural operation, including type/age class of livestock produced, production methods, marketing methods and additional commodities produced. (Scale 0-2)
		__ / 2	iv. Area(s) of specialization and expertise (if applicable). (Scale 0-2)
		__ / 2	v. Length of time managing cattle grazing on (a) publicly owned lands (b) private lands. (Scale 0-1, 1 if 2+ years experience)
		__ / 2	vi. Brief description and location of facilities within the business' ownership or control that directly enhance the ability to fulfill the terms and conditions of the lease and management plan. (Scale 0-2)
Section total		__ / 10	
b. List of references	Required		Includes a list of references, with all elements i-vi
c. Financial Statement	Required		Includes all documents to satisfy requirements of financial statement
d. Grazing Lease Agreement	Required		Includes statement of applicant's acceptance of Grazing Lease Agreement
3. Background & Technical Experience			
a. Livestock Operating Experience	10	__ / 3	i. List of properties grazed (Scale 0-3)
		__ / 3	ii. Ability to perform maintenance (Scale 0-3)
		__ / 2	iii. Equipment (Scale 0-2)
		__ / 2	iv. Other factors (Scale 0-2)
		Section total	
b. Managing Livestock Conflicts	10	__ / 5	i. Experience with recreation (Scale 0-5)
		__ / 5	ii. Experience with predation (Scale 0-5)
		Section total	
c. Managing for Natural Resources	20	__ / 3	i. Experience under natural resources plan (Scale 0-3)
		__ / 5	ii. Experience managing for invasive plants (Scale 0-5)
		__ / 3	iii. Monitoring on rangelands (Scale 0-3)
		__ / 3	iv. Pastures ready to be grazed/rotated (Scale 0-3)
		__ / 1	v. Other monitoring/special training (Scale 0-1)
		__ / 5	vi. Grazing for native and/or sensitive species habitat (Scale 0-5)
Section total		__ / 20	

4. Operations and Employee Staffing			
a. Operational Plan	20	Required	i. List of grazing units (check up to three) ___ Johnston Ranch ___ Lobitos ___ Harrington ___ Butano Farms ___ Cloverdale Ranch
		___ / 5	ii. Class of cattle (Scale 0-5)
		___ / 10	iii. Pasture and ranch management (Scale 0-10)
		___ / 5	iv. Management of unit or across multiple units (Scale 0-5)
	Section total	___ / 20	
b. Employee Staffing Plan	5	___ / 1	i. List all key personnel (Scale 0-1)
		___ / 1	ii. Site presence (Scale 0-1)
		___ / 1	iii. Availability and response time (Scale 0-1)
		___ / 1	iv. Work and communicate with Grazing Program Manager (Scale 0-1)
		___ / 1	v. Work with NRCS, RCD, received grant funds (Scale 0-1)
	Section total	___ / 5	
5. Alignment with District Agricultural Policy			
a. Environmental Sustainability	5	___ / 1	i. Reduce non-renewable energy sources (Scale 0-1)
		___ / 1	ii. Reduced water use (Scale 0-1)
		___ / 1	iii. Drought contingency plans (Scale 0-1)
		___ / 1	iv. Carbon storage (Scale 0-1)
		___ / 1	v. Other factors / quality of response (Scale 0-1)
Section total	___ / 5		
b. DEI	5	___ / 5	(Scale 0-5)
c. Community outreach, education, local food systems	5	___ / 5	(Scale 0-5)
d. San Mateo County	5	___ / 5	(Binary, 0 or 5; 5 if they live in and/or their business in based in County)

SUBTOTAL
(Out of 95)

e. Tenant in Good Standing	5	___ / 5	(Scale, 0-5; will be determined by Midpen staff)
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TOTAL
(Out of 100)

RFP Timeline

- Release of RFP January 14
- Mandatory Informational Meeting February 20
- (Optional) Individual Property Tours March 11th and March 13th
 - March 11: Johnston Ranch (8am), Lobitos Grazing Unit (11am), Butano Farms (3pm)
 - March 13: Harrington (8am), Cloverdale Ranch (2pm)
- Deadline to Submit Questions March 14
- Answers to Questions March 28
- Proposal Submittal Date April 3, 3pm
- Proposals sent by email to Selection Committee members April 3 (5pm)
- Deadline for Selection Committee members to provide proposal scores April 10 (5pm)
- Highest-ranking proposers contacted to set up site visits April 11
- Interview/site visits April 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, and 24
- Final Selection Committee Meeting April 28 (12:30pm)
- Selected Operator Signs Lease May 1*
- District Board of Directors Meeting to Award Lease May 28*
- Grazing Lease Term Begins November 1, 2025

Paper Proposal

SECTION	SCORE (points)
1. Introduction	
a. Cover page	*
b. Table of Contents	*
2. Business Information	10 (Section total)
a. Statement of Experience	10
b. List of References	*
c. Financial Statement	*
d. Grazing Lease Agreement	*
3. Background & Technical Experience	40 (Section total)
a. Livestock Operating Experience	10
b. Managing Livestock Conflicts	10
c. Managing for Natural Resource Objectives	20
4. Operations and Employee Staffing	25 (Section Total)
a. Operational Plan	20
b. Employee Staffing Plan	5
5. Alignment with District Agricultural Policy (adopted November 2023)**	25 (Section Total)
a. Proposal furthers District policy goals on Environmental Sustainability	5
b. Proposal furthers District policy goals on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	5
c. Proposal furthers District policy goals on community outreach, education, and local food systems	5
d. Proposer lives in or operates a business in San Mateo County	5
e. Proposer is currently a District tenant in good standing	5
Total Score Without Oral Interview/Site Visit (sum of Sections 2-5)	100

- Review RFP Scoring Template
- How to think about scoring
 - Scale 0-1
 - 0 = Unacceptable/Section Missing
 - 1 = Acceptable
 - Scale 0-2
 - 0 = Section missing/Does not meet expectations
 - 1 = Fair/Meets expectations
 - 2 = Good/Exceeds expectations
 - Scale 0-3
 - 0 = Section missing
 - 1 = Poor/Does not meet expectations
 - 2 = Fair/Meets expectations
 - 3 = Good/Exceeds expectations
 - Scale 0-5
 - 0 = Section missing
 - 1 = Poor/Response deficient in almost all elements
 - 2 = Below average/Meets expectations in most ways but deficient in some elements of the response
 - 3 = Fair/Meets expectation
 - 4 = Good/Exceeds expectations in some elements of the response
 - 5 = Excellent/Exceeds expectations in almost all elements of the response
 - Scale 0-10
 - 1 (Poor)→5 (Fair)→10 (Excellent)
- Selection Committee member anonymity procedure
- Scoring Templates for all proposals due April 10 by 5pm

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] CA 95043

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, CA 94022-1404

April 2, 2025

To whom it may concern:

We, the undersigned owners and operators of Willow Creek Land Cattle, LLC are pleased to submit the following proposal for Livestock Operator Leases on District Conservation Grazing Lands.

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC is a California-based limited liability company co-owned by Elizabeth S. Duncan and Matthew D. Reikowski (50% ownership each).

Please direct all questions pertaining to this proposal to:

Elizabeth Duncan
Owner/Conservation Manager, Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC


[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] 94074
[REDACTED]

In addition, the undersigned authorize Elizabeth Duncan to, on behalf of Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC, conduct all negotiations pertaining to this contract and to contractually obligate Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC.

The undersigned acknowledge receipt of all addenda to this Request for Proposals.

The undersigned, by submitting the foregoing proposal, declare under penalty of perjury: (i) that the proposal is not made in the interest of, or on behalf of, any undisclosed person, partnership, company, association, organization, or corporation; (ii) the proposal is genuine and not collusive or sham; (iii) the proposer has not directly or indirectly induced or solicited any other proposer to put in a false or sham proposal, and has not directly or indirectly colluded, conspired, connived, or agreed with any proposer or anyone else to put in a sham proposal; (iv) the proposer has not attempted to influence anyone else's response to this solicitation; (v) the proposer has not attempted to influence anyone else to secure an advantage against the District or influence the outcome of the solicitation; and (vi) that all statements contained in the proposal are true.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth S. Duncan
Owner, Conservation Manager



Matthew D. Reikowski
Owner, Livestock Manager



Blake M. Duncan
Operations Manager

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CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED SEPARATELY

Attachment 1: List of References (1 page)

Attachment 2: Financial Statement (5 pages)

Attachment 3: Current Properties Grazed (5 pages)

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

SECTION 2: BUSINESS INFORMATION

A. Statement of Experience

i. Business name and address

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

CA 95043

ii. Organization structure, principals, employees, clients, etc.

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC (WCLC) is a California-based limited liability company founded by a brother-sister team, Liz and Matt Reikowski, that provides conservation-oriented grazing management and other natural resource stewardship services to diverse public and private land-holding clients. WCLC is currently managed collectively by three “partners”: (1) Liz Duncan (formerly Liz Reikowski), who specializes in ecology, natural resource management, grazing planning, and monitoring and serves as the company’s Conservation Manager, (2) Matt Reikowski, who specializes in livestock husbandry, stockmanship, and infrastructure design and serves as the company’s Livestock Manager, and (3) Blake Duncan, who specializes in livestock marketing and acquisitions, infrastructure maintenance, and heavy equipment operations and serves as the company’s Operations Manager.

In addition to the partners, WCLC has one full-time employee, Frank Johnson, who assists with livestock management and infrastructure repair and maintenance. WCLC is also supported by an array of skilled and committed family members, including Tina Swanson, David Reikowski, Peter Reikowski, and Celeste Card, who assist with livestock operations, Gus Duncan, who assists with heavy equipment operations, and Grant Pease and Sunia Yang, who assist with financial planning and accounting. As a company run by three related partners and supported by numerous family members, WCLC is a family ranching operation in the truest sense. The marriage of the diverse skill sets of the WCLC family members and WCLC’s strong commitment to leveraging grazing for natural resource stewardship makes WCLC a uniquely good fit to provide conservation grazing services on Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

iii. Agricultural operation

WCLC is a diversified cattle operation with experience raising all classes of beef cattle. Currently, the company’s primary source of revenue is an Angus-cross cow-calf herd.

WCLC’s cattle operation follows leading industry standards for animal husbandry and welfare. All calves receive two rounds of vaccinations against clostridial and respiratory diseases, a preventative dewormer, and a mineral booster prior to weaning. In addition, WCLC uses careful selection in breeding and culling to ensure that breeding cows are fertile, physically capable of bearing calves, and demonstrate good mothering abilities. When handling livestock, WCLC employs low-stress stockmanship principals, which emphasize building trust and confidence in livestock to enable more efficient handling and improved herd health.

iv. Areas of specialization

As a company founded for the principal purpose of land management, WCLC's primary area of specialization is natural resource stewardship. WCLC is unique as a cattle ranching enterprise in that the company provides written grazing plans to clients, conducts science-based rangeland monitoring, and uses the monitoring results to objectively evaluate how well cattle grazing is meeting land management goals. WCLC also has experience securing funds from organizations including the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) for ranch infrastructure improvements, weed abatement, native species restoration, rangeland monitoring, and research. In addition, the WCLC partners actively promote natural resource stewardship and serve their community by volunteering in leadership roles in local Resource Conservation Districts, Weed Management Areas, and the Society for Range Management.

V. Length of time managing cattle grazing on (a) public and (b) private lands

WCLC has been managing cattle on private lands for 6 years (since December 2018) and on public lands for 4 years (since December 2020).

Individually, the WCLC partners have been involved in cattle ranching for most of their lives. Liz and Matt grew up in a rural ranching community in south San Benito County and Matt has over ten years professional experience working for large cattle ranches operating on BLM and USFS allotments, California State Parks, Contra Costa Water District, and East Bay Regional Parks District. WCLC's operations manager, Blake, grew up on a large family cattle ranch in northern Nevada and worked for privately-owned and University-owned ranches in Nevada from 2015-2020. The partners' backgrounds growing up on rural, western landscapes gave them an abiding passion for natural resource management and a strong interest in the care and management of livestock, which inspired them to found WCLC.

Concurrent with their work in WCLC, all of the partners have honed their skills and furthered their livestock and land management experience through a variety of outside employment:

- Liz and Blake currently live on and manage a 2,000-acre private ranch in San Gregorio that raises cattle, goats, and lambs.
- Matt works part time for a large cattle operation running over 6,000 head of stocker cattle and cow-calf pairs in San Benito, Monterey, and Santa Clara Counties.

vi. Facilities

WCLC operates out of a family ranch located in south San Benito County, approximately 40 miles south of the town of Hollister. The 140-acre ranch includes a workshop, corrals, parking for vehicles and equipment, and pasture for horses used by the partners for herding and processing cattle. In addition, Liz and Blake keep tools, equipment, horses, and herding dogs at their primary residence in San Gregorio.

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

B. References

Please see **Attachment 1: References** (Confidential).

C. Financial Statement

Please see **Attachment 2: Financial Statement** (Confidential).

D. Grazing Lease Agreement

The WCLC partners have read the Grazing Lease Agreement (Attachment C of the RFP) and, if selected, agree to abide by the terms of grazing lease agreement, including but limited to the insurance and indemnification requirements.

SECTION 3: BACKGROUND AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE**A. Livestock Operating Experience***i. Current properties grazed*

WCLC currently operates just over 2,000 acres of rangeland, including two private leased ranches, one National Park Service conservation grazing project, one District conservation grazing project, and a 140-acre family ranch. The following sections describe each of these properties in detail. Landowner information and certificates of insurance for each property can be found in **Attachment 3: Current Properties Grazed** (Confidential).

Lone Madrone

Lone Madrone is a 1,100-acre District-owned conservation grazing unit located on La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, approximately 4 miles north of the town of La Honda. WCLC entered into a 15-year lease term (three 5-year options) on Lone Madrone in November 2024. Year-round grazing is permitted on Lone Madrone, though limited availability of water may restrict access to certain pastures in the summer.

Lone Madrone is a steep mountain ranch comprised of a mixture of open grasslands, coyote-brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) dominated shrublands, dense oak woodlands, and redwood forest. Lone Madrone is heavily invaded by distaff thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*) and milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*), and a key natural resource objective on Lone Madrone is leveraging grazing to control these thistle species and promote increased cover and diversity of native grassland species. To help achieve this goal, WCLC obtained a grant from the San Mateo Weed Management Area to support implementation and data collection for high-density, targeted cattle grazing on invasive thistles (see Section 3.C.ii).

Lone Madrone is bisected by Weeks Creek, La Honda Creek, and Harrington Creek, each of which provide drinking water for downstream communities. Another key natural resource objective on Lone Madrone is excluding cattle from these perennial creeks, an objective that is complicated by lack of functional fencing. To address this management concern, WCLC is partnering with the University of Nevada, Reno to test the efficacy of virtual fence for keeping cattle out of riparian corridors and other sensitive habitats (see Section 3.C.i).

WCLC grazes cow-calf pairs on Lone Madrone. This class of livestock is optimal on Lone Madrone for several reasons: (1) mature cows are less likely to penetrate weak boundary or cross-fencing, (2) mature cows can be readily contained with portable electric fencing, a tool which we use to facilitate rotational grazing and to exclude cattle from several ongoing trail development projects, and (3) resident cow-calf herds learn the layout of the ranches they live on, which makes them easy to move and handle and reduces the potential for conflicts with either public use (see Section 3.B.i) or with predators (see Section 3.B.ii).

Pinnacles National Park

Pinnacles National Park is a 26,000-acre unit of the Department of the Interior National Park Service, located in south San Benito County approximately 30 miles south of Hollister.

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

WCLC grazes cattle in a 70-acre unit near the east entrance of the park known as “The Bottomlands”. The Bottomlands are a flat, alluvial meadow with gravelly sandy loam soils. The Pinnacles Bottomlands were likely historically dominated by forbs and purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*), but currently are dominated by invasive summer mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*) and exotic annual grasses (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Targeted cattle grazing for mustard control on the Bottomlands in Pinnacles National Park. May 2024. Photo credit: Devii Rao, UCCE.

