




Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: July 26, 2017

MEMO TO: MROSD Board of Directors

FROM: Kevin S. Woodhouse, Assistant General Manager

THROUGH: Stephen E. Abbors, General Manager 

SUBJECT: July 2017 Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network Update

The last written update provided to the Board was a year ago, May 2016. At that time, it was reported that the Network had hired its Network Manager, Dylan Skybrook, and was planning a “Meet the Network” gathering for June 2016, which Director Riffle attended. It was also reported at that time that the Network had ratified its bylaws, and had several initiatives underway. These initiatives included a GIS “Story Map” of stewardship projects in the region, establishing a Science and Monitoring team to develop ideas for how stewardship-related scientific data could be gathered, monitored, and shared throughout the region, and developing a Stewardship Awareness Leadership program for community leaders. This update provides information about additional progress the Network has made over the last year on these initiatives and new ones.

Summary of Specific Initiatives

The Network has formed the following teams to implement tangible actions:

- **Spotlight Stewardship Team** is running a four-day course (one day per month in May, June, August, and September) that introduces community leaders, elected officials, and others to stewardship issues. The current course takes the cohort to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, Pescadero Marsh, San Vicente Redwoods, and the Byrne forest. The inaugural tour day was at Mindego Ranch/Russian Ridge and focused on challenges when working lands (grazing, in this case), species protection, watershed protection, and public access intersect. Julie Anderson, Resource Management Specialist III, led the coordination of the event and provided expert information about species protection at Mindego. AGM Woodhouse facilitated a panel discussion between a CA Fish and Wildlife representative, a USGS endangered species scientist, one of Midpen’s grazing tenants, and Midpen’s Land & Facilities Services Manager Brian Malone. Numerous other staff from Natural Resources, Real Property, Land & Facilities Services, and Planning also assisted in providing information during the tour.



Spotlight Stewardship Tour at Mindego

- **Permitting Coordination Team** is working with Jim Robins from Alnus Ecological to find ways for the execution of stewardship projects to happen more quickly and easily within regulatory regimes. Jim completed an initial “Needs Assessment and Framework for Addressing Regulatory Barriers” report, and a workshop was held on June 26th for Network members to discuss and evaluate the next steps forward to address permitting challenges collectively.
- **Science and Monitoring Team** is working on a base map of the region that tracks land use, management treatments, and other data throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains to provide a picture of the region as a whole.
- **Asset Mapping Team** is cataloging the assets and capacities of the Network members to make partnering and resource sharing easier.
- **Responsible Cultivation Team** looks at the environmental impacts of cannabis growing in the region, an evolving concern.
- **Climate Scenario Planning Team** is a brand new team that will look at how climate change may affect the region and what might be done to avoid the worst impacts.
- **Story Map Team** that began work last year is reevaluating how to best support the various Network initiatives and the purpose of the Network.

Membership

At the last Network meeting in May 2017, members voted to extend invitations to several additional organizations to join the Network if they are interested. Invitations have been

extended to Santa Clara County Parks, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, Redwood Empire, and Redtree Properties. The first two are close partners to Midpen and represent a significant constituency concerning the future of stewardship in the Santa Cruz Mountains region. The timber companies are also important land managers and stewards in the region and would bring an important perspective to the Network, currently only represented by Big Creek Lumber.

Press and Case Study

In February, 2017, an article ran in the Santa Cruz Sentinel about the Network:

<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/environment-and-nature/20170221/stewards-collectively-protect-the-santa-cruz-mountains>

A Case Study Report about the Network is under development by the consultant team initially hired to form the Network, and will be provided to the Board when it is finalized.

Future Updates

Future updates will be provided to the Board as Network actions continue throughout the year. Also, please do not hesitate to forward to the General Manager any questions you may have about the Network at this point.