



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: December 11, 2019

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager 

FROM: Michael Williams, Real Property Manager

SUBJECT: MAA13 Cloverdale Coastal Ranch Land Conservation Opportunities: Work Completed to Date, Timeline, and Next Steps

In June 2018, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) Board of Directors approved the addition of *MAA13 Cloverdale Ranch – Pursue Land Conservation Opportunities* (Cloverdale project) as one of the District's Measure AA 5-Year Projects for FY 2018-19 through FY 2022-23. The project purpose is to gain an understanding of the property's conservation values, operations and maintenance needs, community interests and concerns, and opportunities for future public access to inform a future Board decision on the potential acquisition. In December 2018, staff began working with Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) to refine the tasks identified. This memo provides an update of the project timeline, work completed to date, and next steps.

The key tasks related to the Cloverdale project are grouped into the following focus areas:

- 1. Existing Site Conditions:** Develop a working knowledge of the property, prepare a summary of existing site conditions, including past studies completed by POST and others, restoration work completed to date, existing infrastructure, day to day operation, and uses;
- 2. Additional Studies:** Identify information gaps or out of date information in the summary of existing conditions, and work with POST to complete additional studies as needed to form a more complete understanding of Cloverdale's operational and maintenance needs;
- 3. Lake Lucerne Water Company Analysis:** Develop understanding of the water company's rights and responsibilities, infrastructure, administration, day to day operations, and shareholder concerns;
- 4. Community Outreach and Engagement:** Develop strategies for community outreach and engagement to understand community interests and concerns related to the possibility of Cloverdale transferring to public ownership, and to foster relationships with the local coastal community, partners, and stakeholders;
- 5. Coastal Management Plan:** Develop a management plan that addresses operational needs for existing and future Coastal preserves, including a potential purchase of Cloverdale, so as to coordinate priorities for land management, restoration, and future public access; and

- 6. Lot Line Adjustment Planning:** Work closely with POST on the development of proposed parcel reconfigurations in Cloverdale that seek to separate grazing lands from row crop farmlands while adequately addressing land management, resource protection, and future public access goals.

The project requires ongoing coordination with POST and across District departments. The project timeline below identifies the key tasks by fiscal year quarter:

Timeline for Cloverdale Land Conservation Opportunities Areas of Focus															
FY 2018-2019				FY 2019-2020				FY2020-2021				FY 2021-2022			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
				Existing Conditions Report											
				Additional Studies/Site Work											
				Lake Lucerne Water Company Analysis											
				Community Outreach and Engagement											
				Coastal Management Plan											
				Lot Line Adjustment Planning											
				Preliminary Use and Management Plan											
				CEQA compliance											
												Potential Acquisition			

As the project progresses, information will be distilled into a proposed Preliminary Use and Management Plan (PUMP) and recommended actions analyzed for environmental impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Information compiled for the PUMP and CEQA will also help inform the District’s regular coastal acquisition process, e.g. consultation with the Farm Bureau, Agricultural Advisory Committee, County Planning, interested parties, Real Property Committee, Board consideration, etc.

WORK TO DATE

To date, staff has made significant progress in each of the following focus areas:

Existing Conditions: After reviewing POST’s extensive archive of relevant background documents, conducting site visits, holding meetings with POST staff, and other research work, staff has compiled a summary report of existing site characteristics, restoration projects, infrastructure improvements, and day-to-day ranch operations. While updates to the report will continue as new information becomes available, a more complete picture of the property’s conservation value and POST’s land stewardship and infrastructure investments has emerged. In 2017-2019 alone, POST has installed two new wells and solar-powered pumping systems, completed a pond restoration project, constructed a 15-acre-foot reservoir, installed a new vehicular bridge over Butano Creek, repaired an existing storage barn, and participated in floodplain restoration along Butano Creek just south of Pescadero Creek Road. Because projects like these require complex permitting from regulatory agencies, POST has partnered with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District to implement many of these projects.

Additional Studies: After reviewing background documents, staff has identified additional studies to close information gaps and inform potential management of the property. These include an updated botanical survey to document sensitive and rare species, an updated roads and trail inventory and assessment, and updated rangeland management plans to support existing grazing leases and assess the potential to expand grazing. Staff is developing scopes for these studies and talks are underway for POST to contract with independent consultants to complete some of this work. In addition, staff will further review the findings of ongoing studies of federal

and state listed endangered species occurrences on Cloverdale and consult with the regulatory agencies regarding possible identification of likely habitat essential for species survival.

Lake Lucerne Water Company Analysis: As the first step to understanding the responsibilities associated with Lake Lucerne Water Company (LLWC), staff has been working with POST to understand the legal framework and daily operation of LLWC. In 2019, staff developed a scope of work for an independent assessment of the current condition of the water diversion infrastructure and other system components. An independent consultant hired by POST will complete the assessment by July 2020.