Since December 2020, WCLC has been contracted by the park to provide conservation grazing services with the goal of reducing mustard and exotic annual grass cover. Park biologists developed a number of grazing exclosures in the bottomlands and, by sampling vegetation in paired grazed and ungrazed plots, are testing how

effective cattle grazing is at reducing the cover of exotic species and improving the cover and diversity of native species. The project is planned to occur over five years, with the potential to continue beyond five years depending on the study findings, and is currently in its fourth year.

WCLC grazes cow-calf pairs on the Pinnacles Bottomlands. The cattle are delivered to the park in December or January for a 6–8-week grazing period that focuses on removing accumulated residual dry matter (RDM) and reducing the height of exotic grasses as they germinate, with the goal of increasing the germination and survival of native grasses and forbs. Cattle are then typically removed for a two-month rest period and returned to the park in the late spring. The late spring grazing focuses primarily on controlling summer mustard, but also on reducing the height and biomass of exotic grasses. The cattle stay on the park until the stubble and/or RDM targets have been met (typically early July), then the cattle are removed until the next grazing season.

Selleck Ranch

The Selleck Ranch is a 630-acre, privately owned ranch located in south San Benito County, approximately 15 miles northeast of King City. WCLC has been grazing cattle on the Selleck Ranch since 2020 via single year lease agreements. Year-round grazing is permitted, though WCLC typically only grazes this property seasonally and varies the timing and duration of grazing each year to prevent recurring defoliation of native grasses and forbs during flowering and seed set.

The Selleck Ranch has distinctive western and eastern units. The western unit of the ranch (500 acres) is comprised of steep hills and canyons with shallow, clay loam soils dominated by annual grasses and forbs, blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), Tucker’s oak (*Quercus john-tuckeri*) and chaparral species. The eastern unit of the ranch (130 acres) is a flat, treeless valley with alkaline clay soils. The eastern unit has a long history of dry farming and is severely invaded by yellow star thistle (YST; *Centaurea solstitialis*) and black mustard (*Brassica nigra*).

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

WCLC has worked closely with the Selleck Ranch owner and with the NRCS to develop extensive livestock water and cross-fencing across the ranch (see Section 3.A.ii), which has enabled WCLC to implement a rigorous program of targeted rotational grazing focused on controlling noxious weeds and improving the cover and diversity of native plants. With the support of a Western SARE Farmer/Rancher Grant, WCLC has collected extensive data on the ecological outcomes of targeted rotational grazing on both this property and Pinnacles Ranch, a project which has provided valuable insight into the efficacy of our management approach and rich opportunities to conduct education and outreach (see Section 3.C.i).

WCLC is currently using the Selleck Ranch to develop heifers, which, once mature, will be run as cow-calf pairs on public land grazing projects such as Pinnacles National Park and Lone Madrone. The steep and rugged terrain on the Selleck Ranch provides excellent conditioning for young cattle and the ranch is ideal setting to train young cattle to recognize and respect portable electric fencing, a tool that adds significant control and flexibility to our grazing on public lands.

Pinnacles Ranch

Pinnacles Ranch is a privately owned 200-acre ranch located in south San Benito County, approximately 2 miles southeast of the eastern entrance to Pinnacles National Park. Pinnacles Ranch is comprised of rolling hills with clay loam soils. Most of the ranch is oak savannah dominated by wild oats (*Avena Barbata*) and blue oak. Several, sparse patches of purple needlegrass occur throughout the ranch.

WCLC has been grazing cattle on Pinnacles Ranch since December 2018 via single year lease agreements. The allowed seasons of use change annually during the lease renewal process to reflect annual variations in rangeland condition and forage and water availability and to accommodate an Air BnB hospitality business that the owner operates on the property. The current lease agreement allows grazing from October 1, 2024-June 30, 2025. Pinnacles Ranch is located just across the road from the Pinnacles National Park Bottomland Grazing Project, so the same cow-calf herd is typically rotated back and forth between Pinnacles Ranch and the park.

Amity Ranch

Amity Ranch is a privately-owned 140-acre ranch located in south San Benito County, about 3 miles northeast of the east entrance to Pinnacles National Park. The ranch is co-owned by the father and aunt of Liz and Matt and is used by WCLC as an operation headquarters and as Matt's primary residence. Amity Ranch has about 10 acres of grassland and 30 acres of oak savannah, but the majority of the ranch is dominated by chamise chaparral and is not grazeable by cattle. WCLC uses Amity Ranch as a headquarters. The ranch includes corrals and horse pastures, a shop, round pen, arena, and sheds for storing feed, supplies, and equipment.

In addition to using Amity Ranch as a headquarters, the WCLC partners work with the rest of the family to maintain the property and conduct a variety of stewardship activities on the ranch, including seeding perennial grasses in the horse pastures and, more recently, working with the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) and the Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association to plan a prescribed burn in the chaparral-dominated areas of the ranch.

*Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC**ii. Infrastructure Maintenance*

The WCLC partners have extensive experience maintaining and improving infrastructure and a strong interest in working with the District to maintain and improve infrastructure on District lands. The projects described below are a sampling of infrastructure development work that the WCLC team has completed within the past five years.

Lone Madrone

Although WCLC has only been a grazing tenant on Lone Madrone for five months, we have already completed significant infrastructure improvements, including installation of approximately 1,500 ft of wildlife friendly cross fencing (Figure 2) and replacement of derelict gates and fencing at the ranch headquarters (Figure 3). In addition, the partners are working closely with the District Conservation Grazing Program Manager to plan and install (1) an improved livestock water distribution system for the western portion of the ranch, (2) improved overflow lines for spring-fed stock troughs, and (3) a new working corral system to replace the current derelict corrals.



Figure 2. Cross fencing on Lone Madrone before (left) and after WCLC replaced the fencing with District-approved, wildlife friendly cross-fencing.



Figure 3. Lone Madrone headquarters fencing before (left) and after WCLC replaced the fence (right).

*Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC*Selleck Ranch

When WCLC acquired the lease on the Selleck Ranch in 2020, the 630-acre ranch had only one water trough, no working corrals, no interior cross fencing, and was missing nearly half a mile of boundary fencing. Before delivering cattle to the ranch for the first time in 2020, WCLC fully fenced the perimeter of the ranch and, in summer 2020, WCLC constructed a 13,000 square foot set of working corrals, including a squeeze chute and load outs for gooseneck trailers and semi-trucks (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Working corrals built by WCLC on the Selleck Ranch. June 2022.

In 2021, WCLC and the Selleck Ranch owner worked together to apply to the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for cost-share funds to install an expansive livestock water system on the ranch, which would enable rotational cattle grazing. WCLC worked directly with the NRCS engineers and conservation planner to design the project and, after the project was approved for funding, completed all of the installation work in-house (with the exception of the electrical work for a booster pump, which was completed by a subcontractor). The project involved laying over 2,500 ft of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe, leveling ground for and installing two 5,000-gallon water tanks, installing four 350-gallon stock troughs, and installing a booster pump to move water up 600 ft in elevation from the pre-existing tanks to the new tanks. Because the project occurred within California Tiger Salamander (CTS) habitat, the project required extensive coordination with the NRCS and US Fish and Wildlife biologists, who had to inspect and sign off on areas that would have ground disturbance (e.g., the pads for water tanks). The project also required close coordination with the NRCS engineers and conservation planners to ensure the infrastructure was built according to NRCS specifications. For example, all water troughs had to have welded wildlife escape ramps and overflow pipes. WCLC completed this project in spring 2022.

Pinnacles Ranch

Like the Selleck Ranch, Pinnacles Ranch only had one water trough when WCLC acquired the lease in 2018. Over the past five years, WCLC has gradually added three water troughs and another five-thousand-gallon storage tank to the ranch water system. In addition, at the request of

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

the landowner, WCLC installed wood fencing along the ranch driveway, around the owner's house, and around the water storage tanks (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Water tanks and protective fencing (left) and water trough (right) installed by WCLC on Pinnacles Ranch.

Amity Ranch

To better develop Amity Ranch as an operating headquarters for WCLC, the partners built a series of pipe holding corrals and horse stalls at Amity Ranch. In addition, the partners built an arena and round pen for Shining S Performance Horses, a horse training business that Matt and his partner, Celeste Card operate at Amity Ranch (Figure 6). The project included extensive grading and ground leveling for the arena, installation of a new gravel driveway and turnaround for trucks and trailers, installation of drainage, and construction of welded pipe fencing and gates.



Figure 6. Arena, corrals, and round pen built by WCLC partners at Amity Ranch.

Outside Employers

In addition to their work with WCLC, the WCLC partners have extensive experience building and maintaining infrastructure for other ranch and land management enterprises. Liz and Blake are currently responsible for maintenance of all infrastructure on a 2,000-acre ranch in San Gregorio, including 6 miles of gravel roads, over 20 miles of fence, numerous dwellings and outbuildings, and a complex and expansive ranch water system. Blake's maintains all the gravel roads on the mountainous ranch to a standard where they can be driven by two-wheel drive, low clearance vehicles, and over the past two years, Blake has also improved several old, poorly maintained dirt roads into improved gravel roads (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Gravel ranch road maintained by Blake (left) and new ranch road built by Blake to replace an old dirt road (right).

Matt's ten years of experience working on ranches throughout California and Montana also includes substantial infrastructure maintenance. While working for 5 Dot Ranch in northeastern California, Matt developed springs for livestock and wildlife and rehabilitated multiple large, riparian exclosures that had fallen into disrepair. While working for Vaqueros Livestock in the East Bay, Matt took the lead on planning and implementing numerous infrastructure improvements. For example, in 2021 Vaqueros Livestock acquired a grazing lease on a 5,000-acre Delta tract accessible only by ferry, with no handling facilities, water or fencing infrastructure. Matt and his crew designed and constructed over 20 miles of electric perimeter and cross fencing, a water system capable of watering 400 cow-calf pairs, and facilities for shipping cattle on and off the island.

On Vaqueros Livestock's 17,000-acre lease on Contra Costa Water District, the Los Vaqueros Watershed, Matt ran pipe to, set, and plumbed concrete water troughs to NRCS specifications as part of an EQIP-funded water system expansion (Figure 8). Matt also designed and installed significant temporary grazing infrastructure around the watershed, including over 20 miles of pedestrian friendly electric fence and water systems for pumping water out of the reservoir to stock troughs to avoid contamination of the reservoir water by livestock. In addition, he installed remote monitoring systems such as Ranchbot for monitoring and controlling water in less-accessible areas of the watershed.



Figure 8. Left: 1,500-gallon tire trough installed by Matt on Vaqueros Livestock's leased ranch in Byron. Right: Concrete trough installed by Matt on Los Vaqueros Watershed.

Matt has also worked extensively with Vaqueros Livestock's sister company, Western Poly Pipe, which is a nationwide distributor of high-density HDPE pipe. Matt has helped install HDPE pipe on numerous ranches and is experienced at fusion welding HDPE pipe.

*Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC**iii. Available equipment*

WCLC maintains a fleet of essential equipment for transportation of staff and livestock, infrastructure maintenance, and other natural resource management activities. The company's equipment is listed below (please note that some of the trucks and trailers are owned independently by the partners and therefore do not appear on the WCLC balance sheet in Attachment 2).

Type	Available equipment	Status
Trucks	2024 Dodge Ram 2500 2004 GMC Sierra 2500 2002 Chevy Silverado 2500 2019 Dodge Ram 1500 2010 Chevy Silverado 1500	Owned by partners Owned by partners Owned by WCLC Owned by partners Owned by partners
Trailers	2002 22 ft Four Star gooseneck stock trailer 1973 16 ft Dougan gooseneck stock trailer 2000 16 ft custom-built stock combo trailer 2005 20 ft gooseneck flatbed trailer 600-gal custom-built water trailer	Owned by partners Owned by partners Owned by partners Owned by WCLC Owned by WCLC
ATVs	2016 Honda Foreman ATV 2002 Honda Rancher ATV 2007 Yamaha Big Bear ATV 1998 Yamaha Big Bear ATV	Owned by WCLC Owned by WCLC Owned by WCLC Owned by WCLC
Welders and Torches	Hobart Champion engine driven welder McElroy 2LC HDPE pipe fusion welder Oxyacetylene torch	Owned by WCLC Owned by WCLC Owned by partners
Saws	Husqvarna 450 chainsaw Stihl MS 170 chainsaw	Owned by WCLC Owned by WCLC
Augers	Predator gas-powered earth auger	Owned by WCLC
Sprayers	Stihl 5-gal backpack sprayer (2)	Owned by WCLC

In addition to the company and partnered-owned fleet, WCLC maintains rental accounts with Cresco Equipment (Burlingame, CA) and A Tool Shed (Hollister, Morgan Hill, and Santa Cruz, CA), which provides the company with ready access to a wide array of heavy equipment, including skid steers, front-end loaders, excavators. WCLC is also currently in the process of developing a equipment sharing agreement with another San Mateo County ranch. Through this agreement, WCLC and the other ranch would share maintenance costs on a fleet of heavy equipment, giving each operation access to a wider range of equipment at reduced costs. This would allow WCLC to operate heavy equipment for infrastructure improvement projects at a lower cost to our clients.

*Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC**iv. Other considerations for the selection process*

As a company with a strong history of engagement in the rangeland management community and a demonstrated commitment to conservation work, WCLC is an excellent fit for providing grazing services on District lands. WCLC partners Liz and Blake hold numerous leadership positions in agriculture and natural resource management, speaking to their ability to represent the District's values and serve as strong spokespeople for District's land management goals. Key leadership roles, certifications, and recognitions that partners have received are listed below.

Liz Duncan, Conservation Manager

Leadership (current)

- Board Vice-President and Treasurer of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition
- Board Secretary of the San Benito Resource Conservation District
- Rancher advisor to Society for Range Management Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

Education and Awards

- Master of Science in Natural Resources and Environmental Science, University of Nevada, Reno (2021)
- Bachelor of Science in Biology, Haverford College (2017)
- University of Nevada Dept. of Natural Resources Masters Student of the Year (2021)

Blake Duncan, Operations Manager

Leadership (current)

- President of the Society for Range Management Young Professional's Conclave
- Chair of the Society for Range Management Young Producer's Forum
- Rancher advisor to the San Mateo County Weed Management Area

Leadership (past)

- Vice President of the Society for Range Management Young Professional's Conclave (2023-2024)
- President of the Society for Range Management Student Conclave (2019-2020)
- President of Nevada State Future Farmers of America (2015-2016)

Education

- Bachelor of Science in Rangeland Ecology and Management, University of Nevada, Reno (2020)

B. Potential livestock conflicts*i. Managing conflicts related to public lands and recreation*

WCLC is a strong supporter of multi-use landscapes. Recreation on grazing lands benefits livestock producers as it gives the public an opportunity to learn about agriculture and food systems and to learn that food production can be (and should be) compatible with ecological stewardship. We are proud to graze cattle on District lands and on Pinnacles National Park, which receives over 300,000 visitors annually, and enjoy opportunities to interact with the public and share information on our grazing management.

As livestock operators on land with public access, we understand that we are representing the District in the eyes of the public and are committed to running our livestock operations in manner that reflects positively on the District. For this reason, we are diligent about checking livestock and infrastructure and keeping a regular presence around our animals. If a member of the public finds a sick or injured cow, it can generate the perception that we are neglectful. Similarly, if a member of the public finds a broken water trough that is overflowing and wasting water, it can generate the impression that we are careless with precious natural resources. By diligently checking animals and infrastructure and ensuring that we are the first people to spot any issues that may arise, we can help maintain a positive public perception and ensure that we are good representatives of the District's ethics and stewardship values.

Specific measures that we have taken on leases with public access (Pinnacles and Lone Madrone) include planning shipping and processing events for low-visitation times (e.g., weekday mornings), signposting electric fences, and selecting gentle, mild-mannered cattle that are unlikely to be disruptive to pedestrians. On Lone Madrone, we are currently working with District staff to maintain electric fences around the in-progress Bathtub Loop Trail to avoid livestock damage to the trail. Once this trail is complete and open to the public, we'll design grazing rotations so that sensitive activities (such as calving) occur in areas more distant to the trail.

