



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: February 10, 2016

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Stephen E. Abbors, General Manager *SEA*

FROM: Lisa Bankosh, Planner III

SUBJECT: La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Public Access Projects

This FYI memorandum provides the Board with an overview of the general scope and schedule for implementation of Measure AA Project 7-6, La Honda Creek Sears Ranch Road Interim Parking Area, and Measure AA Project 5-5, Red Barn Parking Area and trail connections. Both are Key Projects listed in the Fiscal Year 2015-16 Action Plan.

DISCUSSION

The 3,681-acre former Driscoll Ranch, now the southern portion of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (Preserve), is a working ranch supporting a productive beef cattle operation and is currently closed to public use. In 2012, the Board adopted the La Honda Creek Master Plan (Master Plan; see R-12-83) which provides stewardship and public access prescriptions for the entire Preserve over a thirty-year period. The Master Plan prioritizes rangeland and natural resource management actions at the former Driscoll Ranch, followed by facility improvements to allow for hiking, equestrian, and limited bicycle use. A number of these actions have been completed and include:

- **Implementation of a conservation grazing program;**
- **Pond repairs;**
- **Riparian habitat protection;**
- **Road improvements to reduce erosion (Attachment 1, resource management photos).**

As part of the District's implementation of the Board-approved Five-Year Measure AA Projects List, public access improvements are now underway to open the southern portion of the Preserve to the public by 2017, and greatly expand access in the northern Preserve by 2020. These improvements will ensure that increased visitor use will be safely and successfully integrated into the ranching operations.

Sears Ranch Road Interim Parking Area

Measure AA Project 7-6 will provide a small gravel parking area at the end of Sears Ranch Road near the southern Preserve boundary, adjacent to the town of La Honda (Attachment 2, Interim Staging and Trails Map). Preliminary design of the parking area, which was formerly used for staging construction equipment, includes minor grading and installation of compacted base rock and wheel-stops to provide capacity for approximately 10 vehicles. A portable restroom, additional cattle fencing, and Preserve wayfinding and educational signage will also be installed. A permanent, paved parking lot will be constructed at Sears Ranch in a later phase. A potential

use of the interim gravel lot once the permanent lot is constructed would be as an equestrian parking area.

Construction of the interim parking area will allow approximately six miles of the Driscoll Ranch main access road to be open to public use. Operational improvements to the unpaved road, including drainage improvements, fencing, gates and signage, and bridge repair, must be implemented prior to opening the full length of the road. Furthermore, demolition and clean-up of dilapidated structures and debris along the ranch road is required to maintain public safety. New trails will be opened to the public as they are constructed.

Since the majority of public engagement regarding the La Honda Creek Master Plan occurred more than 5 years ago, introducing public access to the former Driscoll Ranch will include additional community outreach. A neighborhood/Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting will be scheduled in Spring 2016. Furthermore, the project will require planning permits from San Mateo County as well as consultation with the San Mateo County Farm Bureau. Due to uncertainties inherent in this planning process, staff anticipates that the interim lot and trail access will be available for public use by Fall 2017. Projected schedule milestones are provided in the table below.

Red Barn Parking Area and Trails

Measure AA Project 5-5, the Red Barn Parking Area and Trails Project, will create a visitor destination at the site of the historic Red Barn, including a paved parking lot, an accessible loop trail, and a connection to the eventual Bay Area Ridge Trail extension. Additional site amenities such as picnic tables and interpretive materials may also be considered. The Red Barn location is integral to the active grazing operation at the former McDonald Ranch, as it currently includes the main access driveway and cattle processing site. New public access facilities and uses will be sensitively planned and sited to avoid impacting the viability of the grazing operation and sensitive species and habitats. Pending the Board’s approval of a new Planner II (Midyear FY15-16 Budget position), additional Planning staff would help augment the Red Barn Parking and Trails project delivery process. A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be prepared to select a consultant team to lead the public and stakeholder outreach, design, and permitting process for this complex project. It is anticipated that the facility construction will be completed by 2020.

