



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

## PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-26-88  
June 23, 2026

### AGENDA ITEM 2

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Partnership Agreement to Enhance Carbon Sequestration and Storage at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve

#### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Forward a recommendation to the full Board of Directors to approve a partnership agreement with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District to implement the Bluebrush Ranch Carbon Farming Implementation Project at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve.

#### SUMMARY

In 2022, the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) developed a Carbon Farming Plan (Plan) for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) Bluebrush Ranch property (Bluebrush) in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. The Plan describes land management actions for promoting carbon sequestration and storage in soils and vegetation on the property. In 2023, the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) awarded the RCD grant funding for numerous projects, including implementation of the Plan. The RCD proposes to partner with the District to utilize \$43,960 in grant funds for implementing qualifying components of the Plan. The proposed Partnership Agreement would authorize the RCD to implement the Plan on District lands and authorize \$76,820 in matching District funding for project expenses not covered by the WCB grant.

#### DISCUSSION

The Bluebrush Ranch Carbon Farming Plan Implementation Project (Project) aims to increase carbon sequestration and storage in soils and vegetation at Bluebrush in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Preserve), by implementing recommendations from the 2022 Plan. The Plan was developed for the District by the RCD and Point Blue Conservation Science in 2022 under the General Manager's spending authority. The Plan describes existing conditions of soil health, plant communities, and carbon storage at Bluebrush and proposes management actions to increase carbon sequestration and storage by stabilizing and/or amending soils, planting perennial vegetation, and restoring the ecological values of certain areas.

In 2023, the RCD secured a grant from the WCB that provides funding through calendar year 2026 for numerous projects, including: implementation of the carbon farm plan, wildlife habitat restoration, pollinator habitat restoration on working lands, and riparian restoration in San Mateo County. The District and RCD staff have identified qualifying actions from the Plan that would utilize \$43,960 of the grant funding:

- Conservation cover plantings: Planting of native perennial grasses and wildflowers to improve forage, establish habitat for pollinators and other wildlife, suppress invasive plant species, stabilize soil on slopes, and promote soil carbon sequestration. These plantings would be installed in an ungrazed area adjacent to the riparian corridor of Purisima Creek, following treatment actions to control invasive vegetation that currently dominates the site (Attachment 1, Site A, ~0.4 acre). This type of treatment typically increases carbon sequestration by 0.5 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (MTCO<sub>2</sub>e) per acre, per year.
- Erosion control plantings: Installation of native willow stakes and low-growing, moisture-loving species that can stabilize soils and provide forage for cattle once established. These would be planted in and above an erosional feature that has formed due to surface runoff from the County's Purisima Creek Road (Attachment 1, Site B, ~0.1 acre). This type of treatment typically increases carbon sequestration by 2 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e per acre per year.

Total expected carbon sequestration increase for the Project, based on the treatments and acreage, is 0.45 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e per year.

This Project is a pilot to explore the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of implementing carbon farming methods on the District's actively-grazed rangelands. Mr. Tom Pacheco, the conservation grazing tenant at Bluebrush, grazes cows and calves in the pasture between Purisima Creek Road and Purisima Creek (includes Site B) in spring and early summer, then moves the livestock elsewhere and grazes bulls on the pasture in late summer and fall. Site A is ungrazed. The Project has been designed in collaboration with the tenant to avoid undesirable impacts on the grazing operation, which has revealed some of the complexities of implementing carbon farming alongside active grazing. The plant palette is limited to species safe for consumption by cattle, including species that offer good forage. Water for irrigation of the plantings must be trucked in, as on-site water is prioritized for the livestock and the District-owned residence on the property. Certain elements originally proposed, including a hedgerow of native shrubs along Purisima Creek Road and silvopasture (sparse planting of trees within rangeland) were eliminated based on feedback from the tenant and the San Mateo County Farm Bureau, who were concerned about the potential loss of grazable area. Trees and shrubs, being woody, are generally more effective at sequestering carbon than herbaceous plants, so their incompatibility with the grazing operation demonstrates another potential challenge for implementing carbon farming alongside active grazing. Approximately 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an acre in Site B needs to be excluded from grazing for the three-year plant establishment period; however, the Project will allow the opening of a ~0.4-acre area in Site A to livestock grazing, resulting in a net increase in pasture area. The Project is also designed to withstand pressures from grazing, including robust exclusion fencing and plant species that can tolerate both trampling and browsing after establishment.

