



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Half Moon Bay Library
620 Correas Street, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
Community Room B

Tuesday, August 26, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riffle called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at 3:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Yoriko Kishimoto, Curt Riffle

Members absent: None

Staff present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Chief Financial Officer Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Stephanie Gross, Planner II Brittany Wheatman, Senior Planner Gretchen Laustsen, and Planning Manager Jane Mark

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public comment opened at 3:03 p.m.

District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 3:03 p.m.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Approve the April 29, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes

Public comment opened at 3:03 p.m.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 3:03 p.m.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Kersteen-Tucker seconded the motion to approve the April 29, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting minutes.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Overview of the Proposed Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve - Comprehensive Use and Management Plan, Including New Public Access and Restoration Projects (R-25-110)

Planner II Brittany Wheatman presented. Senior Planner Gretchen Laustsen and Planning Manager Jane Mark assisted with answering questions.

Director Kersteen-Tucker suggested modifying the Comprehensive Use and Management Plan (CUMP) Goal 1: Natural Resources final bullet point to state, “Continue conservation grazing to maintain and enhance native grassland communities and to help with wildland fire resilience.”

Ms. Wheatman confirmed the language could be added.

Director Kersteen-Tucker inquired how the neighbors of Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Purisima) have been engaged.

Ms. Wheatman explained that there have been multiple public meetings and outreach efforts as part of various public access projects, including the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking project, Purisima Multimodal Access project, and the Highway 35 project. She stated that while the CUMP is in the early stage of outreach for this part of plan development, most aspects of the plan have already been brought to the Board of Directors (Board) and to the larger community under different projects.

Director Kishimoto requested that one of the future maps be an overall trail map that includes added details to show which trails are open to various user groups, such as dogs or bikes. She further suggested that the context for regional trails be provided regarding any new proposed facilities that support multi-day hikes.

Ms. Wheatman responded that staff can provide additional background on the regional trail corridors, specifically how the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and existing trails connect. She noted

that specific language can also be added to the Implementation Action Table (IAT) about conducting research to identify regional trail support facilities.

Director Kishimoto inquired whether the four creeks within Purisima are adjudicated.

Ms. Wheatman replied that staff will follow up with an answer.

Chair Riffle inquired how the public would be able to track the project and engage in the process.

Ms. Wheatman stated that there is a project website, which was included in prior notifications and can be provided again. The project website provides updates on the project status, next steps, upcoming meetings, and when the draft deliverables are expected. She added that the public may also sign up for the preserve interested parties list to receive email updates.

Ms. Wheatman next reviewed eleven actions from the IAT to ask for Committee feedback.

Director Kishimoto asked how a prospective hiker would know what website to use to gain information about the regional Bay to Sea Trail given that there are multiple partners involved.

Ms. Wheatman stated that the District will be coordinating with partner agencies and considering ways to advertise and provide information about the regional trail through District and partner websites.

Chair Riffle referred to Attachment 1, page 15 of the staff report, which references backpack camps. He noted that the public has expressed interest in camps along regional trails and inquired about next steps given that the District currently only accommodates camps at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve.

Ms. Wheatman stated that exploring new trail amenities that support long-distance trail use, such as camps, will be considered in future evaluations. She noted that recommendations about these types of amenities would return to the Board for further review and direction. These amenities are not part of the CUMP but identified as a future priority for evaluation.

Ms. Ruiz explained that it would be an exploration to determine whether there is a suitable and feasible location within the interior preserve for a backpack camp site, outside of the Coastal Protection Area.

Planning Manager Jane Mark stated that the District has been approached by regional trail partners that are also interested in exploring backpack camps along the regional trail within Purisima.

Director Kersteen-Tucker suggested a District-wide evaluation to identify preserves that may be feasible for backpack camps to avoid potential issues which may arise from a piecemeal approach.

Ms. Mark responded that she participates in a regional trails forum known as the Peninsula Trails Team, which includes other public agencies that are considering low-cost overnight accommodations such as backpack camps and campgrounds. She added that there is an interest in conducting a study along the San Mateo County coast.

Director Kersteen-Tucker expressed interest in having the District and its constituents being part of the conversation.

Ms. Mark stated she can bring back the suggestions to the forum.

Director Kishimoto inquired if the forum also includes the Sierra Club.

Ms. Mark explained the forum is facilitated by the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and is centered on San Mateo County. She added that she would raise the topic of potentially including the Sierra Club to be able to work with that community as well.

Ms. Wheatman added that staff will ensure the language in the table is broad enough that it identifies that staff will be identifying potential partners to explore these opportunities further with a focus on Purisima, and potentially as part of a larger District-wide exploration.

