



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: December 9, 2020

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *aruiz*

FROM: Michael Williams, Real Property Manager

SUBJECT: Cloverdale Coastal Ranch Land Conservation Opportunity: Annual Update

This memo provides an annual update to the Board of Directors (Board) on the progress of *Measure AA (MAA)#13 Cloverdale Ranch – Pursue Land Conservation Opportunities* project (Cloverdale), which was added as a new project to the Measure AA 5-Year Project List in June 2018 for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-19 through FY2022-23. The purpose of the project 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. Despite delays as a result of COVID-19 and the CZU Lightning Complex fire, progress has been made on many key tasks.

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

- 1. Understanding of Existing Site Conditions:** Develop a working knowledge of the property, based upon a summary of existing site conditions, infrastructure, day to day operation, uses, past studies, and restoration work completed by Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST);
- 2. Undertake Additional Studies:** Work with POST to complete additional studies as needed for a complete understanding of Cloverdale's operational and maintenance needs;
- 3. Analysis of Lake Lucerne Mutual Water Company Infrastructure:** Develop an understanding of the water company's rights and responsibilities, infrastructure, administration, day to day operations, and shareholder interests;
- 4. Community Outreach and Engagement:** Undertake community outreach and engagement to foster relationships with the local coastal community, partners, and stakeholders and to understand community interests and concerns related to the possibility of Cloverdale transferring to public ownership;
- 5. Plan for Expanding Coastal Lands Management:** Develop a management plan that addresses operational needs for existing and future Coastal preserves to coordinate priorities for land management, restoration, and future public access; and
- 6. Land Division Planning:** Work with POST on the development of a proposed land division application to the County that seeks to separate Cloverdale's grazing lands from row crop farmlands while addressing land management, resource protection, and future public access goals.

WORK COMPLETED IN 2020 / IDENTIFIED FOR 2021

The project requires ongoing coordination across multiple departments. Building on the progress made on key tasks in 2019, staff continues work in 2020 with planned work in 2021 in the following focus areas:

Existing Conditions: Updates to the Existing Conditions Report completed in 2020 have continued as new information becomes available and POST continues to work on restoration and infrastructure projects. In 2020, the District's GIS and Land & Facilities staff completed a 2-day field mapping exercise to document exact locations of existing infrastructure, making this information available on the Atlas GIS portal and adding greatly to the on-the-ground-knowledge of the property. Additional field days to map existing fence lines and complete minor updates to information logged in GIS is planned for 2021.

Additional Studies: In July 2020, the District's Natural Resources staff prepared an internal technical memo regarding identification of likely habitat essential for four animal species found on Cloverdale: San Francisco garter snake, California red-legged frog, American badger, and Burrowing owl. Based on information about wildlife use of the site and the need for additional protections of these habitat areas, one or more Conservation Management Units (CMUs) may be warranted should the property be acquired by the District. A CMU is defined in Board Policy 4.01 Open Space Use and Management Planning Process as: "areas within preserves, or possibly entire preserves, which because of certain criteria limiting their use, are planned and subsequently managed primarily for preservation of natural resources and viewshed." Informal consultation with regulatory agencies on the possible configurations of the CMUs was deferred due to COVID-19 and competing project priorities, and will thus be undertaken in 2021.

Completion of a botanical survey to document sensitive and rare plant species on Cloverdale was deferred to 2021 due to shelter in place orders issued during the critical spring field study season. Updates to the existing roads and trails inventory previously prepared by Tim Best, Consulting Geologist, was deferred to 2021 due to COVID-19 delays and the subsequent need for the consultant to complete other critical work disrupted by the CZU Lightning Complex fire.

Completion of the above-mentioned mapping, informal consultation, and additional studies is necessary before undertaking rangeland management planning to support existing grazing leases and assess the potential for expanding conservation grazing on the property. If significant progress can be made by the second half of 2021, staff will work with POST to develop a scope of work for a rangeland management plan. POST will contract with an independent consultant to begin rangeland management planning.

Lake Lucerne Mutual Water Company Analysis: In 2020, staff continued to work with POST and an independent consultant to complete an assessment of the current condition of the water diversion infrastructure and other system components. Field work and analysis was interrupted due to COVID-19 and the CZU Lightning Complex fires, and will soon resume under the guidance of the District's new Water Resources Specialist. Staff also continued to research and collate information on the water company's land and water rights. It is anticipated that the assessment will be completed in 2021.

Community Outreach and Engagement: Early project outreach and engagement is focused on expanding general understanding of the District's mission, resource conservation goals, day-to-day operations, and partnerships. In early 2020, District staff met informally with representatives of the La Honda Pescadero Unified School District, Puente del Sur, Sustainable

Pescadero, and the Pescadero Municipal Advisory Committee (PMAC). District and POST staff met onsite with each of the two Cloverdale grazing tenants and the five farming tenants to provide an opportunity to get to know the District and our coastal mission, learn about their operations, and answer any questions they may have about how a future land transfer from POST to the District would affect them. Follow up meetings with tenants and introductory discussions with adjacent neighbors and shareholders of the Lake Lucerne Mutual Water Company were deferred due to COVID-19 and the CZU Lightning Complex fire, and will resume in 2021.