NEXT STEPS

Schedule milestones for the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Public Access Projects are provided below. A conservative schedule is provided for the Sears Ranch Road Interim Parking Area, which allows time for potential permitting delays. Additional projects, including demolition and clean-up of dilapidated structures, and operational improvements to gates, signs, and fencing, will proceed concurrently but are not shown below for simplicity.

Milestone	Sears Ranch Road Interim Parking	Red Barn Parking and Trails
Design/Engineering Consultant Selection	February 2016	June 2016
Initiate Public and Stakeholder Outreach/Agency Consultation	March 2016	October 2016
Submit planning/regulatory permit applications	July 2016	October 2017
Initiate construction documentation	October 2016	June 2018

Submit construction permit applications*	NA	January 2019
Initiate construction bidding process	January 2017	January 2020
Construction	Summer 2017	Summer 2020
In Service	Fall 2017	Fall 2020

*If required

Attachment 1. Resource management photos



Photo 1. Harrington Creek in 2007



Photo 2. Harrington Creek after installation of cattle exclusion fencing



Photo 3. Culverted stream crossing, before restoration

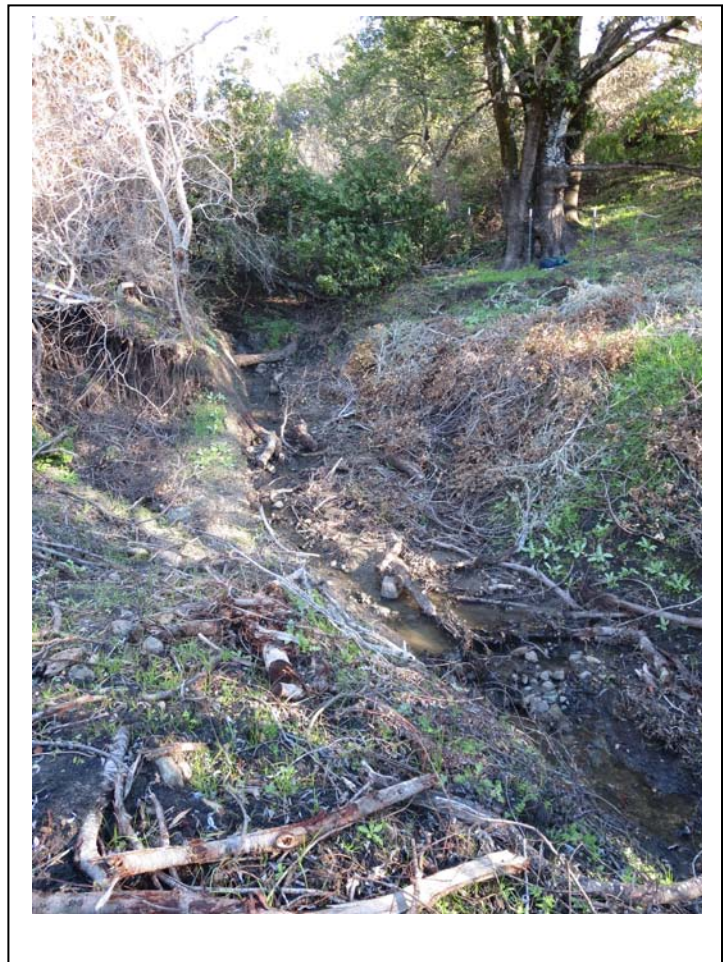
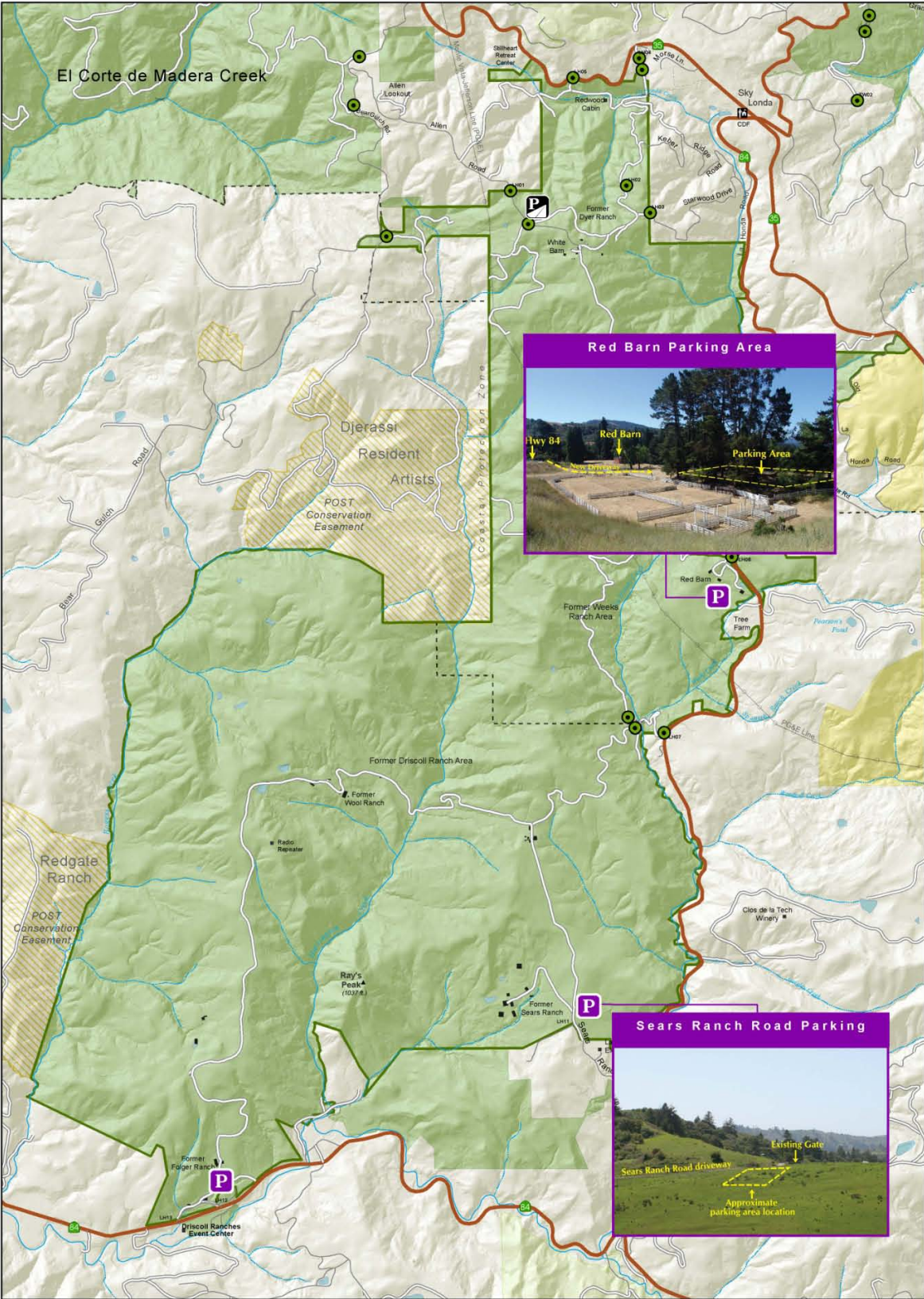


Photo 4. Abandoned crossing and restored streambanks

Attachment 2 Project Location



La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve

Map Projection: UTM Zone 10N, NAD 1927
 Data Sources: USGS, County of San Mateo, and MROSD
 Map Printed September, 2008

La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Public Access Projects

Roads

- Unpaved Ranch / Patrol Road
- Existing Paved Road
- Highway

Access

- Boundary Gate
- Roadside Parking
- New Parking Areas

Land Use

- La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve
- Land Trust
- MROSD Open Space Preserve
- Land Trust Conservation Easement
- Other Public Open Space