Chair Riffle suggested adding to action 2, related to Purisima-to-the-Sea use designation, a comment indicating that the trails transitioning from hiking-only to multi-use will be reevaluated from both a construction and safety point of view so that multi-users know that they can enjoy the trail safely.

Ms. Wheatman confirmed that the field crew has already performed an evaluation to see what needs to be updated and one trail in particular needs to be widened for multi-use.

Chair Riffle recommended adding clear language, noting that most users are hikers and it is important that the public is aware that the trail will continue to be safe as a multi-use trail.

Ms. Wheatman stated staff can update the language to ensure it is clear.

Director Kersteen-Tucker recommended adding language to action 2 reinforcing that e-bikes are not allowed or include it in the CUMP as it pertains the Purisima-to-the-Sea trail.

Ms. Wheatman replied that it was a great point and that the language can be made clear.

Director Kersteen-Tucker recommended adding to the IAT language to make it clear that the smaller loop trails would also be evaluated for dog access.

Ms. Wheatman confirmed language could be added and clarified in the table, noting that evaluations would include review of the loop trails and new segments to evaluate the suitability of dog access. She added that this would be a preliminary evaluation and would not designate dog use at this time, it would simply be studied for potential consideration in the future.

Director Kersteen-Tucker commented that dogs are seasonally allowed in conservation grazing areas at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve and inquired whether the language added to the CUMP is not precluding that similar use at Purisima.

Ms. Wheatman stated that the language would remain broad enough to allow for future evaluations to determine whether seasonal access is appropriate or whether certain areas are

more suitable than others. She added that she will confirm the language to ensure every potential opportunity can be evaluated.

Chair Riffle commented on action 4, relating to development of the Verde and North Ridge lots, noting the projects are complex and time-consuming, and requested for the projects to proceed independently if possible to prevent delays in one project from affecting the other projects.

Ms. Wheatman explained that under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process, all projects are grouped under a single CEQA document, making their timelines interdependent to proceed. Only the Highway 35 project could potentially be separated if there are significant delays with CEQA and the CUMP. The Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail, Verde parking, Purisima Multimodal, and Irish Ridge Restoration projects are interrelated and would need to proceed with CEQA together in order not to piecemeal the projects, which is not allowed under CEQA. Following CEQA is the Coastal Development Permit process and San Mateo County has requested that all projects proceed under one application, excluding the Highway 35 project since it is outside the Coastal Service Area. There is a possibility that the permitting process could result in delays. After the Coastal Development Permit process, the projects would go through other County permitting review separately and at that point the projects would not be reliant on each other's timeline.

Director Kersteen-Tucker commented on action 7, related to expanding conservation grazing. She recommended that the consideration of expanding conservation grazing operations to further support natural resource management be listed as a high priority since tenants, parties interested in grazing leases, and the public have expressed an interest in an expedited timeline.

Ms. Wheatman stated staff can further review whether it could be listed as a higher priority and if phasing as a shorter-term implementation action is possible.

Chair Riffle recommended clarifying that the District places trails where appropriate, with minimal impact to wildlife and manageable impact to agriculture, in response to significant public feedback received.

Ms. Wheatman confirmed that language could be added so that it is clear that the District is not adding trails without considerations given to wildlife and agriculture.

Director Kersteen-Tucker recommended adding "grazing tenants" to the list of potential partners under the Focus Area of Wildlife on Attachment 1, page 2 of the staff report under both of the purposes.

Ms. Wheatman confirmed "grazing tenants" will be added to both of the purposes under Wildlife.

Director Kersteen-Tucker requested highlighting that Purisima is an important wildlife corridor for apex predators, including mountain lions, which need to be protected and preserved yet acknowledging the challenges this poses for grazing tenants.

Ms. Wheatman responded that staff can add that information to the full plan document and provide background to raise awareness of the potential conflict. Staff can also look for other actions that could be added to the CUMP as a way to address the issue.

Ms. Laustsen added that it would also be appropriate to include this information to a map in the plan of existing resources. While it may not be included in the table of in-progress actions, it should be reflected on the natural resources map of the preserve.

Ms. Ruiz stated that the District's mountain lion research work can be referenced, as it provided valuable information not only to the District but also to other land managers on how to address these potential conflicts of protecting both the wildlife and livestock.

Chair Riffle referred to Attachment 1, page 17 of the staff report, under the Focus Area of Interpretation and Education, and highlighted two purposes: to enrich the visitor experience through outdoor guided activities that highlight the importance of open space, conservation, and agricultural preservation; and to expand reach of educational and interpretation programs to new and underserved communities. He expressed an interest in collaborating with partners to help the District in providing that experience.

Ms. Wheatman confirmed that additional partners can be included. She added that staff can identify specific groups to reach out to and coordinate with for these efforts.