Community Outreach and Engagement: POST and the District are collaborating to learn more about the open space interests and concerns of the Pescadero community and larger coastal region, and to expand general understanding of the District's mission, resource conservation goals, day-to-day operations, and partnerships. Efforts to date have focused on discussions with our regional partners such as State Parks, San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, the Coastal Conservancy, and San Mateo County Parks. In 2020, the District will expand outreach to include discussions with community members and advisory groups to learn about their interests and concerns about the Cloverdale property, should it transfer into public ownership. The District will also host a series of informal open houses to provide an opportunity for the community to learn more about the District and our work in areas such as natural resource protection, water resource protection, support of local agriculture and grazing, and public access and trails. Outreach may include field trips to lower La Honda Open Space Preserve to demonstrate how the District restores and enhances lands with future public access and interpretation in mind. Participants will be introduced to how the District develops land conservation, management, and public access goals for the lands we acquire and be encouraged to share their knowledge and become involved in future discussions.

Coastal Management Plan: A management plan for the District's coastal preserves requires an understanding of existing site conditions, day-to-day land management responsibilities, and support needed for coastal acquisitions, including the potential acquisition of Cloverdale. Over the past year, staff has toured the Cloverdale property to become more acquainted with site conditions, background information and improvements completed, and how POST manages the property. In 2020, staff will assess how the District's coastal area operations are currently structured and consider options to support our expanding open space responsibilities in the coastal area. An outline of a coastal area management plan is anticipated in 2020.

Lot Line Adjustment Planning: Since 2018, the District and POST have been in active discussion with San Mateo County on the complexities of parcel reconfigurations in the County's Coastal Zone. In July 2019, the District submitted a zoning amendment application to revise the County's Zoning and Subdivision Code and resolve inconsistencies between County ordinances and the Coastal Act's exemptions for land divisions in relation to public recreation and open space. Since October, staff has been engaged with the County on providing additional District policy background to support the application and staff has been working with them on a schedule for preliminary review. It is anticipated that the County will take action on the zoning amendment application in 2020. Lot line adjustment planning that would apply to Cloverdale would begin after the completion of the zoning amendment.

Concurrent to the tasks identified above, staff is engaged in other work related to the Cloverdale project, including:

Funding Support: Staff is identifying partnership funding opportunities for the potential Cloverdale acquisition. Possible funding sources include grants and a legislative budget ask. If

obtained, these funding sources would enable the District to reserve some of the funds identified in Measure AA for continuing land restoration, support of coastal grazing lands, and future public access projects. To date, staff has introduced the project to local and state legislators, hosted tours for state resource agencies to raise awareness of the importance in permanently protecting the property, engaged our grant-writing consultants to help us seek funding sources, and worked with POST on a FY 2019-2020 State Grant request. Work has begun on a FY 2020-2021 State Grant request.

Public Access Planning: Although public access planning does not occur during pre-acquisition planning, it is beneficial to gain an early understanding of community interests, emerging trail opportunities, potential trailhead and parking options, and site constraints. It is also important to understand how a potential new property can support regional trails. Staff is monitoring regional trail planning efforts that may play a role in future public access for Cloverdale. These include the San Mateo County *Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail*, the Coastal Conservancy's *Coastal Trail Feasibility Study between Pigeon Point and Gazos Creek*, and State Parks' interest in implementing a *Palo Alto to the Sea Trail* connection between Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park and Butano Creek State Park. Staff also participates regularly in the Trails Subcommittee of the Peninsula Working Group (PWG) and the Santa Cruz Mountain Stewardship Network (SCMSN) where regional trail planning efforts are coordinated with participating agencies.

Other District Projects Relevant to Cloverdale: Other concurrent District projects underway that are relevant to the Cloverdale project include the Grazing Management Policy amendment, development of an Agricultural Policy, the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program, the Strategic Communications Plan, use of a Science Advisory Panel, and a development of a comprehensive Routine Maintenance and Facilities Improvements Program. Outcomes of these projects would contribute to any future preliminary use and management planning for Cloverdale.

Additional Cloverdale project tasks proposed: In addition to the work identified in the six focus areas above, staff will add the following additional tasks in Fiscal Year 2020-21 to support the project:

1. Review findings of ongoing studies of federal and state listed endangered species occurrences on Cloverdale. Meet with the various regulatory agencies who are conducting the studies to develop sensitive habitat mapping on Cloverdale for species protection and understand implications for any future changes in land management. Work with the regulatory agencies to determine any required changes to existing permits and strategies to address changes.
2. Per outcomes of additional studies or sensitive habitat mapping investigation described above, negotiate with POST to perform additional site work needed to stabilize key infrastructure or perform additional site restoration.

Next Steps:

1. Continue work with POST to complete identified tasks
2. Provide future updates to the Board on project status