In 2020, a new information sign up/project notification link was added directly to the Coastside Protection webpage of the District's website. District staff gave three general interest presentations at the virtual PMAC meetings (Wildland Fire Resiliency Program – August 2020, Mt. Lion Research – November 2020, and Badgers and Burrowing Owl Studies – scheduled for December 2020). Plans to host a series of informal open houses for the community to learn more about our work in natural resource protection, water resource protection, support of local agriculture and grazing, and public access and trails was delayed due to COVID-19. These will be rescheduled when it is safe again to assemble in-person for public gatherings.

Coastal Management Plan: A coastal management plan is needed to plan for the expanding operational needs of existing and proposed future coastal preserves. In 2020, staff collated information on how the District has been meeting the Coastal Service Plan's targets for land management planning, resource inventories, restoration projects, agricultural and rangeland plans, public access planning, operational facilities, staffing, housing, and support of agriculture in tandem with the Service Plan's land acquisition targets. Staff has formulated criteria to use when investigating possible locations for a new coastal field office and possible interim solutions to fill the gap until a permanent location can be found. Staff is also assessing how coastal area operations and responses are evolving in light of COVID-19 disruptions, increased visitation, implementation of newer programs such as the IPM and Wildland Fire Resiliency programs, and expanded support of emergency response efforts. An outline of a coastal area management plan is in development and anticipated for General Manager's Office (GMO) review in early 2021.

Land Division Planning: In July 2020, the District completed a rigorous 6-month public engagement process for a zoning and subdivision text amendment application submitted to the County of San Mateo in July 2019. The text amendments aim to resolve inconsistencies between County ordinances and the Coastal Act's exemptions for land divisions by a public agency in relation to public recreation and open space. The process included 14 public meetings with the coastal community and review by the County's Planning Commission. In July 2020, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors approved the text amendments. In September, County Planning submitted the amendments to the California Coastal Commission for their concurrence under state law. As of the date of this memo, the item has not yet been agendaized by the Coastal Commission. District staff is working with County Planning to ensure that the Coastal Commission takes up this item in early 2021. The District and POST cannot submit a land division application for Cloverdale until after the Coastal Commission's certification of the text amendments.

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

Funding Support: COVID-19 eliminated the 2020 State Budget request for \$8 Million to support the District's purchase of Cloverdale, sponsored by Senator Jerry Hill and Assemblyman Marc Berman. It also eliminated the potential for San Mateo County Measure K funding supported by Supervisor Don Horsley. Despite unanticipated diversion of state and local funds needed to respond to the pandemic, an unprecedented fire season, and commitment to fund

climate change solutions, staff will continue to refine funding strategies for the potential Cloverdale acquisition. Possible funding sources continue to include grants, a much-reduced legislative budget ask, and a possible new bond measure in 2022. If successfully obtained, these funding sources would enable the District to reserve some of the funds identified in Measure AA for land restoration work, support of coastal grazing lands, and future public access projects.

Regional Planning Efforts: In 2020, the Trails Subcommittees of the Peninsula Working Group (PWG) and the Santa Cruz Mountain Stewardship Network (SCMSN) combined efforts under their new title as the Peninsula Trails Team. The District continues to participate in their regional trails planning meetings to coordinate and support partner agencies such as POST, San Mateo County Parks, GGNRA, SFPUC, Coastal Conservancy, and SCMSN. In 2020, District staff also participated in other regional transportation planning efforts that have an impact on future public access connections to Cloverdale. Recently, District Planning staff met with County of San Mateo Planning / Office of Sustainability staff on the *Connect the Coastside Plan* to highlight the importance of access to coastal trails, parking areas, and trailheads outside the Midcoast focus area of the proposed plan and how new connections may be made to coastal destinations in the future. In November 2020, the District submitted comments on the Office of Sustainability’s draft *Active Transportation Plan* for the unincorporated San Mateo County highlighting transportation needs to recreational destinations in unincorporated areas.

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, initiation of review of the Basic Policy, the outcomes of the recent report by the Science Advisory Panel on conservation grazing, and implementation of the Routine Maintenance and Facilities Improvements Program. Outcomes of these projects would contribute to future use and management planning for Cloverdale.

The Cloverdale project timeline below has been modified from last year to accommodate a minimum one-year extension of the schedule in response to funding and other challenges:

Timeline for Cloverdale Land Conservation Opportunities																			
FY 2018-2019				FY 2019-2020				FY2020-2021				FY 2021-2022				FY 2022-2023			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Existing Conditions																			
				Additional Studies/Site Work															
				Lake Lucerne Water Company Analysis															
				Community Outreach and Engagement															
				Coastal Management Plan															
				Land Division Planning															
				Use and Management Plan															
				CEQA compliance															
				Proposed acquisition															

Next Steps:

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

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