Public comment opened at 4:12 p.m.

Doug Forster expressed excitement about the trail improvements but noted potential issues with the new parking on Skyline Blvd., where weekend overflow can reach up to 100 cars. He asked whether the 23 new spaces would address this or if parking on the side of Skyline would still occur. He also raised concerns about the crosswalks from the North Ridge parking area to the SFPUC Ridge Trail Extension, noting that drivers often exceed the speed limit, and suggested adding a flashing light, especially in the fog. He expressed concern about backpack camps due to fire risks. Finally, he mentioned Miramontes Ridge OSP, which is not open to the public, but stated that it is overgrown, and suggested fuel reduction in this area.

Jan Roletto requested clearer information on the process, opportunities for community input, and a glossary for acronyms. She expressed concern about the trail crossing from the SFPUC Ridge Trail extension to Purisima. She is in support of not having flashing lights because of the wildlife corridor and rather considering having an undercrossing for wildlife and people. She also requested more details about the shuttle service, including parking lot closures during service times, and suggested adding this information to maps. Finally, she shared concerns about potential fire risks from backpacking camps, and the impacts on nearby homeowners' insurance.

Kerry Burke inquired about the type of CEQA document envisioned for the CUMP and emphasized the importance of allowing a maximum public review period. She stated the implementation actions should explicitly include coordination with the San Mateo County Farm Bureau and Agriculture Advisory Committee to ensure agricultural stakeholders are engaged. She also expressed support for the shuttle program and suggested using the recently acquired Alves Dairy property as a bus stop or bike rest to minimize local traffic.

Jim Sullivan suggested trail design features, such as rolling water dips and chicanes, to improve the experience for all users, specifically on the Irish Ridge Trail if it becomes multi-use. He suggested a potential extension of Route 117 down to Verde Road to help visitors avoid Highway 1. He also mentioned that Irish Ridge now terminates on the private Irish Ridge Road

and suggested rerouting the trail to connect with the Purisima-to-the-Sea trail to avoid backtracking.

Steve Ruddock commented that the Coastside Hikers are excited about the Verde parking lot and shuttle pilot program. He spoke about the need to carefully consider how shuttle operating hours and parking lot availability will be coordinated, noting potential communication challenges and encouraged staff to address them early.

Pete Kelly spoke about safety concerns regarding the Highway 1 crossing near the Cowell-Purisima Trailhead; he suggested adding flashing lights, a tunnel, or a bridge. He asked whether there is a specific routing for the Purisima-to-the-Sea trail. He referenced existing shuttles operating from the Ritz hotel and suggested that staff investigate idling engines that last a long period of time. He advocated for preserving local history through interpretive signage, citing the former oil refinery site in the Purisima uplands and agricultural history, and suggested partnerships with the San Mateo County Historical Society, Half Moon Bay History Association, or the Coastside Land Trust as models. Lastly, he asked what the fine is for a parking citation, noting that while enforcement has increased, violations persist and some visitors may treat the fines as a cost of access.

Betsy Rix echoed concerns about the Highway 35 crossing and asked what goes into deciding exactly what the crossing is going to look like. She inquired whether the District is working, or will work with Caltrans, the sheriff, and emergency services to address the speeding on Skyline Boulevard.

Public comment closed at 4:27 p.m.

Chair Riffle asked staff how the public's questions would be best addressed.

Ms. Wheatman stated that staff could prepare responses and additional information to share on the project website and will notify the public when the information becomes available. She added that updates regarding Purisima will also be sent to those subscribed to the Purisima interested parties list.

Mr. Forster advocated for keeping the Kings Mountain community engaged and providing updates.

Director Kersteen-Tucker commented that while neighbors are excited about the project, they also expressed concerns about parking, the crossing on Highway 1, and the speeding on Highway 35. She suggested adding a line in the CUMP to demonstrate the District's sensitivity to these issues and its willingness to work with the community as access to the preserve expands. She emphasized the importance of acknowledging and addressing the neighbors' concerns.

Ms. Wheatman stated that staff will ensure these concerns are emphasized in the CUMP and would determine the best way to incorporate them.

Ms. Ruiz added that staff could include this in the responses to questions, explaining how recommendations help address these concerns and noting any additional coordination that may be needed.

Director Kishimoto noted the public comment received about interpreting the history of the canyon and asked whether this could be incorporated into the plan goals, along with tribal history.

Ms. Wheatman stated that staff did try to incorporate them into the goals but can make it more clear and call them out more specifically and highlight the local culture and tribal history.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to forward the Plan components and Committee feedback to the Board of Directors for consideration as the project description and scope to initiate environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Riffle adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 4:39 p.m.

Shaylynn Nelson, Deputy District Clerk
Maria Soria, District Clerk