



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: June 10, 2026

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *AR* *deu*

FROM: David Liefert, Sr. Resource Management Specialist

SUBJECT: External grant application by San Mateo Resource Conservation District for restoration of Little Butano Creek, Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve

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## Summary

This memo provides an informational update on the San Mateo Resource Conservation District's (RCD) intention to apply for external grant funding in summer 2026 to advance streamflow and habitat enhancements on Little Butano Creek. The proposed project would overlap Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District)-owned lands along a small portion of Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve (Preserve). No Board of Directors (Board) action is requested at this time. A future item will return to the Board seeking authorization for a Partnership Agreement allowing construction on District lands, if the project is successfully funded.

## Project Overview

The proposed Little Butano Creek Streamflow and Habitat Enhancement Project (Project) is primarily located on property owned by Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and leased to Root Down Farms, with a small portion located on District land within Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve (Attachment 1). For most of the Project reach, the centerline of Little Butano Creek serves as the property boundary between POST and District land. The Project continues and extends the fish passage and habitat restoration that was previously completed on Little Butano Creek in 2025 downstream of the segment of the Preserve that the Project would enhance.

The Project seeks to restore hydrologic function, improve instream habitat complexity, enhance summer streamflow in a drought-prone watershed, and support recovery of Central California Coast coho salmon and steelhead within a significant length of Little Butano Creek. The approach combines actions to increase summer streamflow by building off-stream water storage with strategic channel restoration and large wood installation across approximately 1.1 miles of Little Butano Creek.

## Two-Phase Implementation Approach

The RCD proposes implementing the complete Project in two phases as follows:

### *Phase I: Off-Stream Irrigation Reservoir (2027)*

The first phase includes constructing a 10-acre-foot off-stream irrigation reservoir fully located on Root Down Farms (POST property). This pond will store winter flows, enabling Root Down Farms to reduce or eliminate summertime creek diversions under a forbearance agreement. The resulting increase in summer streamflow is expected to benefit approximately eight miles of downstream habitat, including the Pescadero Marsh Natural Preserve, where freshwater inputs are critical for salmonid survival during the dry season.

### *Phase II: Creek Habitat Enhancements (2028)*

The second phase will restore instream and floodplain habitat along Little Butano Creek on POST lands and a small area of the District's Preserve. Planned work includes bank laybacks, inset floodplain benches, large woody debris structures, grade-stabilizing features, and regrading to reconnect riparian forested areas. These actions are designed to reverse decades of incision, reduce erosive forces, promote sediment deposition and sorting, improve water quality, expand aquatic habitat complexity, and support climate-resilient refugia for salmonids and other sensitive species.

On District land, the proposed design includes limited grading and the installation of in-stream large wood structures. District staff will have the opportunity to review the designs and Basis of Design report to ensure compatibility with Preserve management goals.

## **Design and Funding Status**

The RCD previously secured funding from POST and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center to complete 65% designs in 2026. District staff will participate in review of the 65% and 100% designs.

The RCD now intends to seek additional funding in summer 2026 to complete 100% design, permitting, and both phases of project implementation. The RCD will be responsible for securing all regulatory approvals and all external funding required to build both phases of the project. If any funding gap remains after grant awards are announced, the RCD may request a District contribution. Any such request would be brought to the Board for consideration in conjunction with the Partnership Agreement authorizing work on District lands.