Outside of WCLC, our Livestock Manager, Matt has extensive experience running cattle on lands with public use. For example, while working for Vaqueros Livestock, a company that grazes cattle on public lands around Los Vaqueros reservoir (an area with significant hiker, biker, and equestrian usage), Matt was responsible for designing, installing, and signposting pedestrian-friendly gates along permanent and electric fence lines near the reservoir. Vaqueros Livestock's operations also required trailing cattle along busy county roads. Matt coordinated and led these moves, which often required posting signage, using flagging vehicles around the livestock, frequently pushing the livestock to the side of the road to allow cars to pass, and spraying off the road after the move.

A key component of our operating strategy on public lands is to take time to engage with the public, answer questions, and address concerns. We've found the being responsive, helpful, and engaging can often turn a potential conflict into a positive interaction and a valuable educational experience for the public.

ii. Managing conflicts with predators

Large predators are a key component of healthy ecosystems, and part of the art and science of rangeland management is running livestock in a manner that allows livestock and predators to co-exist with minimal conflict. The District grazing units are located in an area of the state that is well known for its abundance of mountain lions, which creates potential for predator conflicts beyond those experienced by most California cattle ranches. However, the WCLC partners believe that most conflicts can be avoided by adjusting livestock management practices.

Strategies that we have found helpful for managing predators include selecting for experienced and proven cows with strong mothering instincts and decreasing pasture sizes (thereby increasing stock density) using electric fencing. In 2022, Liz and Blake moved to a ranch near San Gregorio that has high abundance of mountain lions and a history of regular predation losses during calving season. Following research conducted in Montana showing that predation losses tend be lower when herds are less dispersed¹, Liz and Blake used electric fencing to divide the 100-acre pasture typically used for calving into several smaller sections which the cattle were rotated between. They also used electric fencing to exclude the cattle from brushy or forested areas during calving. This prevented the mother cows from stashing their calves in the brush while they grazed and leaving the calves vulnerable to predation. With these practices in place, predation decreased from a loss of four calves in 2021, to a loss of one calf in 2022, to no loss of calves in 2023 and 2024.

Matt also has substantial experience managing predator conflicts. While working as a cowboy in Montana, Matt used electric fence to deter grizzly bears from predating on calves and, when predation occurred, documented the kills and worked with Department of Fish and Game trappers to relocate particularly problematic bears. Matt also worked as a backcountry cowboy and camp manager on Plumas National Forest shortly after wolves were reintroduced to the region. To help deter predation, Matt maintained an active presence range riding among the cattle herd and identified and relocated calves with injuries or illness that would make them more susceptible to predation. In addition, he interfaced with US Fish and Wildlife and Forest Service biologists to document kills and apply for reimbursement when kills occurred.

As a District tenant, WCLC is participating in Panthera's Bay Area Carnivore-Livestock Interactions Project, which seeks to better understand factors that can contribute to or protect against predation events. WCLC will be placing GPS collars on all mature cattle as part of a separate (but related) trial using virtual fence to exclude cattle from riparian corridors (see Section 3.C.i). WCLC will share GPS collar data with the Panthera team to help them better understand patterns in overlapping land use between livestock and mountain lions. In addition, WCLC will be installing Lone Star GPS ear tags on a subset of their calf crop to understand (1) whether calves have a tendency to stray beyond virtual fence boundaries and (2) whether calves straying beyond the virtual fence boundaries creates an increased risk of predation. It is our hope that our participation in this research will improve not only our ability to reduce predator conflicts, but also the ability of the rest of our ranching community to safely manage livestock in the presence of predators.

¹ Barnes, M. 2015. Livestock Management for Coexistence with Large Carnivores, Healthy Lands, and Productive Ranches. Keystone Conservation White Paper. Bozeman, Montana.

C. Managing for Natural Resource Objectives

i. Experience grazing for natural resource objectives

WCLC's main area of specialization is grazing to achieve natural resource management objectives, and we have a strong history of leveraging both best available science and significant creativity and adaptability in order to achieve natural resource objectives.

WCLC typically approaches grazing projects by working with the landowner to identify management goals, then developing (1) a targeted grazing management plan and (2) a monitoring plan that will help us to evaluate how well grazing is meeting the objectives. One thing that is clear to us from our reviews of scientific literature and our experiences working on rangeland is that there is no "one size fits all" grazing prescription for managing for natural resource objectives. The most favorable grazing regime depends on the soils and plant community, the climate, and the landowner's specific natural resource management goals. Typically, the soils, plants, and management goals will vary even within a single ranch, necessitating multiple management strategies within the ranch. For example, landowners often request fairly heavy grazing near the dwellings on the property in order to provide fire protection but will be highly sensitive about avoiding overgrazing and maintaining ground cover in other sections of the ranch. WCLC has developed the flexibility to meet multiple and often conflicting stewardship goals on the same property by leveraging portable electric fence and significant herding, placement, rotation of livestock using horses and herding dogs (Figure 9). Leveraging electric fence and pasture rotation allows us to control the timing, intensity and duration of grazing at a very fine scale. For example, WCLC has used electric fencing to exclude cattle from stands of purple needlegrass during flowering, as this has been shown to increase seed set for this desirable native grass². Conversely, WCLC has used electric fence to concentrate cattle at high



Figure 9. From left to right – The WCLC management pathway: (1) goal setting and implementation of targeted rotational grazing, (2) monitoring to evaluate outcomes, and (3) summarizing and analyzing data to determine whether the grazing treatments were successful. These photos and data are from Pinnacles Ranch, where a significant focus of our grazing treatments in our first few years on the ranch (2018-2021) was reducing the cover of the noxious weeds tocalote and summer mustard. All field data was collected by Liz and Blake and data was analyzed and summarized by Liz using R software.

³ Russel, W. and J. McBride. 2003. Landscape scale vegetation-type conversion and fire hazard in the San Francisco bay area open spaces. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 64(4): 201-208.

density on stands of tocalote and YST during the bolting and budding life stage in order to reduce the survival and fecundity of these noxious weeds (see section 3.C.ii).

WCLC's best-known example of grazing for natural resource management objectives is our grazing contract at Pinnacles National Park, where we are leveraging cattle to reduce the cover of invasive grasses and forbs (particularly, invasive summer mustard, which is abundant in the study area). To meet these management objectives, WCLC developed a rotational grazing program where cattle are moved back and forth between the park and the nearby Pinnacles Ranch to meet the stubble and RDM targets identified by the park ecologist while providing adequate recovery and seed-set time for native grasses and forbs. This program has flourished via a strong partnership between WCLC and park biologists, who conduct extensive vegetation monitoring at the project site and, based on monitoring results, collaborate with the WCLC staff to plan seasonal adjustments in the timing of grazing and stock density. Results from the project indicate that grazing has been successfully at reducing the cover of summer mustard (Figure 10).

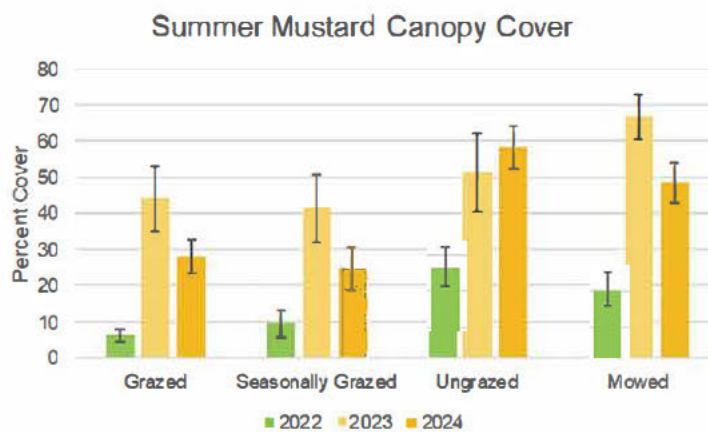


Figure 10. Results from first three years of grazing experiment at Pinnacles National Park. Plots in the “grazed” treatment were fully grazed to the stubble and RDM targets each year (1.08-1.21 AUM/acre/year) while the plots in the “seasonally grazed” treatment were excluded from grazing halfway through the season (~0.4 AUM/acre/year). “Ungrazed” plots were always excluded from grazing and “mowed” plots were mowed instead of grazed. Mustard cover was highly dependent on rainfall, but in general, grazing significantly decreased mustard cover and was far more effective than mowing at reducing mustard cover.

Continually improving our methods and exploring new, innovative tools for achieving natural resource objectives is an important element of WCLC's management philosophy. To that end, we are partnering with the University of Nevada, Reno to test the efficacy of virtual fencing - a new



Figure 11. Virtual fence base station installed on Lone Madrone. March 2025.

tool that uses GPS collars to control cattle movements - on Lone Madrone. We will use virtual fence to prevent cattle from entering sensitive riparian corridors and to better control the distribution of livestock and timing of grazing across the ranch. A key advantage of virtual fence on multi-use, public lands such as Lone Madrone is that it has the potential to dramatically reduce the amount of infrastructure required to run a grazing operation. Instead of having to build barbed wire fencing that can impede the movements of wildlife, cattle can be controlled via collars and a few small base stations (Figure 11). We will be GPS collaring cattle for virtual fence on Lone Madrone on April 18, 2025 and have invited multiple interested stakeholders from the District, UCCE, and the local ranching community to observe and participate in the collaring event.

ii. Utilizing livestock to manage invasive species

One of the most common natural resource objectives that WCLC manages for is the reduction of invasive plants. We have experience using targeted cattle to control YST, totalote, black mustard, and summer mustard. In addition, we have broad experience using other weed abatement methods, such as herbicide, mowing, and mastication, either alone in combination with targeted grazing treatments.

When grazing for invasive species management, we typically use electric fencing to cut large grazing units into very small grazing units that can then be grazed at a higher number of cattle per acre (Figure 12). When grazing at high densities, cattle tend to exhibit a less selective and more frenzied feeding behavior, which causes them to consume vastly more weeds than they would if dispersed across a large landscape. High stock densities will also cause injury or mortality to weeds via trampling. We time targeted grazing treatments carefully so that weeds are grazed when they are both palatable and sensitive to grazing (typically the bolt or bud stage for rosette-forming weeds such as mustards and thistles).



Figure 12. Left: Cattle grazing at high density in stand of black mustard the Selleck Ranch in spring 2020. Right: End-of-season grazing results on the Selleck Ranch (left side of fence) versus a neighboring parcel (right side of fence). Despite being grazed by cattle, the neighboring parcel still has significant standing mustard, whereas nearly all the mustard on the Selleck Ranch side of the fence has been trampled or consumed. We attribute this difference to the use high-intensity, short duration rotational grazing on the Selleck Ranch, which greatly increases the trampling of weeds and also tends to reduce the selectivity of livestock when feeding, which causes increased consumption of weeds.

In addition to grazing for invasive plant management, Liz and Blake have extensive experience managing invasive plants using herbicide. Liz and Blake both hold a PAC (Private Applicator's Certificate) in San Mateo County and, if desirable to the District, are interested in obtaining QALs (Qualified Applicator License). Species that Liz and Blake have treated with herbicide include milk thistle, Italian thistle, distaff thistle, YST, poison hemlock and French broom. As with grazing, we keep detailed records of herbicide products used, the area treated, and the observed outcome. We also diligently observe safety and health regulations, including wearing PPE, taking steps to avoid chemical drift, and adhering to the restrictions and application rates listed on product labels.

Blake also has extensive experience mechanically treating invasive plants. Although it is native to California, coyote brush is an invader in many coastal grasslands. Historically, fire was used to maintain native prairie and prevent encroachment of shrubs and, in the absence of regular

burning, many acres of historic grassland or oak savannah are now dominated by coyote brush³. At the ranch they manage in San Gregorio, Liz and Blake developed a program of grazing coyote brush with goats, then masticating the woody coyote brush skeletons left behind by the goats (Figure 13). They follow this practice with broadcasting a grass and forb seed mix over the masticated area. Liz and Blake leveraged historic imagery to determine which brush-dominated areas of the ranch were historically grass or oak savannah in order to apply this treatment appropriately. Over the past three years, they have converted over 30 shrub-invaded acres back to oak savannah.



Figure 13. Left: Grazed and masticated shrubland in September 2022. The masticated debris provides a layer of litter to protect against bare ground. Right: The same area in April 2023. Rangeland seed spread in November has germinated and is covering the masticate area.

WCLC is committed to leveraging our skills and experience in both grazing management and other weed abatement methods to meet the Districts natural resource management goals. When WCLC acquired the Lone Madrone grazing lease, District staff expressed a strong desire to reduce the abundance of distaff thistle on Lone Madrone. To address this management priority, WCLC applied for and was awarded a grant from the San Mateo Weed Management Area to (1) test the efficacy of high density, targeted cattle grazing for controlling distaff thistle and (2) to chemically treat approximately 100 acres of distaff thistle. The project will include both pre and post treatment mapping of distaff extent using ArcGIS to document progress in reducing this invasive species. The project will also include pre and post treatment vegetation monitoring conducted by the WCLC partners and education and outreach to share our findings with interested stakeholders. Throughout the grant application process for this project, WCLC staff worked closely with the District IPM team to ensure that our proposed approach aligned with the District's approved chemical treatment methods and that the project would offer genuine value to the District. The feedback that we got from District staff was that exploring methods to control distaff via grazing was of great interest to the District as chemical weed treatments can create conflicts with public access and recreation. This project exemplifies how WCLC approaches management of District grazing lands – we listen attentively to the District concerns and management needs, then pursue and implement innovative land management solutions.

³ Russel, W. and J. McBride. 2003. Landscape scale vegetation-type conversion and fire hazard in the San Francisco bay area open spaces. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 64(4): 201-208.

iii. Rangeland monitoring

WCLC has a strong history of employing rigorous scientific monitoring in to order to verify the efficacy of our grazing management. Monitoring methods that we have employed in the past including photo monitoring, RDM sampling, and identifying plant species and estimating their cover along LPI (line point intercept) transects.

WCLC views monitoring as an important opportunity to learn, adapt management practices, and contribute knowledge to the larger rangeland management community and we actively seek opportunities to collect data and engage with a variety of research partners. In 2020, WCLC applied for and received a research grant from the USDA Western SARE Farmer/Rancher grant program to fund rigorous monitoring aimed at understanding the efficacy of WCLC's targeted rotational grazing practices. Through this grant, WCLC constructed a series of grazing exclosures on the Pinnacles Ranch and Selleck Ranch lease lands and collected data on plant cover and diversity inside the exclosures and on the adjacent grazed land over a three-year period. WCLC continued to conduct monitoring at these plots after the grant ended in 2023 and recently received another SARE grant to expand their monitoring network and to help fund both outreach and ongoing monitoring efforts for grazing experiment at Pinnacles National Park. Results from the SARE-funded plot network on Pinnacles Ranch and the Selleck Ranch indicate that WCLC's targeted rotational grazing program is effective at improving cover and diversity of native species, in particular, native forbs (Figure 14).

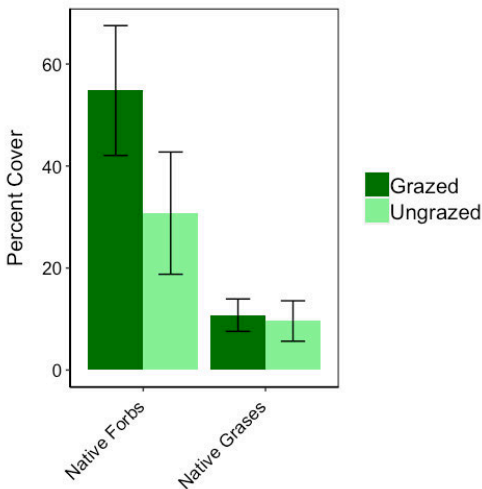


Figure 14. 2024 native plant cover data from ongoing SARE research project. Each year, WCLC staff estimate plant cover using LPI at a series of plot pairs where on half of each pair is freely accessible to livestock and the other half of the pair is excluded from grazing. In 2024, native forb cover was approximately 70% higher in grazed plots while native grass cover was approximately equal in grazed and ungrazed plots.