The following activities would be conducted on District lands as part of the proposed Partnership Agreement with the RCD:

- Site preparation to prepare for plant installation;
- Coordination with nurseries for the grow-out of native plants;
- Native planting installations;
- Installation of browse protection fencing around the erosion control and wetland planting area;

- Annual site monitoring for three years, including documenting conditions and correcting any issues in coordination with the District;
- Coordination with the grazing tenant for targeted grazing in Site A to control invasive species;
- Irrigation of plantings as needed during the dry season for three years following installation; and
- Maintenance of browse protection as needed for three years following installation and its removal if plants are sufficiently established at the end of the three-year period.

The RCD will identify appropriate contractors to install plants and conduct maintenance and monitoring activities in partnership with the District. The RCD and any contractors under RCD supervision would coordinate with the grazing tenant via District staff.

The RCD has obtained a quote from an installation and maintenance contractor who can provide the necessary services and materials for a total of \$88,196. The RCD expects project administration to cost \$17,370 for the Project duration (through calendar year 2029). Capital and labor costs for plant installation and materials are reimbursable by the grant, but maintenance, monitoring, and project administration are not eligible and would be paid for by the District.

The RCD can commit \$43,960 of grant funds for the first-year implementation, including furnishing and supplying nursery plants, labor, erosion control and plant protection materials. The General Manager proposes that the District, as a project partner, contribute up to \$76,820 to leverage the existing RCD grant funding for qualifying activities.

The proposed funding structure for the Project is as follows:

<b>District</b>	
Project administration	\$17,370
Maintenance and monitoring	\$59,449
<i>Total maximum District contribution</i>	<i>\$76,820</i>
<b>RCD (Grant-reimbursed)</b>	
Plant installation labor	\$26,458
Nursery plants and materials	\$17,502
<i>Total RCD/Grant contribution</i>	<i>\$43,960</i>
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	<b>\$120,779</b>

## FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed Partnership Agreement would leverage \$43,960 in RCD grant funds to further the District's greenhouse gas reduction goals and enhance the carbon sequestration and storage potential within coastal agricultural lands. In exchange, the District would commit up to \$76,820 in District funding.

## PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

None

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Notice was also provided to the Natural Resources Management and Coastal, Agricultural, and Purisima Creek Redwoods interested parties lists. Staff hosted a field visit with the San Mateo County Farm Bureau to receive input on the Project during which they voiced concerns about Project elements (i.e., shrub and silvopasture plantings) that would result in a small reduction of grazeable area. Those specific elements were removed from the Project based on Farm Bureau (and tenant) feedback. The Farm Bureau has been notified of this PNR meeting.

## CEQA COMPLIANCE

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR, State Clearing House Number 2013092033) prepared for the Integrated Pest Management Program, which the Board approved on December 10, 2014 ([R-14-148](#), [Minutes](#)), analyzed vegetation management activities including those in the recommended Partnership Agreement.

The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND, State Clearing House Number 2021080129) prepared for the Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program (OSMRP), which the Board approved on September 22, 2021 ([R-21-126](#), [Minutes](#)), analyzed restoration and maintenance activities including those in the proposed Partnership Agreement. The Project was included in the 2026 OSMRP project notification to permitting agencies.

The Partnership Agreement and subsequent contracted work to complete the vegetation actions will incorporate the associated mitigation measures and BMPs from both the Integrated Pest Management and OSMRP CEQA documents.

## NEXT STEPS

If approved by the PNR, this Agreement will be brought to the full Board for their consideration. If authorized by the Board, implementation of the planting plan and subsequent monitoring and reporting would be completed by the RCD and its contractors. Project activities are anticipated to begin in Fall 2026 (Q1 of Fiscal Year 2027).

Attachment

1. Site Map

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Prepared by/contact person:  
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Site map for Bluebrush Carbon Farming Project