## **Project Roles and Responsibilities**

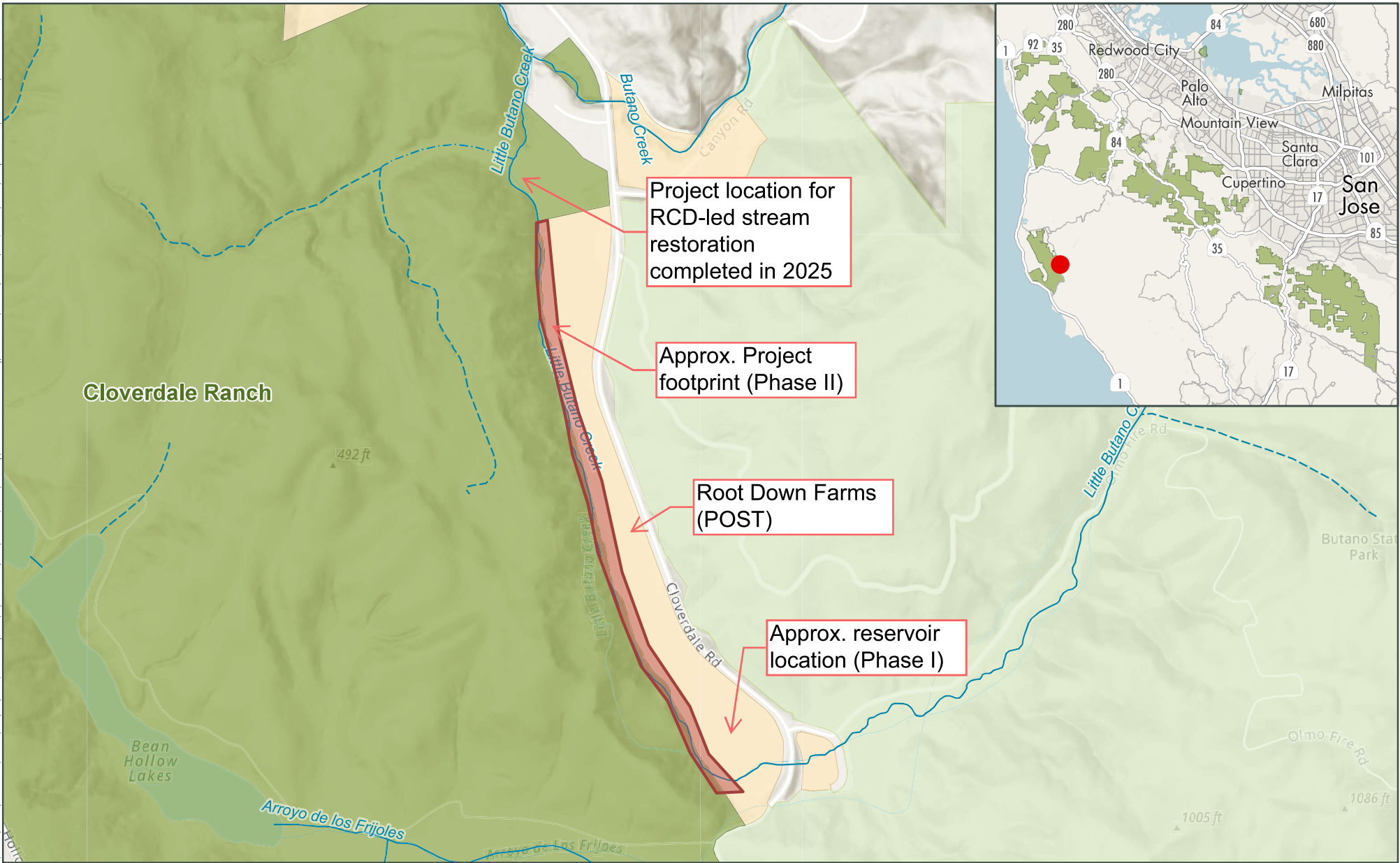
The RCD will be the lead entity responsible for design, permitting and CEQA, and implementation of the Project. The District is a supporting landowner for a small portion of the project footprint. A future Partnership Agreement with the RCD will be needed before construction occurs on District property. That item is expected to return to the Board in advance of Phase II construction, currently anticipated in 2028.

The RCD will conduct all monitoring, reporting, and site maintenance required under regulatory permits and grant agreements, and POST—together with the agricultural operator, Root Down Farms—will assume most of long-term management obligations. The District's role will focus on supporting overall watershed health by monitoring water-quality conditions relevant to salmonid habitat. The District may become a third-party beneficiary to a future conservation easement on the Root Down Farms property, which would allow for ongoing site access to conduct monitoring and, if needed, support adaptive management or future restoration actions.

Attachment:

1. Project area map

Date Source(s): Sources: Esri, Vantor, Airbar DS, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NIS, OS, NMA, Geodatosystem, Rikswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap, and the GIS user community. Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, PAC, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



### Proposed Little Butano Creek Streamflow and Habitat Enhancement Project

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|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Stream</b>     | <b>Open Space</b>          |
| Perennial         | Land Trust                 |
| Intermittent      | Other Protected Open Space |
| Preserve Boundary |                            |

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