In addition to the rigorous, scientific monitoring described above, WCLC employs a wide array of visual pasture monitoring methods that directly inform day-to-day grazing management decisions. Our monitoring methods include (1) visual estimations of utilization,

RDM, and stubble height, (2) photos and detailed notes, and (3) spatial data on relevant landscape features, such as weed infestations or populations of sensitive native plants. Mapping is an important component of WCLC's monitoring program and WCLC was recently accepted into ESRI's Conservation Grant Program, which provides access to discounted ArcGIS software. In addition to mapping weed infestations and other landscape features, WCLC uses ArcGIS for planning infrastructure improvements and for tracking the locations of electric fences and the grazing dates and AUMs in each pasture. Having these records available helps us to connect specific grazing management decisions to observed outcomes in the rangeland vegetation.

iv. Determining when pastures are ready to be grazed

Growing season: During the growing season, WCLC uses several metrics, either alone or in combination, to determine whether pastures are ready to be grazed:

- **Vegetation height:** Typically, WCLC avoids grazing until the grass is at least 6 inches tall. Naturally, in year-round cow-calf operations, cattle have to be on some pasture during the intervening period between germination and grass reaching the 6" height. During this period, WCLC places cattle on pasture where dry biomass has been "banked" throughout the dormant season. This dry biomass helps protect germinating grasses and forbs and prevent bare ground.
- **Bare ground/erosion:** If WCLC observes high levels of bare ground or emerging erosion issues, we may decide to defer grazing, even if the grass is over 6" tall.
- **Plant community composition:** WCLC often determines whether a pasture is ready to be grazed or should be deferred based on the plant species present and the desired impact of the cattle on those plants. For example, in a pasture with high cover of the native bunchgrass, purple needlegrass, we might decide to defer grazing while the needlegrass is flowering in April and May. Conversely, in a pasture with high cover of YST, we might decide to graze at high animal density during bolting and budding in May and June in the hopes of reducing YST survival and fecundity.
- **Time since last graze:** From field observations, we've observed that grazing an area too frequently during the growing season can greatly limit the forage's ability to recover and regrow. This observation is supported by science indicating that frequent defoliation greatly depletes the root stock of grasses^{4,5}. We've found that allowing at least 6 weeks recovery between grazing periods in coastal areas, such as District lands, and allowing at least 12 weeks between grazing periods on more arid rangelands, such as those in San Benito County produces greater grass regrowth, which can be advantageous for preventing bare ground and improving feed availability for wildlife and livestock.

Dormant season: During the dormant season (June-November), WCLC determines whether pastures can support grazing by evaluating RDM. RDM is typically measured at the end of the dormant season (around November 1st), so we account for natural feed decay throughout the dormant season when deciding whether a pasture can support grazing in the summer and fall. Across California, RDM tends to decrease by an average 7% per 30 days during the dormant season and can decrease by as much as 13% every 30 days in coastal zones where summertime fog can accelerate biomass decay⁶. So, if the RDM target for a pasture on District lands was 1,200 lb/ac, then we would calculate back and determine that, in the absence of grazing, the pasture should have approximately 1,900 lb/ac RDM on July 1st, 1,700 lb/ac on August 1st, and so on. If the pasture had 4,000 lb/ac on July 1st, then we would know that the pasture should be grazed at approximately 50% utilization to meet the fall RDM target.

⁴ Ferraro, D. and M. Oesterheld. 2002. Effects of defoliation on grass growth: A Quantitative Review. *Oikos* 98(1): 125-133.

⁵ Venter, Z., H. Hawkins, and M. Cramer. 2021. Does Defoliation frequency and severity influence plant productivity? The role of grazing management and soil nutrients. *African Journal of Range and Forage Science* 38(2): 141-156.

⁶ Frost, W., J. Bartolome, and K. Churches. 2005. Disappearance of residual dry matter on annual grassland in the absence of grazing. In F. P. O' Mara et al., eds. XX International Grassland Conference. Wageningen, Netherlands.

*v. Additional monitoring and specialized training***Mapping (GPS & GIS technologies)**

Map and GPS data are a powerful tools for communicating and coordinating land management activities. Liz and Blake are both experienced in using GPS and GIS products to map vegetation and infrastructure and to record land management activities (e.g., temporary pastures created with electric fence, weed populations treated with herbicide, etc.).

WCLC is a member of ESRI's Conservation Program and, as part of our upcoming distaff thistle control project, will be using ArcGIS software to collect data on distaff thistle extent. At the request of the District IPM team, WCLC will be formatting all spatial data to match CalFlora's specifications and sharing the data with CalFlora's noxious weed database.

Data preparation, analysis, and visualization

In addition to collecting data in the field, the ability to summarize, analyze, and interpret data is essential for effective, science-based land management. Liz is a published researcher and received advanced training in statistics and data analysis while obtaining her Master of Science degree at UNR (see section 4.B.i). Liz has experience summarizing data using Microsoft Excel Pivot Tables and using R. Liz also has experience conducting a wide array of analyses in R including Analysis of Variance tests, generalized linear models, and nonmetric multidimensional scaling, and has developed numerous figures using the GGPlot2 package in R. These skills in data preparation, analysis and visualization help us both to draw to sound scientific conclusions from our rangeland data and to disseminate our findings to other ranchers, land managers, and the public.

Soils

All the WCLC partners have taken college courses in soil science and have experience collecting soil samples in the field and submitting them for laboratory analysis. In addition, Liz and Blake both have experience developing soil maps using the NRCS Web Soil Survey tool and ground truthing NRCS soil maps by digging soil pits, identifying soil horizons, and texturing the soil.

Riparian and Forest Monitoring

In addition to rangeland monitoring, the WCLC partners also have training in forest and riparian monitoring. Liz has collected extensive tree health, growth, and survival data for the US Forest Service Nationwide Forest Inventory plot network. In addition, Liz has mapped stream channels and measured stream discharge using digital, open channel flow meters and has remotely collected data on water temperature using HOBO data loggers.

vi. Managing for native species and sensitive species habitat

WCLC has broad experience managing grazing for sensitive species and sensitive species habitat. Our lease lands in San Benito County all fall within the range of CTS and red-legged frog (RLF). These species are adversely affected by high RDM accumulation, and, by using cattle to reduce RDM, we can improve the habitat for these species⁷. On the Pinnacles National Park grazing unit, one of the key objectives is to improve habitat for CTS, and the RDM standards provided by the park are set with an eye to reducing the accumulation of RDM so that CTS can more easily traverse the area.

In addition to managing RDM to benefit CTS and RLF, WCLC also takes several specific steps to avoid detrimental impacts to these species. We often use electric fence to exclude ponds and wetlands from grazing units in the winter, as cattle trampling on wet, sensitive ground can cause loss of plant cover, erosion, and negative impacts to water quality. When use of a pond is necessary in order to provide water for livestock, we often use electric fence to create a “water gap” that allows cattle only one small point of access to the pond. In addition to preventing trampling around the majority of the pond, the water gap also decreases the amount of time that cattle spend loafing at the pond. The restricted space within the water gaps makes the cattle uncomfortable, which causes them to leave the pond and go back to feeding more quickly.

Matt also has extensive experience managing for sensitive species through his work with Vaqueros Livestock. Similar to Pinnacles National Park, the biologists for Contra Costa Water District and East Bay Regional Parks set RDM targets with an eye towards improving habitat for several key species, including CTS, RLF, and California whipsnake. Matt responsibilities included planning stocking rates and grazing rotations in order to meet these RDM targets, visually estimating RDM, and working with biologists to adjust stocking rates when necessary in order to meet the RDM targets. Matt also planned ranch operations and designed grazing rotations to avoid disruption to golden eagles, which nest on Contra Costa Water District. Collectively, these experiences managing for sensitive species on public lands in the East Bay and WCLC’s experiences managing for sensitive species on Pinnacles National Park illustrate substantial ability and willingness to adjust our management to avoid impacts to sensitive species and broad experience using grazing as a tool to improve habitat for these species.

⁷ Ford, L., P. Vanhorn, D. Rao, N. Scott, P. Trenham, and J. Bartolome. 2013. Managing Rangelands to Benefit California Red-legged Frogs and California Tiger Salamanders. Alameda County Resource Conservation District. Livermore, California.

SECTION 4: OPERATIONS AND EMPLOYEE STAFFING**A. Operational Plan***i. Grazing units for WCLC is submitting a proposal*

WCLC is submitting this proposal for **Harrington, Cloverdale, and Lobitos**.

ii. Class of cattle

WCLC plans to run primarily cow-calf pairs on Harrington, Cloverdale and/or Lobitos. Cow-calf pairs offer several advantages for managing District lands. Mature cows tend to be less flighty and more gentle, which makes them easier to handle and makes them less likely to react adversely to visitor presence on District lands. As mature cows are typically retained in ranching operations for many years, they also become familiar with the ranches they are raised on. A mature cow's knowledge of the locations of fences, water, gates, and trails makes her easier to gather, herd, and rotate between pastures. In addition, mature cows tend to be the class of cattle that is least likely to fall victim to mountain lion predation. With careful herd management and selection, mature cows can also be very adept at protecting their calves from predation (see section 3.B.ii).

WCLC may also occasionally run replacement heifers on District lands, as developing replacement heifers is important for maintaining and growing our cow-calf herd. In addition, WCLC may occasionally run yearlings or two-year-old steers that are being grown for direct-to-consumer beef. Often, we'll mix these younger animals with cow-calf pairs, which allows us to retain many of the herd behavioral benefits of mature cows.

iii. Timing, duration, and frequency of grazing rotations

In order to achieve the District's natural resource management objectives, we propose a grazing regime that involves frequent rotation of livestock and allows fine-scale control of the timing and intensity of grazing throughout the District grazing units. We believe that this can best be achieved through (1) rotational grazing, (2) strategic placement of water and mineral supplements, and (3) seasonal fluctuation of livestock numbers to match forage availability and natural resource management needs. Each of these tools is described in greater detail below.

Rotational grazing

As described in section 3.C.i, actively managed rotational grazing allows for more fine-scale control of where cattle go within a grazing unit, when they graze a particular area, and how intensely they graze. When cattle roam freely over a large area, the outcomes of grazing tend to be very uneven. For example, the District's standards for RDM and stubble height might be met or even exceeded in one part of a large pasture but not yet reached in another part of the same pasture. Rotational grazing allows greater control of stock density and provides the flexibility to exclude cattle from portions of a grazing unit that they tend to overutilize or to confine cattle in the areas that they tend to underutilize. Rotational grazing can be facilitated by permanent cross fencing and, if desired by the District, also through the use of portable electric fencing or through

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

virtual fence, a tool that we are currently implementing on Lone Madrone and are eager to expand to other grazing units. If virtual fencing proves to be an effective and valuable tool on Lone Madrone, WCLC is interested in applying for an NRCS EQIP cost share to implement virtual fence on additional grazing units.

On District lands, grazing rotations can be planned to exclude cattle from sensitive natural resources during times of year when grazing is not desired. For example, the District expressed concerns about the potential impacts of livestock to salmonoid habitat in creeks on Harrington, Cloverdale, and Lobitos. WCLC can use either electric fence or virtual fence to exclude cattle from these sensitive habitats. Similarly, electric and/or virtual fence can be used to exclude cattle from patches of rare or sensitive native plants during flowering and seed set. These tools can also be employed to concentrate cattle onto stands of undesirable species such as distaff thistle, milk thistle, and medusahead in order to reduce the survival and fecundity of these noxious weeds. This is practice that we are currently implementing to control distaff thistle at Lone Madrone.

In addition to allowing very fine-scale control of cattle movements throughout District grazing units, electric and/or virtual fence can be useful for overcoming a variety of operational and infrastructure constraints. For example, on Lone Madrone, we are currently using electric fence to exclude cattle from several in-progress trail construction projects, a practice that we could employ on other District grazing units to avoid conflicts with trail developments and public access.

Water and Mineral Placement

We're highly interested in working with the District to expand livestock water access across the grazing units in order to facilitate greater flexibility in grazing management. In particular, if the District is interested in expanding rotational grazing management, then increasing water access would increase the number and configuration of pastures that we are able to create with electric and/or virtual fence. Water access is generally good throughout the District grazing units, which creates substantial opportunity for rotational grazing. However, there are some areas where greater water access would facilitate much more fine-scale control of cattle movements and the outcomes of grazing. Examples of such areas include the western portion of the Sears Ranch section of Harrington and the ridge of the westernmost pasture on Lobitos.

Where electric fencing and/or water system expansions are infeasible or impractical, strategic placement of mineral supplements can be a useful tool for managing the distribution of livestock. By placing mineral in areas that cattle tend to underutilize, we can increase both consumption of vegetation and trampling in the underused area. Placing mineral in patches of weeds can also be a useful tool for increasing trampling and consumption of undesirable weed species.

Seasonal fluctuation of livestock numbers

Through their experience ranching in San Gregorio, Liz and Blake have found that forage quality and availability fluctuates widely throughout the year in coastal San Mateo County, necessitating different stocking strategies in the summer and winter months. Although the relatively wet coastal climate causes large flushes of nutritious forage in the spring and the summer, the prevalence of fog in the summer prevents much of this forage from curing well enough to remain palatable to livestock in the fall and winter. This is a very different grazing scenario than our

leases in San Benito County, where forage cures well over the summer and can be “banked” to feed cattle in the fall and winter. Because of this challenge, we suggest grazing approximately twice as many AU in the spring and summer than the fall and winter. For example, on Harrington, which is rated for just over 168 cows year-round, we might graze approximately 90 cows October-March and 200 cows April-September. This strategy will ensure that spring and summer livestock numbers are high enough to provide meaningful vegetation management but will avoid overgrazing and poor livestock body condition in the winter. We believe this strategy will also be highly effective at reducing impacts on riparian corridors, as excessive livestock trampling during the wet season can cause significant soil disruption and sediment loading into creeks. Partial destocking in the winter will also eliminate the need to feed hay, which will reduce vehicle impacts on District Lands.

This strategy of partial de-stocking in the winter is very compatible with our grazing operation in San Benito County, as high temperatures and water scarcity in the summer make fall and winter more desirable seasons for grazing in San Benito County. In addition to this regular, seasonal fluctuation of livestock numbers, we plan to fluctuate livestock numbers annually as needed in response to drought or wet winters. We also hope to work with District staff to evaluate how well our stock numbers are meeting natural resource management objectives and to make adjustments as necessary.

Collectively, the tools described above create a high degree of control and flexibility in managing the effects of grazing, which better positions us to meet the District’s natural resource management objectives. Because the District has a variety of different natural resource management objectives, and because plant communities and forage availability vary seasonally and spatially across District grazing units, there is no “one size fits all approach” in terms of managing the timing, duration, and frequency of grazing rotations. However, below we list a few general principals we employ in managing the timing, duration, and frequency of grazing.

Timing: The ideal timing of grazing in each pasture depends on the plant community present and the desired effect of grazing on the plant community. For example, WCLC plans to avoid grazing in desirable plant communities (e.g., remnant stands of purple needlegrass) during flowering and seed set. WCLC also plans to avoid grazing in patches of noxious weeds during seed set to prevent livestock from inadvertently dispersing the seeds. In the absence of other vegetation management considerations, WCLC typically grazes pastures once the grass is over 6” tall (see section 3.C.iv).

Duration: In general, WCLC uses shorter grazing durations (< 2 weeks, often 3-5 days) during the growing season and longer grazing durations (1-4 weeks) during the dormant season. Short grazing durations and frequent rotation of livestock provide much more benefit during the growing season than the dormant season, so we typically rotate livestock as frequently as is operationally feasible during the growing season and then scale back the rotations and focus on RDM management in the dormant season.

Frequency: As described in section 3.C.iv, WCLC typically allows at least six weeks of rest between grazes during the growing season. We may shorten this rest period if trying to adversely impact stands of invasive species. Conversely, we may lengthen this rest period in areas with

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sensitive native species to avoid any detrimental impacts. WCLC typically only grazes each pasture once during the dormant season, with the single dormant season graze lasting for as long as is required to achieve the desired stubble or RDM target.

iv. Order of preference for grazing units

Our top-choice grazing unit is **Harrington**. Our second-choice grazing unit is **Cloverdale** and our third-choice grazing unit is **Lobitos**. We would be happy to accept either multiple grazing units or any of these grazing units on their own.

Harrington is our top choice grazing unit because it borders the Lone Madrone grazing unit, which we currently lease. If we were awarded Harrington, we could run it in combination with Lone Madrone, which would create excellent operational flexibility in terms of stocking and pasture rotations. This would allow us to stock certain pastures heavily where the goal is to impact and control noxious weeds and stock other pastures lightly (or seasonally defer grazing) in order to protect sensitive species. If the District is interested working with us to expand the use of virtual fencing, Harrington is an ideal grazing unit because the proximity of Harrington and Lone Madrone means that they could share virtual fence towers, dramatically reducing the cost and operational footprint of implementing virtual fence.

Collectively, Harrington and Lone Madrone comprise nearly 5,000 acres of contiguous grasslands, coast-sage scrub, oak woodlands, and redwood forest. The ability to manage this extensive landscape as a single unit under one operator rather than separate, individually operated units with different management strategies creates a powerful opportunity to enhance landscape connectivity and eliminate “human-induced ecological boundaries”, a phenomenon that arises when landscapes are artificially segmented into different administrative units and which often corresponds to ecological fragmentation⁸. Collective management of Harrington and Lone Madrone also allows our cattle to better mimic the behavior and movements of native herbivores, which traveled in large herds, roamed significant distances, and, via their disturbance to the landscape, created important niches for other plants and animals. Grazing livestock in a manner that replicates the natural grazing patterns of wild herbivores has been hypothesized to lead to positive ecological outcomes, such as improved wildlife habitat, increased ecological diversity, and enhanced soil health, and is a cornerstone of the Bird Friendly Beef Certification offered by Audubon’s Conservation Ranching Program⁹.

Cloverdale is our second-choice grazing unit because of the unique diversity of natural resource concerns on the property, including San Francisco garter snake habitat, coyote brush and Monterey pine encroachment, and sensitive water resources. As a company that specializes in natural resource management, we feel that Cloverdale would be an excellent fit for our operations and would be excited to work with the District to address natural resource management concerns on this property.

⁸ Aslan, C. E., M. W. Bruson, B. A. Sikes, R. S. Epanchin-Niell, S. Veloz, D. M. Theobald, B. G. Dickson. 2021. Coupled ecological and management connectivity across administrative boundaries in undeveloped landscapes. *Ecosphere* 12:1.

⁹ Hauck, A. 2023. Grazing Gone Wild: Grassland terms of endearment that define when grazing is good for birds and wildlife. Audubon Working Lands. <https://www.audubon.org/news/grazing-gone-wild>

B. Employee Staffing Plan*i. Key personnel and employees*

The WCLC team has diverse and unique skill sets that are well-suited to meeting the District's conservation grazing objectives. To illustrate the complementary skills sets of the partners, and how these skill sets will be employed to benefit the District, we provide a brief education and work history for each partner below.

Liz Duncan, Conservation Manager

Liz has ten years professional experience in natural resource management and over five years of experience in ranching and livestock production. Liz has a BS in Biology from Haverford College (minor in Environmental Studies) and an MS in Natural Resources and Environmental Science from University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), where she completed and published research on the ecological outcomes of livestock and wildlife herbivory in aspen stands in Nevada and California¹⁰. Liz has worked as a biological technician for both the National Park Service and the US Forest Service on projects including wildlife monitoring, chemical weed abatement, native bunchgrass restoration and genetics research, and targeted, rotational cattle grazing in riparian meadows. Liz also worked as a restoration technician for the National Audubon Society, where she conducted oak woodland and riparian plant community monitoring and led volunteer work crews on a variety of restoration projects.

Liz is active in the rangeland management community and serves on the boards of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition (CRCC) and the San Benito Resource Conservation District. She has also been a speaker for numerous rangeland-focused educational events, including rancher's seminars in San Benito, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties, rangeland management classes at UC Berkeley, the CRCC Annual Summit, the California Oak Symposium, and Society for Range Management (SRM) Annual Meeting. Liz's primary responsibilities on District lands will be (1) working with the District to plan grazing management, including shipping and receiving dates, stocking rates, and pasture rotations, (2) rotating cattle between pastures, (3) assisting with herd husbandry, (4) and completing other natural resource management projects (e.g., weed spraying) at the discretion of the District.

Matt Reikowski, Livestock Manager

Matt has ten years of experience working on large cattle ranches in California and Montana. Matt got his start in cattle ranching working for the central coast rancher Joe Morris, who is well known for his holistic rotational grazing and commitment to ecosystem stewardship. Matt studied animal and rangeland sciences for two years Montana State University and worked as a cowboy for multiple large Montana cattle ranches, including Sieben Livestock and Climbing Arrow Ranch. After returning from Montana, Matt studied Equine and Ranch Management at Feather River College and worked for 5 Dot Ranch in northeastern California, where his primary responsibility was managing a 200,000-acre grazing allotment on Plumas National Forest, a job that involved extensive range riding to herd cattle away from sensitive riparian resources and monitoring utilization across the allotment to ensure compliance with Forest Service grazing

¹⁰ Reikowski, E., T. Refsland, and J. Cushman. 2022. Ungulate herbivores as drivers of aspen recruitment and understory composition throughout arid montane landscapes. *Ecosphere* 13(9): e4225.

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standards. More recently, Matt worked for four years for Vaqueros Livestock, a custom grazing enterprise that raises over 5,000 yearlings seasonally on water board and regional park land in Contra Costa County. Matt's responsibilities included actively managing cattle grazing, installing infrastructure with the support of NRCS EQIP, and monitoring RDM to ensure that the grazing was aligned with wildlife management objectives for sensitive species, including California whipsnake, CTS, and RLF.

Matt is a skilled cowboy with vast experience herding and managing cattle using horses and dogs in remote and rugged country, a skill that will be invaluable for successfully managing cattle in mountainous District lands. In addition, he is well-versed in herd health management and is skilled in ranch infrastructure design and maintenance. Matt's primary responsibilities on District lands will be (1) leading shipping, receiving, and all livestock processing events, (2) assisting with day-to-day livestock husbandry and rotational grazing management, and (3) working with the District to design and build infrastructure.

Blake Duncan, Operations Manager

Blake grew up on a family ranch in Northern Nevada that ran 600 cow-calf pairs on irrigated meadows and on desert Bureau of Land Management (BLM) allotments. Blake holds a BS in Rangeland Ecology and Management from UNR and has nearly ten years' experience working on public and private ranches, including the 96 Ranch in Paradise Valley, NV and the UNR Main Station Farm. Blake's work for these ranching operations included herd husbandry and rotational grazing management, heavy equipment operation and maintenance, and leading backcountry fencing crews on BLM and USFS grazing allotments. Blake worked for one year as a Partner Biologist for Pheasants Forever and the NRCS, where he facilitated the planning of EQIP-funded range and infrastructure improvement projects, evaluated rangeland health using the IIRH Protocol¹¹, and conducted soil sampling, photo point monitoring, and rare plant surveys.

Throughout his career Blake has been a leader in the agriculture and rangeland community. Blake was the Nevada State FFA president in 2016 and has been an active member of SRM for the past 8 years. Blake is currently President of the SRM Young Professionals Conclave, a group which facilitates networking and career development opportunities for students and young professionals. As an articulate and thoughtful leader who is passionate about rangelands and the people who manage them, Blake will be an outstanding spokesperson for the District's conservation grazing vision. Blake's primary responsibilities on District Lands will be (1) day-to-day livestock husbandry and rotational grazing management, (2) assisting with shipping, receiving, and processing events, (3) completing natural resource management projects, and (4) repairing and maintaining infrastructure.

Frank Johnson, Ranch Hand

Frank has five years' experience working on large cattle ranching operations throughout California. Frank is a skilled cowboy, whose responsibilities on District's lands will be (1) checking livestock, (2) rotating cattle between pastures, (3) assisting with shipping, receiving, and processing events, and (4) infrastructure repair and maintenance.

¹¹ Pellant, M., P. Shaver, D. Pyke, J. Herrick, N. Lepak, G. Riegel, E. Kachergis, B. Newingham, D. Toledo, and F. Busby. 2020. Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health, Version 5. Tech Ref 1734-6. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, National Operations Center, Denver, CO.

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All the WCLC partners and staff can be reached by phone, text, or email. The main POC for day-to-day operations will be Liz Duncan, which can be reached at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

ii. Site presence

Typically, WCLC checks cattle every two to three days. During calving season, we check cattle every day so that we can respond rapidly to birthing difficulties, sick calves, or any other issues that might arise. In addition to these regular livestock checks, we will have frequent presence on District lands in order to actively rotate cattle between pastures, place mineral, and work on infrastructure improvement and natural resource management projects at the discretion of the District. A typical week on a District grazing unit might include brief cattle checks on Monday and Wednesday, then a longer workday moving cattle and completing infrastructure maintenance on Friday. When working on large infrastructure improvement projects, our site presence will be much higher (on-site 4-5 days per week) so that we can complete projects in a timely manner.

iii. Ability to respond to emergencies

Liz, Blake, and WCLC's ranch hand, Frank Johnson, are all conveniently located in San Gregorio, approximately 10 minutes from Harrington and Lobitos and 20 minutes from Cloverdale. Liz, Blake, and Frank can all respond rapidly in the event of an emergency (within an hour for significant emergencies or within a few hours for minor emergencies). If additional staff are needed to rectify an emergency situation, Matt is located 2.5 hours away at the WCLC headquarters in San Benito County.

iv. Communication and collaboration with the District Conservation Grazing Program Manager

We look forward to a strong collaboration with the District Conservation Grazing Program Manager. In our experience, the best land stewardship is generated through an open and creative exchange of ideas and experiences, which we hope to promote with the District staff. We view our role with the District as providing a natural resource management service, and will adhere to any standards the District gives us regarding range readiness for grazing, utilization, stubble, RDM, etc. when planning shipping, stocking rates, and pasture rotations. We particularly look forward to hearing input from the Conservation Grazing Program Manager on the timing, intensity, frequency, and duration of grazing rotations and feel that a strong collaboration with the District offers us valuable opportunities to learn and to continue to hone our grazing management skills. We're happy to communicate with the Conservation Grazing Program Manager through phone, email, text, and in-person meetings and site-visits.

v. Experience working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

As described in Section 3.A.ii, WCLC has extensive experience using NRCS EQIP to fund water and fence improvements. WCLC is willing and eager to leverage EQIP funding for infrastructure improvements on Districts Lands, and as described in Section 4.A.iii, is particularly interested in using EQIP to fund installation of virtual fence on District lands.

SECTION 5: ALIGNMENT WITH DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL POLICY**A. Alignment with District goals pertaining to environmental sustainability***i. Reduction in non-renewable energy use and greenhouse gas emissions*

As WCLC conducts a substantial portion of its livestock management on horseback, our use of fossil fuels for managing lease lands is low. We work to further reduce fossil fuel use by avoiding unnecessary travel and avoiding driving our larger, diesel-powered trucks unless we are transporting livestock. When building electric fence and checking cattle, we typically commute to and from the lease in a car or light truck. As electric vehicle technology develops, we're highly interested in adding electric trucks, ATVs, and side-by-sides to our fleet in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.

ii. Reduction in impacts to streams/sensitive habitats

WCLC has used several strategies to reduce impacts to streams and other sensitive habitats. One of our most commonly used strategies is to exclude livestock from sensitive habitats using electric fencing. For example, we often exclude livestock from ponds if the pond is not absolutely necessary for providing livestock water. If the pond is necessary for stock water, we generally use electric fence to construct a water gap that allows cattle only one small point of access to the water, which prevents trampling around the majority of the pond and reduces the amount of time that the cattle spend resting by the pond. If necessary, we'll remove the water gap and graze livestock around the pond once every one to two years to prevent vegetation around the pond from getting too overgrown. As described in Section 3.C.i, WCLC is currently testing the efficacy of virtual fence for protecting streams and other sensitive habitats and is eager to employ this tool on additional grazing units.

While WCLC has not done this in the past, we are also very interested in developing water systems where water is pumped from a stream or pond to a nearby trough and cattle are prevented from watering directly from the stream or pond. With such systems in place, cattle would only be given access to a stream or pond if grazing was deemed beneficial for preventing the vegetation from becoming overgrown.

WCLC has also found that using short grazing durations coupled with long rest periods is a valuable strategy for preventing degradation of sensitive habitats. When grazing durations are long, cattle will repeatedly return to streams, ponds, and wetlands, which can cause long-term degradation to the plants, soils, and water quality. However, if vegetation is trampled and consumed only occasionally and for a relatively short period of time, then streams, ponds, and wetlands tend to rapidly re-vegetate and suffer no noticeable long-term effects.

iii. Drought planning

WCLC has developed a multi-pronged approach to preparing for and adapting to droughts that includes planning conservative stocking rates and having multiple avenues for destocking in the event of a drought. Our approach includes the following specific strategies:

Sizing the herd with drought in mind: Because ranchers are frequently forced to sell livestock for low prices during drought, WCLC has developed an alternative strategy where we maintain a relatively small herd and then add animals in the event of an unusually wet year with good forage production. This reduces and often entirely eliminates the need to sell animals for low prices during a drought. In wet years, WCLC takes advantage of additional feed by buying animals that we can add value to and sell within a single season. One example of this is developing replacement heifers, which can be grazed on leased lands then sold as bred heifers once vegetation management targets have been met. In wet years, WCLC also occasionally offers clients custom grazing contracts, which are excellent tool for temporarily increasing stocking rates to avoid undergrazing.

Selling low-value animals: We keep records of animals' age, disposition, and reproductive history, and if forced to sell animals by drought, will use it as an opportunity to remove the animals that add the least value to our operation.

Range Monitoring and forecasting: WCLC uses both visual assessments of biomass and weighing and clipping of forage to estimate forage availability and plan any necessary de-stocking well in advance so that we do not inadvertently graze below RDM targets.

iv. Increasing carbon storage

WCLC is very interested in using grazing to increase carbon capture and storage on rangelands. We've experimented with using high-intensity, short duration rotational grazing as tool to return organic matter to soil, thereby increasing carbon sequestration, and are highly interested in continuing to explore this approach. We've also worked extensively to develop grazing systems that promote increased cover of native perennial grasses, as these species tend to generate higher soil carbon sequestration than exotic annual grasses¹². In addition, we've secured funding for seeding perennial grasses through the CDFA's Healthy Soils Program and have completed perennial grass seeding projects on both the Selleck Ranch and Amity Ranch. As woody plants are important contributors to above and below ground soil carbon, we've also secured funding to install a pollinator friendly hedgerow on the Selleck Ranch and have conducted extensive oak woodland monitoring on Pinnacles Ranch to ensure that our grazing approach benefits rather than harms this keystone species.

We've been very interested to follow the research of Stanley et al., which suggests possible benefits of targeted rotational grazing for increasing soil carbon, but also indicates that these benefits vary greatly depending on the soils, plant community, and climate¹³. To better educate ourselves on managing for and monitoring soil carbon, we've recently engaged with Working Lands Conservation (WLC), and have paired monitoring guidance from WLC's soil scientists with Western SARE grant funds to begin implementing a program of soil carbon monitoring on Pinnacles National Park. We would be eager to explore a similar approach on District lands.

¹² Koteen, L., D. Baldocchi, J. Harte. 2011. Invasion of non-native grasses causes a drop in soil carbon storage in California grasslands. *Environmental Research Letters* 6: 044001.

¹³ Stanley, P., C. Wilson, E. Patterson, M. Machmuller, and M. Francesca Cotrufo. 2024. Ruminating on soil carbon: Applying current understanding to inform grazing management. *Global Change Biology* 30(3): e17223.

B. Alignment with District goals pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion

The WCLC company and the partners are unusual and underrepresented in the cattle ranching industry in several ways:

1. WCLC is 50% woman-owned (Liz)
2. The WCLC partners include two first generation ranchers (Liz and Matt)
3. All the WCLC partners are young ranchers (< 30 years old). The average age of a rancher in the U.S. is 58 and only 9% of U.S. ranchers are under 35 years old¹⁴.

Our unusual backgrounds make us particularly committed to advancing opportunities for beginning producers to develop successful agricultural enterprises. Since graduating from high school, Blake has served as a volunteer and mentor for Nevada FFA, an organization that provides leadership and career training in agriculture and serves numerous Hispanic and Paiute students. Similarly, Liz works to advance opportunities for producers from underrepresented background by serving as a rancher advisor to SRM's Diversity and Inclusion committee.

As a District grazing operator, WCLC plans to expand its diversity, equity, and inclusion work in several ways:

1. Develop an internship program for students and young professionals.
WCLC offered a 5-week internship to an anthropology student at Middlebury College in 2021 and found the experience to be highly rewarding. The intern assisted with oak woodland monitoring and infrastructure development projects and learned significant skills in livestock husbandry. A future internship program would focus on providing training to students and young professionals from underrepresented backgrounds in livestock husbandry, grazing management, and rangeland monitoring.
2. Host tours for University of California Cooperative Extension's (UCCE) Range Camp
Range Camp is an educational event that introduces high school students to plant, animal, and land management. The event is typically held on the UCCE's Elkus Ranch near Half Moon Bay. Range Camp organizers have told Liz that they are always looking for new and exciting tour sites for the Range Camp attendees. A tour on District lands would be an excellent way to introduce students from diverse backgrounds to using livestock grazing as a land management tool.
3. Provide opportunities for employees to partner on grazing leases or livestock purchases.
Agricultural employees (particularly Hispanic, Asian and female employees) often have limited opportunities to gain ownership of an agricultural enterprises, despite decades of experience working in agriculture. By giving employees opportunities to purchase and run their own livestock with WCLC cattle and/or to co-sign on grazing leases, we can help employees transition from a ranch worker to an owner/operator.
4. Provide educational opportunities to agricultural employees
To help our employees succeed in their transition to owners of agricultural enterprises, we will pay time and tuition for employees to attend trainings, such as the FarmLink's Resiliator Course or ALBA's Farmer Education and Enterprise Development Program, both of which are offered in English and Spanish and provide aspiring farm and ranch owners with valuable business management skills.

¹⁴ USDA. 2022. "2022 Census of Agriculture impacts the next generation of farmers." <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/2023/02/22/2022-census-agriculture-impacts-next-generations-farmers>

C. Alignment with District goals pertaining to community outreach, education, and local food systems

Community Outreach and Education

The WCLC partners are committed to advancing the art and science of rangeland stewardship and to educating our community on the synergy that exists between land conservation and food production when grazing lands are well-managed. Liz regularly speaks on grazing management and rangeland stewardship for classes and conferences, including Weed Management Area meetings, the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition Annual Summit, the SRM Annual Meeting, the California Oak Symposium, the California Society for Ecological Restoration, and range management classes at UC Berkeley and UNR. Liz's history of engagement in the rangeland management community and her advocacy for innovative approaches to grazing management has earned her positions on the board of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition and San Benito Resource Conservation District. Similarly, Blake serves as President of SRM's Young Professionals Conclave and as Chair of SRM's Young Producers Forum, groups that are committed to advancing knowledge of innovative rangeland management solutions and fostering career development and networking opportunities for early-career professionals working in rangeland management. As part of his leadership role in SRM, Blake also helps manage a scholarship fund that provides financial assistance for young professionals to attend the SRM conference and he organizes monthly career development meetings that connect students and recent graduates to established professionals in the rangeland field. We find opportunities to engage with the community to be highly enriching and hope to be a valuable representative of the District conservation grazing mission.

Local food systems

WCLC is a strong believer in local, sustainably grown and ethically raised meats. A challenge for our operation is combining local food production with targeted vegetation management. Targeted vegetation management sometimes requires conditioning animals to eat substandard feeds (e.g., thistle, invasive brome grasses, hardinggrass, etc.), which is counterproductive to fattening animals for direct-to-consumer beef. To achieve our vegetation management objectives while participating in ethical and sustainable food systems, we are in the process of joining the co-op Country Natural Beef (CNB). CNB members voluntarily obtain Global Animal Partnership Level 4 (GAP-4) certifications, which indicate a very high level of animal care and welfare, including living primarily on pasture and no antibiotic use. CNB members also obtain certifications in GrazeWell, CNB's regenerative grazing certification program that requires a high level of pasture rotation, regular monitoring or range conditions, and extensive peer-to-peer engagement and learning. Co-Op members send weaned calves to a large, irrigated pasture ranch in Oregon for finishing and then sell finished and butchered animals directly to consumers and to a number of western US restaurants and natural grocers. We feel this program effectively balances our ability to have a cow-calf herd that is well conditioned for vegetation management with our commitment to participating in sustainable and ethical food systems. As CNB members, one of our responsibilities will be tabling at grocery stores that sell CNB beef and educating consumers on sustainable beef production, a responsibility that we feel is highly synergistic with our larger community education and outreach work. We anticipate being fully certified and enrolled in CNB by the end of 2025.

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D. Business and Residential Address

WCLC's business address is [REDACTED] CA 95043. This is also Matt's residential address. Liz and Blake live on a ranch in San Mateo County. Their residential address is [REDACTED], 94074.

E. Current or former grazing tenant

WCLC is a current grazing tenant with the District. We have been the grazing tenant on Lone Madrone since November 2024.

ATTACHMENT 1: REFERENCES (CONFIDENTIAL)

AMELIA RYAN

Vegetation Ecologist, Pinnacles National Park
5000 East Entrance Rd
Paicines, CA 95043

Pinnacles National Park is a 26,000-acre unit of the National Park Service located in south San Benito County. Pinnacles is well-known as the first re-introduction site for the critically endangered California Condor and for its dramatic rock formations and stunning displays of wildflowers. Since 2021, WCLC has been providing seasonal grazing services on 70-acres of grassland in the park for an experimental prairie restoration project. Through this project, park biologists are evaluating the efficacy of cattle grazing for controlling exotic annual grasses and invasive summer mustard and for promoting increased cover of native grasses and forbs and improved habitat for sensitive species.

GAIL IVENS

Owner, Selleck Ranch

CA 93930

The Selleck Ranch is a 630-acre cattle ranch located in south San Benito County, approximately 20 miles east of the town of King City. WCLC has been grazing cattle on the Selleck Ranch since 2020. WCLC's grazing management on the Selleck Ranch has focused on controlling weeds, promoting increased cover and diversity of native plants, providing fire protection, and improving the habitat for native wildlife.

JOE MORRIS

Owner, Morris Grassfed

95045

Joe Morris and his family have been raising cattle on the Central Coast and selling 100% grassfed beef direct to consumers for 30 years. In addition, Morris Grassfed has been providing conservation grazing services on Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area since 1994. Joe has been a mentor to all the WCLC partners and, before WCLC's founding, employed Matt Reikowski as a cowboy. Many of WCLC's grazing management and livestock husbandry practices were inspired by Morris Grassfed.

Supplemental Questions for Financial Statement:

- i. In the past ten (10) years, have you, your partners, and/or your subcontractors defaulted in the performance of a contract or lease, related to your livestock operation, leading the other party to terminate your contract? If answer is ' Yes', please offer a detailed explanation.

No

- ii. Are you, your partners, and/or subcontractors currently involved in any litigation or bankruptcy proceedings which now or in the future could affect your ability to pay rent or perform within the terms of the lease agreement? If answer is ' Yes', please offer a detailed explanation.

No

- iii. In the past ten (10) years, have you, your partners, and/or subcontractors had any lawsuits filed against you related to your livestock operation? If answer is ' Yes', please offer a detailed explanation, including the circumstances, parties involved and outcome.

No

- iv. Do you, your partners, and/or subcontractors have any civil or criminal litigation or investigations pending in relation to livestock and/or agricultural production? If answer is ' Yes', please offer a detailed explanation.

No

ATTACHMENT 3: CURRENT PROPERTIES GRAZED (CONFIDENTIAL)

The name of the landowner for each property currently grazed by WCLC is provided in Table 1. Proof of insurance for all properties grazed by WCLC is provided on the following pages.

Table 1. Landowner information for WCLC grazing leases

Property	Owner
Lone Madrone	Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District
Pinnacles National Park	U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service
Selleck Ranch	Gail Ivens
Pinnacles Ranch	David Cole
Amity Ranch	David Reikowski and Tina Swanson



CERTIFICATE OF LIABILITY INSURANCE

DATE (MM/DD/YYYY)
10/31/2024

THIS CERTIFICATE IS ISSUED AS A MATTER OF INFORMATION ONLY AND CONFERS NO RIGHTS UPON THE CERTIFICATE HOLDER. THIS CERTIFICATE DOES NOT AFFIRMATIVELY OR NEGATIVELY AMEND, EXTEND OR ALTER THE COVERAGE AFFORDED BY THE POLICIES BELOW. THIS CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A CONTRACT BETWEEN THE ISSUING INSURER(S), AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OR PRODUCER, AND THE CERTIFICATE HOLDER.

IMPORTANT: If the certificate holder is an ADDITIONAL INSURED, the policy(ies) must have ADDITIONAL INSURED provisions or be endorsed. If SUBROGATION IS WAIVED, subject to the terms and conditions of the policy, certain policies may require an endorsement. A statement on this certificate does not confer rights to the certificate holder in lieu of such endorsement(s).

PRODUCER License# 0C36861
Alliant Insurance Services, Inc.
Todd Garibaldi Insurance
641 South Ham Ln Ste A
Lodi, CA 95242

CONTACT Teresa Patchen
PHONE (A/C, No, Ext) : (209) 334-3030 FAX (A/C, No) (209) 334-3535
E-MAIL Address: teresa.patchen@alliant.com

INSURER(S) AFFORDING COVERAGE

NAIC #

INSURER A: Ohio Security Insurance Company

24082

INSURER B:

INSURER C:

INSURER D:

INSURER E:

INSURER F:

INSURED

Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC

COVERAGES

CERTIFICATE NUMBER:

REVISION NUMBER:

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A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL GENERAL LIABILITY <input type="checkbox"/> CLAIMS-MADE <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUR GEN'L AGGREGATE LIMIT APPLIES PER: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLICY <input type="checkbox"/> PROJECT <input type="checkbox"/> LOC OTHER:	X		FGS68150553	8/29/2024	8/29/2025	EACH OCCURRENCE \$ 1,000,000 DAMAGE TO RENTED PREMISES (Ea occurrence) \$ 100,000 MED EXP (Any one person) \$ 5,000 PERSONAL & ADV INJURY \$ 1,000,000 GENERAL AGGREGATE \$ 2,000,000 PRODUCTS - COMPIOP AGG \$ 2,000,000
A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ANY AUTO OWNED AUTOS ONLY <input type="checkbox"/> SCHEDULED AUTOS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HIRED AUTOS ONLY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NON-OWNED AUTOS ONLY	X		BAS68150553	10/25/2024	8/29/2025	COMBINED SINGLE LIMIT (Ea accident) \$ 1,000,000 BODILY INJURY (Per person) \$ BODILY INJURY (Per accident) \$ PROPERTY DAMAGE (Per accident) \$
	<input type="checkbox"/> UMBRELLA LIAB <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUR <input type="checkbox"/> EXCESS LIAB <input type="checkbox"/> CLAIMS-MADE DED RETENTION \$						EACH OCCURRENCE \$ AGGREGATE \$
	WORKERS COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY ANY PROPRIETOR/PARTNER/EXECUTIVE OFFICER/ MEMBER EXCLUDED? (Mandatory in NH) If yes, describe under DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS below	Y/N	N/A				PER STATUTE <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER <input type="checkbox"/> E.L. EACH ACCIDENT \$ E.L. DISEASE - EA EMPLOYEE \$ E.L. DISEASE - POLICY LIMIT \$

DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS / LOCATIONS / VEHICLES (ACORD 101, Additional Remarks Schedule, may be attached if more space is required)

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, its officers, agents and employees.

Primary, Non-Contributory.

CERTIFICATE HOLDER

CANCELLATION

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, CA 94022

SHOULD ANY OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLICIES BE CANCELED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION DATE THEREOF, NOTICE WILL BE DELIVERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLICY PROVISIONS.

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE



CERTIFICATE OF LIABILITY INSURANCE

ATTACHMENT 3

04/02/2025

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PRODUCER Alliant Insurance Services, Inc 641 S Ham Ln Ste A Lodi CA 952423535		CONTACT NAME: SMITH, CRAIG PHONE (A/C No. Ext): E-MAIL ADDRESS:		FAX (A/C No.):
INSURED Willow Creek Land And Cattle, Llc CA 94074		INSURER(S) AFFORDING COVERAGE INSURER A: Ohio Security Insurance Company INSURER B: Ohio Security Insurance Company INSURER C: INSURER D: INSURER E: INSURER F:		NAIC # 24082 24082

COVERAGES

CERTIFICATE NUMBER: 0237456709

REVISION NUMBER: 2016-03

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	AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY <input type="checkbox"/> ANY AUTO <input type="checkbox"/> OWNED AUTOS ONLY <input type="checkbox"/> SCHEDULED AUTOS <input type="checkbox"/> HIRED AUTOS ONLY <input type="checkbox"/> NON-OWNED AUTOS ONLY	X	X	BAS68150553	10/25/2024	08/29/2025	COMBINED SINGLE LIMIT (Ea accident) \$ 1,000,000 BODILY INJURY (Per person) \$ BODILY INJURY (Per accident) \$ PROPERTY DAMAGE (Per accident) \$ \$
	UMBRELLA LIAB <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUR EXCESS LIAB <input type="checkbox"/> CLAIMS-MADE DED <input type="checkbox"/> RETENTION \$						EACH OCCURRENCE \$ AGGREGATE \$ \$
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CERTIFICATE HOLDER**CANCELLATION**

Dept. of Interior National Park Service

5000 East Entrance Rd

Paicines

CA 95043

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AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

Curtis Luken

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COVERAGES

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GEN'L AGGREGATE LIMIT APPLIES PER: <input type="checkbox"/> POLICY <input type="checkbox"/> PRO-JECT <input type="checkbox"/> LOC OTHER:							GENERAL AGGREGATE \$ 2,000,000
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	BODILY INJURY (Per accident) \$						
	PROPERTY DAMAGE (Per accident) \$						
							\$
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Dept. of Interior National Park Service

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AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

Paicines

CA 95043

Curtis Luken

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AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

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**VINCE FONTANA
LOBITOS GRAZING LEASE
PROPOSAL**

**SUBMITTED TO:
MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
APRIL 3, 2025**

**1) Introduction****a) Cover Page**

April 3, 2025

Matthew Shapero

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

5050 El Camino Real

Los Altos, CA 94022-1404

Dear Mr. Shapero:

(i.-iii) I am rancher Vince Fontana Jr, along with my grandson Hunter Fontana, in the ranch grazing business Vince Fontana, in the San Mateo Coastal Area.

**Vince Fontana Jr, [REDACTED] California
94019 email: [REDACTED] Hunter Fontana, [REDACTED]**

Please accept the enclosed materials as my individual proposed bid for the new Grazing Lease on the District Conservation Grazing Lands of Lobitos Grazing Unit, henceforth "Lobitos," in Half Moon Bay. I would be the sole person responsible for any contract clarification, ability to negotiate the contract, and be contractually obligated. I am in receipt of all addenda to the Request for Proposals.

(iv) "The undersigned, by submitting the foregoing proposal, declares under penalty of perjury: (i) that the proposal is not made in the interest of, or on behalf of, any undisclosed person, partnership, company, association, organization, or corporation; (ii) the proposal is genuine and not collusive or sham; (iii) the proposer has not directly or indirectly induced or solicited any other proposer to put in a false or sham proposal, and has not directly or indirectly colluded, conspired, connived, or agreed with any proposer or anyone else to put in a sham proposal; (iv) the proposer has not attempted to influence anyone else's response to this solicitation; (v) the proposer has not attempted to influence anyone else to secure an advantage against the District or influence the outcome of the solicitation; and (vi) that all statements contained in the proposal are true."

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

Best regards,

Vince Fontana Jr

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vince Fontana Jr', written over a horizontal line.



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2] Business Information

a] Statement of Experience

i. Business name and address.

i. My cattle grazing business is Vince Fontana, operating from 785 2nd Avenue, Half Moon Bay, California 94019.

ii. Description of organization's structure, principals, employees, client base, etc., to demonstrate the stability and strength of the business.

ii. Vince Fontana is operated by me, Vince Fontana Jr and Hunter Fontana, dedicated to raising cattle and providing healthy cattle for high quality beef. Vince Fontana, like most other ranch businesses, pull from the local community for various needs, it could be another cattle rancher, a company, family member or other labor. Ranching skills are learned over time, it is important to get the right help for safety and efficiency. I currently manage grazing on six ranches, all are private ranches, except for Lobitos which is District.

iii. Description of organization's agricultural operation, including type/age class of livestock produced, production methods, marketing methods and additional commodities produced.

iii. The herds Vince Fontana has developed over the years in the cow/calf operation, are almost entirely Black Angus. The herds ages range from 2 year old cows, to cows up to 15 years old. With all leases, Rotational Grazing is used and implemented, benefiting both the land and the cattle, this prevents overgrazing and helps to maintain soil structure and fertility. Cattle require proper nutrition and management to attain their best health and productivity, which is fundamental to the business operation. For Vince Fontana, water distribution, fencing and infrastructure are all elements related to Rotational Grazing, those costs for leases on private land need to be justified to implement. The implementation costs to the infrastructure is absorbed by District for Lobitos, alleviating me of costly infrastructure.

iv. Area(s) of specialization and expertise.

iv. As a cattle rancher, I have leased ranch lands in the coastal region of San Mateo County for 50 plus years. My experience up to this date, has been to address all stewardship needs and range management, from water development to erosion,



including soil and grass management. Livestock production and all issues have been handled, from cradle to grave by Vince Fontana.

v. Length of time managing cattle grazing on (a) publicly owned lands and (b) private lands.

v. Vince Fontana has been managing cattle grazing on (a) publicly owned lands for 20 years, and (b) private lands for 50 plus years. I am the fourth generation, my son, Greg Fontana, is the fifth generation, and my grandson, Hunter Fontana, is the sixth generation, involved in agriculture. Since the 1890s, the Fontana's have been associated with agriculture on the San Mateo Coast. Starting in 1920s, the Fontana's began farming and ranching in the Purisima Creek area to present time, part of which is now the Lobitos Grazing Unit leased to Vince Fontana by the District.

► **See Attachment Photo 1 | Vince Fontana and Hunter Fontana**

vi. Brief description and location of facilities within the business' ownership or control that directly enhance the ability to fulfill the terms and conditions of the lease and management plan.

vi. Vince Fontana has all the supplies and equipment necessary to operate a sustainability of cattle ranching, for 50 plus years.

b) List of References

Provide a list of three (3) references from three (3) different external agencies/clients /advisors who have knowledge of your cattle grazing operation and who are willing to validate your past performance managing livestock and natural resources on leased and/or owned land. At least one (1) reference shall be from a past or current landowner/agency from whom the individual or firm submitting this proposal has been in a grazing contract or agreement with in the past five (5) years.

b) List of References Agencies / Clients / Advisors

1) BJ Burns, President

i. San Mateo County Farm Bureau

i. [REDACTED] A 94019

iv. [REDACTED]



- 2] i. Nancy Poss
 - ii. UC Cooperative Extension | Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources
 - iii. [REDACTED]
 - iv. [REDACTED] CA 94019
 - v. [REDACTED]
- 3] i. Carolyn Whitesell, co-principal investigator
 - Bay Area Carnivore-Livestock Interactions Project
 - ii. UC Cooperative Extension | Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources
 - iii. [REDACTED]
 - iv. [REDACTED]
 - v. [REDACTED]

Current Landowner of Grazing Contract

- 1] i. Karen Moty
 - ii. Klingman-Moty Farm
 - iii. [REDACTED]
 - iv. [REDACTED]
 - v. email
 - vi. 600 acres of dry land grazing, lease started in 1983 to ongoing.

c] Financial Statement

Provide written evidence proving the financial ability to purchase livestock, make necessary infrastructure improvements, provide care for livestock, and to make timely rent payments. Written evidence will include a certified financial report or a certified statement of financial condition. This requirement could be satisfied by providing a balance sheet indicating assets and liabilities, which is certified by a certified public accountant (CPA) or certified as true and correct by an officer of the business, indicated by a date and signature on the bottom of the statement. Alternative materials and documents will be considered by the District on a case-by-case basis, and the District may request additional information after the proposal submission, if it deems necessary to adequately assess the proposer's financial condition.

If the operator is a sole proprietor or a combination of sole proprietors, a financial statement is required for each person in the operation.

In addition to a Financial Statement, please clearly and concisely respond to each of the following questions:



c] Financial Statement

Vince Fontana Financial Statement, which far exceeds the needs of the lease, is in Attachments.

► ***See Attachment Document 2***

i. In the past ten (10) years, have you, your partners, and/or your subcontractors defaulted in the performance of a contract or lease, related to your livestock operation, leading the other party to terminate your contract?

i. In the past ten (10) years, I have not defaulted in the performance of a contract or lease, related to my livestock operation, leading the other party to terminate my contract.

ii. Are you, your partners, and/or subcontractors currently involved in any litigation or bankruptcy proceedings which now or in the future could affect your ability to pay rent or perform within the terms of the lease agreement?

ii. I am not currently involved in any litigation or bankruptcy proceedings which now or in the future could affect my ability to pay rent or perform within the terms of the lease agreement.

iii. In the past ten (10) years, have you, your partners, and/or subcontractors had any lawsuits filed against you related to your livestock operation?

iii. In the past ten (10) years, I have not had any lawsuits filed against me related to your livestock operation.

iv. Do you, your partners, and/or subcontractors have any civil or criminal litigation or investigations pending in relation to livestock and/or agricultural production?

iv. I do not have any civil or criminal litigation or investigations pending in relation to livestock and/or agricultural production? If answer is ' Yes', please offer a detailed explanation.

d] Grazing Lease Agreement.

d] I accept the terms of the Grazing Lease Agreement, including insurance and indemnification requirements.



3] Background & Technical Experience | Alignment with District Grazing Policy

a] Livestock Operating Experience

i. List each property that you currently graze (private and publicly owned) or incorporate into your livestock operation. For each property, please include the following information:

1. Location
2. Size
3. Duration of grazing agreement or lease
4. Detailed description of rangeland/vegetation types/topography
5. Season of use
6. Type of livestock grazed (cow/calf, stocker, etc.)
7. Name of the landowner
8. Proof of Insurance
 - a. Certificate of insurance covering the properties that you currently graze

Property Currently Grazing 1

i. Bell Ranch

1. 209 Madera Lane, San Gregorio, CA 94074
2. 160 acres
3. 20 years. Started 2005, ongoing lease
4. Coastal dry land, coastal range land, nutritional coastal flora including: annual rye, wild oats, filigree, bird foot tree, foil, purple reed, grasses include: seeded perennial harding grass
5. Year Round Use
6. Stocker
7. Kay Bell II
8. Chubb Insurance Policy
 - a. ► See Attachment Document 2

**Property Currently Grazing 2****i. Klingman-Moty Farm**

- 1. 3000 Hwy 84, San Gregorio, CA 94074-3000**
- 2. 600 acres**
- 3. 42 plus years / Ongoing**
- 4. Coastal dry land, topography hilly, nutritional coastal flora including: annual rye, wild oats, filigree, bird foot tree, foil, purple reed**
- 5. Year Round Use**
- 6. Cow/calf**
- 7. Karen Moty**
- 8. Chubb Insurance Policy**
 - a. ► See Attachment Document 2**

Property Currently Grazing 3:**i. Sanders Ranch**

- 1. 2047 Pomponio Creek Road, Pescadero, CA 94060**
- 2. 300 acres**
- 3. 25 plus years / ongoing lease**
- 4. Coastal dry land, topography hilly, nutritional coastal flora including: annual rye, wild oats, filigree, bird foot tree, foil, purple reed**
- 5. Year Round Use**
- 6. Cow/calf**
- 7. Mark Sanders**
- 8. Chubb Insurance Policy**
 - a. ► See Attachment Document 2**

**Property Currently Grazing 4:****i. Scott Monori Ranch**

- 1. 2799 Lobitos Creek Road, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019**
- 2. 125 acres**
- 3. 50 years. Started 1975 to present / Ongoing lease**
- 4. Coastal dry land, topography hilly, native grasses, nutritional coastal flora including: annual rye, wild oats, filigree, bird foot tree, foil, purple reed**
- 5. Year Round Use**
- 6. Cow/calf**
- 7. Scott Monori**
- 8. Chubb Insurance Policy**
 - a. ► See Attachment Document 2**

Property Currently Grazing 5:**i. UC Elkas Ranch**

- 1. 1500 Purisima Creek Road, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019**
- 2. 100 acres**
- 3. 50 years. Started 1975 to present / Ongoing lease**
- 4. Coastal dry land, topography hilly, nutritional coastal flora including: annual rye, wild oats, filigree, bird foot tree, foil, purple reed**
- 5. Year Round Use**
- 6. Cow/calf**
- 7. University of California**
- 8. Chubb Insurance Policy**
 - a. ► See Attachment Document 2**



District Property Currently Grazing 6:

i. Lobitos Grazing Unit

1. 2700 Verde Road, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
2. 1210 acres
3. 50 years. Started 1975 with Elkas Ranch, then Beffa, then Cowell, then Peninsula Open Space, current lease with District
4. Coastal dry land, topography hilly, nutritional coastal flora including: annual rye, wild oats, filigree, bird foot tree, foil, purple reed
5. Year Round
6. Cow/calf
7. Midpen Open Space
8. Chubb Insurance Policy
 - a. ► See Attachment Document 2

ii. The grazing lease requires that the grazing operator perform maintenance to the infrastructure on the property and—in certain circumstances—make capital improvements. Describe, in detail, your ability to perform the following infrastructure work. Describe similar projects and show examples of infrastructure work you have completed as relevant to your current or past grazing.

1. *Ranch road maintenance and repair (grading, culverts, water diversions, etc.)*
 1. My experience in ranch road repairs and maintenance, in my over 50s years of ranching, I have managed all related issues, and when needed called on outside assistance.
 2. *New fence/gate installation and repair of existing fences/gates*
 2. My fencing experience includes: New fence/gate installation and repair of existing fences/gates, from wire gates to welded gates, new and existing.
 3. *Spring development, spring box repair/maintenance, trough repair/maintenance, and water line installation.*
 3. Vince Fontana has managed spring development, spring box repair/maintenance, trough repair/maintenance, and water line installation.



4. Development, repair, and maintenance of corrals and shipping facilities

4. Corral and shipping facilities have been developed, repaired and maintained by Vince Fontana.

5. Site cleanup/debris removal

5. Every Vince Fontana lease has involved site clean/up and debris removal.

iii. Describe or list all equipment that you own or have readily available for use that will directly enhance your livestock operation and your ability to achieve the desired resource management objectives and infrastructure improvements. (Tractors, cattle trucks, portable welders, woodchippers, etc.)

iii. Vince Fontana Equipment owned: Caterpillar Dozer, Massey Ferguson Loader, Dump Trailer, Welding Equipment, Torches, Portable Welders, Metal Grinders, Grass Mower, BG Scrapper. What is not owned, can be rented to meet the desired management objectives and infrastructure improvements.

iv. Please list or describe any other factors or considerations not stated elsewhere that you believe may be relevant in the selection process.

iv. Vince Fontana has a lifetime dedication to agriculture. District ranches, which Vince Fontana had worked for with previous private owners, included development of six small livestock ponds, which were maintained and cleaned every two years until District takeover. Vince Fontana management and sustainable practices on the Cowell Property with previous owners the Marsh Family, was shown by the control and eradication of the coyote brush. The stock pond on Cowell Property, now Lobitos owned by District, was constructed by Bob Marsh, Bob Aranimi and Vince Fontana in the mid 1980s.

► **See Attachment Photo 2 | Lobitos Stock Pond**

b] Potential Livestock Conflicts

i. Describe your experience (if any) managing a grazing operation on public lands and/or lands with public access and recreation. Include size of operation, duration grazing these properties, types of recreation (equestrian, biking, hiking, dog use), and an estimate of recreational use (frequency and number of users). Describe adaptive measures that you have utilized or plan to utilize to reduce the risk of human/livestock conflicts on grazed properties. Describe issues that you have encountered, your reaction to the issue, and



mitigating measures you employed to prevent future issues pertaining to human/livestock conflicts.

i. In response to the upcoming recreational access, and other issues, at Lobitos, my cattle grazing cow/calf operation will not continue there. Should Vince Fontana be the upcoming Lease Awardee at Lobitos I would change my entire operation to stockers.

▶ ***See Attachment Document 1 | 2025 Vince Fontana Proposed Operating Plan***

▶ ***See Attachment Photo 3 | Lobitos Trail + Grazing***

ii. Describe your experience (if any) managing a grazing operation in the presence of predators. Include the location of the operation(s)/properties, the kind of predators, and impacts to cattle. Describe adaptive measures that you have utilized or plan to utilize to reduce the risk of livestock/predator conflicts. Describe how you have responded or plan to respond should your operation be impacted by predation.

ii. Lobitos lease has a history of interactions with lion losses, which created very costly financial losses for me. I have addressed, met, discussed, and argued with District staff and Fish and Game, solely with the objective of addressing wildlife and livestock industry. Lobitos is particularly vulnerable to predator attacks, due to the fact that it is bordered by Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. The predator issue is why I am going to change from cow/calf to stocker operation.

▶ ***See Attachment Document 1 | 2025 Vince Fontana Proposed Operating Plan***

c] Managing for Natural Resource Objectives

i. Give a detailed description of your experience managing a grazing operation(s) under a natural resource management plan to achieve specific natural resource objectives. Describe cattle management techniques you employed to achieve the resource management objectives and observed results (positive or negative).

i. In my experience there is a big difference in grazing District property and grazing private property. On private property I have full control over the management and implementation over invasive weeds. On District properties I have limited management and implementation control, consequently limiting what I can do with livestock on those lands. The benefits on District areas are that they manage significant maintenance and infrastructure issues. On District leases I follow their suggested guidelines.



ii. Describe your experience utilizing livestock grazing to manage invasive plant species such as purple starthistle, yellow starthistle, medusahead, barbed goatgrass and/or distaff thistle. Describe the grazing methods you have employed in the past to reduce invasive plants and the observed results. Describe additional measures or tools that you have implemented to control invasive plants and the observed results.

ii. Vince Fontana has handled vast expanses of invasive plant species including: the thistle family, brush and poison oak. In my experience, I have found that livestock grazing has limited to no positive impact on most species listed by you. I have worked on invasive weeds on private leases, including, involvement with Jim Howard and the NRCS, and had very positive results on invasive weed control. That had been mechanical and herbicidal implementation.

► **See Attachment Photo 4 | Lobitos + Open Space**

iii. 4 Describe your approach to monitoring grazing on rangelands. Include examples of previous rangeland (RDM) clipping , monitoring (e.g., Residual Dry Matter photo monitoring, visual/ocular estimation, etc.). Describe previous monitoring outcomes and how that monitoring effort helped informed subsequent management.

iii. The approach for me using RDM Monitoring as follows: My monitoring of RDM is in the period of late Fall, to evaluate RDM which will decide on the number of cattle to be adjusted, as to not negatively impact my pasture and body condition of my cattle. The RDM has been handled by District staff on my District leases.

iv. Describe your method for determining when pastures are ready to be grazed. Describe factors or environmental conditions that you consider when determining when cattle should be rotated between pastures or added/removed from the property.

iv. Pasture Rotation varies every year due to rainfall. My rotational grazing is pre-planned with a 30 day window of movement in any direction. What dictates the time is moisture and grass growth. The stage of grass growth is determined by livestock needs and/or pasture needs. Pasture needs and livestock needs change at times, and the rotation is adjusted accordingly. I make sure that grasses have reached their seed development stage to reseed my pastures naturally.

v. Describe any additional monitoring you have utilized in your grazing operation and/or specialized training (water quality, aquatic habitats, forestry, soils, etc.) that would enhance your ability to monitor natural resources and habitat on the property.



v. I have had a lifetime of experience in agriculture, both farming and grazing. Farming has given me the knowledge and understanding to be able to identify classes of soil, from highly productive to not worth planting. Grazing cattle is nothing more than a farmer using livestock to convert a crop to create a commodity of protein. Good soil, good grass equals good production, all comes from managing the operation with good stewardship.

vi. What is your experience with grazing management specifically for enhancing native and/or sensitive species habitat?

vi. My experience for enhancing native and/or sensitive species habitat, has been solely under the direction of District staff.



4] Operations & Employee Staffing

a] Provide a detailed operational plan for how you anticipate managing the grazing units for which you are submitting a proposal (4 page maximum). In particular, please:

a] Operational Plan

i. List the grazing unit(s) for which you are submitting a proposal;

i. Lobitos Grazing Unit

ii. Describe the class of cattle you expect to graze on the unit(s) and how that choice aligns with the requirements and constraints of the grazing unit(s) as you understand them;

ii. My proposal is for a stocker cattle operation which fits the requirements and constraints of the unit. The stocker operation will fit the wants and needs of District, which is described in "Vince Fontana 2025 Proposed Operational Plan."

► **See Attachment Document 1 | 2025 Vince Fontana Proposed Operating Plan**

iii. Describe the timing, duration, and frequency of rotations of grazing that you expect to utilize and explain how that plan best achieves the natural resource management objectives of the unit(s) as you understand them;

iii. Rotation decisions are made on various things, that at any particular time may change, using knowledge, timing, ingenuity and commitment to optimize production.

iv. N/A. If applying for multiple grazing units.

b] Provide a detailed description of your operational employee staffing.

b] Vince Fontana does not have employees.

i. List all key personnel and employees involved in your livestock operation, including: Include relevant certifications, education, and specialized training if applicable. Indicate who the main point of contact will be for day-to-day operations and describe best methods for contact and availability;

i. Vince Fontana is the main point of contact, additional contacts are listed below.

1. Greg Fontana

2. Hunter Fontana

3. Gabe Pimental



ii. Describe the need for site presence and how often you and/or employee(s) plan to be on the property. Indicate your expected presence on the property as it may vary by season.

ii. Site presence is addressed by needs. I do constant monitoring throughout the year.

iii. It is extremely important that the livestock operator or employees have the capacity to respond to an emergency (livestock/human conflict, sick or injured livestock, cattle on a roadway, etc.,) in a reasonable amount of time. Describe the availability and expected response time (minimum and maximum response time) of the operator or employees of the operator, in the event of an emergency;

iii. My response time in the event of an emergency is immediate, respective to the situation itself and the type and severity of the emergency. The appropriate assistance would also be contacted specific to the emergency if necessary. My response team is no farther than 20 minutes away. Contacts in order of response: 1] Vince Fontana 2] Greg Fontana 3] Hunter Fontana 4] Gabe Pimental

iv. Describe how you plan to work with the District's Conservation Grazing Program Manager to determine range readiness, shipping dates, changes in stocking rate, and pasture rotations? What is your preferred method(s) of communication?

iv. To work with District's Conservation Program Manager regarding operations, I will use phone communications.

v. Have you ever worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, local Resource Conservation District, or applied for grant funds to assist in infrastructure improvements relevant to your livestock operation? Do you plan to utilize these services to assist with improvements on District property or would you consider these services as an option?

v. Yes. Worked on a project with a Natural Resource Conservation Service - NRCS on the Red Gate Ranch addressing coyote brush in approximately 2009 on 300 acres. Working with NRCS in the future is an option.



5] Alignment with District Agricultural Policy elements

a] Describe how your proposal furthers District policy goals on Environmental Sustainability; in particular, please answer the following questions:

i. How do you reduce non-renewable energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in your operation (solar pumps, vehicle use, etc.)?

i. My carbon footprint is created by need to manage and monitor my cattle operation. The cattle by nature are giving stewardship, while producing protein and multiple additional products. Vehicles outside of my operation, I have no control over and their impacts.

ii. What are some examples of how you have worked with water systems to reduce reliance on and impact to streams or other sensitive habitats?

ii. I have developed water systems springs, installed storage tanks, troughs and water lines, picked locations for water systems and access routes. I have fenced off access to streams to address District's goals.

iii. What are your contingency plans for dealing with drought?

iii. With a stocker operation I will be able to adjust, adapt and prepare for drought strategy implementation. Stocker operations livestock numbers can be adjusted easily.

iv. How do you manage a grazing lease to increase carbon storage on the landscape (soils and vegetation).

iv. The important thing in carbon storage is to keep grasses growing, and not allowing them to go to seed maturity. The longer the grasses are kept green the more carbon is collected.

b] We encourage applicants that prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts and address systemic barriers to access and equity. We are particularly interested in partnering with operators that either currently have DEI initiatives in place or are working to establish DEI initiatives, such as:

b] Vince Fontana has no employees, when I hire workers, I hire on ability and qualifications to meet the task.

c] Describe how your proposal furthers District policy goals on community outreach, education, and supporting local food systems.

VF

c] I attend every meeting on agriculture that I can, and participate in ways to be helpful to others and the community. From 1981 to 1986 I participated in Field Days for Elkas School presenting information on range management, low stress handling, and basic livestock health and production.

d] Identify your business and residential address, if you have business operations in San Mateo County identify the location of those business operations.

d] Vince Fontana Address

Vince Fontana

[REDACTED]

California 94019

e] Are you a maximum current); or former a grazing tenant with the District? If yes, describe how long you have been a tenant and on what properties.

e] Yes, I am a former and current grazing tenant with the District.

If yes, describe how long you have been a tenant and on what properties.

District Lease 1. Big Dipper 2005- 2020. Grazing Lease 15 years

District Lease 2. Lobitos* 2020 – current ongoing.

***Vince Fontana has Lobitos Grazing Lease History of 50 Years**

a. Private Leases of Lobitos 1970s to 1980s with three consecutive owners

b. Agency Leases with two consecutive agencies 1980s to current i. Peninsula Open Space ii. Midpen Regional Open Space District



6] Attachments

a] Documents

- 1] 2025 Vince Fontana Proposal | Operating Plan**
- 2] 2025 Vince Fontana Financial Statement**
- 3] Vince Fontana Current Insurance**

b] Photos

- 1. Vince Fontana and Hunter Fontana**
- 2. Lobitos Stock Pond**
- 3. Lobitos Trail + Grazing**
- 4. Lobitos + Open Space**



6] Attachments

a] Documents

- 1] 2025 Vince Fontana Proposal | Operating Plan**
- 2] 2025 Vince Fontana Financial Statement**
- 3] Vince Fontana Current Insurance**



1] 2025 Vince Fontana Proposal | Operating Plan

2025 Vince Fontana Proposal Operating Plan

This proposal and grazing plan are directed at the needs and wants of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District "District," which incorporates rotational grazing on the Lobitos Grazing Land "Lobitos." I am working within the guidelines of the Farm Bureau MOU, relative to recreational activities coexisting with livestock grazing, in order to meet District goals.

There are particular points related to Lobitos that have prompted me to change my entire operation from cow/calf, to stocker operation, at a cost. The main issues are water, invasive weeds, trail, liability, and predators.

By changing Lobitos to a stocker operation, I believe, will fit District's operations and needs addressing grazing goals, and for my business to continue. My plans are to advance my ranching business into the future, my grandson Hunter Fontana, sixth generation in my family to be significantly involved in agriculture and my operation.

The issues related to water, invasive weeds, trail, liability, and cattle conflicts, will be addressed to the best of my ability, describe following:

1. Water. The new water system has yet to be proven. A stocker operation will have less pressure and impact on the water system, due to the fact that 80-90% of the cattle will be off the property in July, cattle will return in October / November, leaving the heated summer months with few or no cattle, reducing the need for water.

2. Invasive Weeds. Invasive Weeds can be addressed more readily with stockers than they can with a cow/calf operation.

3. Trail. Stockers will fit District trail maintenance and needs requirements, with more positive and less impact on the trails. My plan is to start grazing with 400-500 lb stockers in the summer, and remove them at approximately 750-800 lbs in the fall. Stockers with those weights and sizes, and with months off the land, would have less negative effects on District trails, than cows weighing 1200-1500 lbs on a year round grazing program. The stockers will also reduce the impact of walking on the trails in the wet season. This will reduce the cost and/or need for maintenance by District. Also with no, or small number of cattle, the District maintenance work can be done without cattle interference.



4. Liability. Cow/calf operation creates a higher risk of negative public and/or maintenance worker interactions with cows, due to maternal protection instincts, and larger cattle and bulls. A cow will approach each interaction with maternal instincts at the forefront. On Driscoll and Mindego District leases cattle are fenced off from most trails, or trail areas are closed during calving season. The Lobitos lease has the trail going through the center of property, also as close as 200 feet from the watering troughs, therefore negative interactions with people and dogs with cows is inevitable. Also, with a cow/calf operation, there are breeding bulls with weight up to 2000 lbs which can have negative interactions with the public or maintenance resulting in injury or even death. My concerns with having the wrong type of cattle on Lobitos with a cow/calf operation creates a liability issue that I cannot afford. With a stocker operation 99% of these interactions would not occur. Rotational grazing with a cow/calf operation entails a significant amount of maneuvering the herd, especially in keeping the mother and calf together. Stocker operations, the rotational operation has an easier flow and runs more smoothly. Rotations have more potential, than simply grazing cows, of interference from the public in both operations, but significantly less with a stocker herd. Being Lobitos is such an open environment between livestock and the public, I feel that a stocker operation is the only option for this District Unit.

5. Predators. Lobitos lease has a history of interactions with lion losses which created very costly financial losses for me. I have addressed, met, discussed, and argued with District staff and Fish and Game, solely with the objective of addressing wildlife and livestock industry. Lobitos is particularly vulnerable to predator attacks due to the fact the it is surrounded by Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. My calf/cow operation at Lobitos has become almost unaffordable, where I had a successful operations on that land, long before it was purchased by District. A Stocker operation is the last thing that I can try to help lessen my losses.

Predators are threatening livestock and the livestock industry. The issue should be discussed openly to seek solutions that protect the livestock businesses. Like invasive plants that have negative impacts on the use and quality of lands, predators left entirely unmanaged have negative impacts on the livestock industry and our food supply. I hope that District, Fish and Game, and Land Foundation monitor the situation and consider changes in policy to help the agricultural industry gain trust in them. Wildlife protection and Livestock preservation need a balance that creates a safe, productive, and diverse area.

As explained above, 2025 Vince Fontana Proposal is based on a stocker operation.



Photo 1

Vince Fontana [R] and Hunter Fontana [L], Fourth and Sixth Generation Ranchers on the East Pasture of Klingman-Moty Farm. 3.7.2025

Reference: 2] Business Information a] Statement of Experience v. Length of time managing cattle - Page 2



Photo 2

Stock pond on Cowell Property, now Lobitos owned by District, was constructed by Bob Marsh, Bob Aranimi and Vince Fontana in the mid 1980s. 3.7.2025

Reference: 3] Background & Technical Experience a) Livestock Operating Experience iii. Vince Fontana has a lifetime dedication to the agriculture. – Page 9

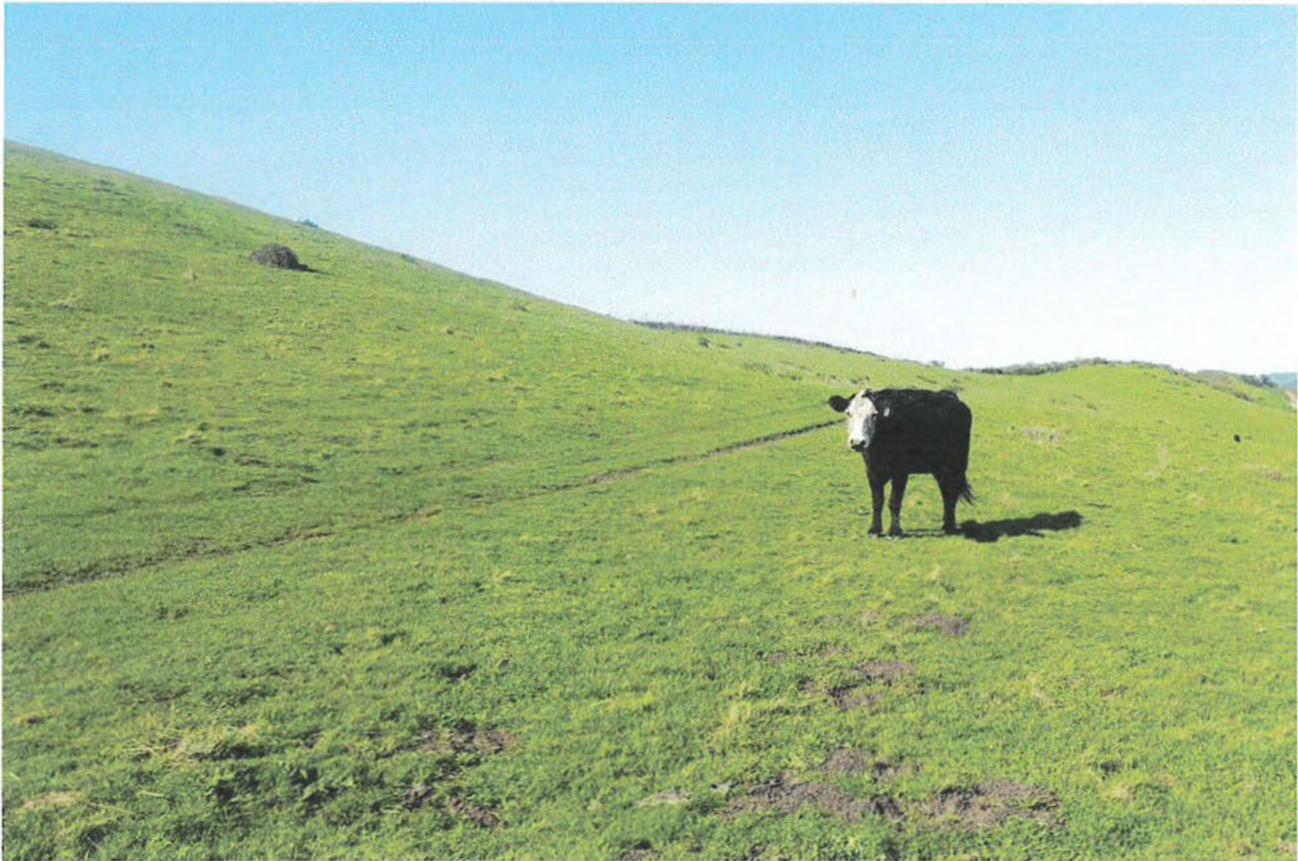


Photo 3

As a result of the new trail planned at Lobitos, I would change my entire operation to stockers from cow/calf, to avoid interactions and impacts on the trail. The trail path, seen by the ruts from current vehicle access above, will go through the center of Lobitos. 3.7.2025

Reference: 3] Background & Technical Experience b] Potential Livestock Conflicts i. In Response to the Upcoming Recreational Access – Page 10



Photo 4

Vince Fontana has been addressing stewardship needs and range management with dedicated grazing operations on ranch lands for 50+ years. Lobitos Grazing Land is surrounded by Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. 3.7.2025

Reference: 3] Background & Technical Experience c] Managing for Natural Resource Objectives i. On District leases I follow their suggested guidelines. ii. Vince Fontana has handled vast expanses of invasive plant species including: the thistle family, brush and poison oak. – Page 11