



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: June 30, 2021

Contact: Sasha Hnatkovich, 650.691.1200, shnatkovich@openspace.org

Midpen purchase expands El Sereno Preserve for habitat and future regional trail connections

Los Altos, CA — Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District announced today that it has expanded El Sereno Open Space Preserve by closing escrow on the purchase of 182.15 acres of open space land that includes northern slopes and ridgeline of Mount El Sereno. Midpen received funds from the California Wildlife Conservation Board to purchase the property from the Peninsula Open Space Trust.

“This expansion of El Sereno Preserve – one of Midpen’s oldest preserves – is an excellent example of how Midpen and POST have collaborated for more than four decades to creatively meet the community’s collective conservation goals,” Midpen General Manager Ana María Ruiz said. “Midpen is pleased to work again with our nonprofit partner to preserve additional acreage of the Santa Cruz Mountains as public open space, opening new opportunities for public access and protecting habitat for wildlife like mountain lions, deer and bobcats. We are grateful to former state senator Jim Beall for his leadership in securing funding for this purchase and other efforts in this regionally significant area for trail and habitat connectivity.”

The purchase expands El Sereno Preserve, which Midpen originally acquired in 1975, to more than 1,600 acres. Furthering Midpen’s mission to preserve a regional greenbelt of connected habitat and wildlife corridors, it protects additional open space lands within the San Tomas Aquino Creek and Los Gatos Creek watersheds. The former San Jose Water Company property also provides an important link in the preserve’s Aquinas Trail, closing a 0.34-mile gap to formally connect the 3.7-mile trail across the ridgeline and through the preserve. Aquinas Trail is planned to support regional trail connectivity as a key segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail system, moving forward one of the priority action projects of the voter-approved 2014 Measure AA general obligation bond.

Midpen partnered with POST to acquire the property from the San Jose Water Company for \$1,075,000. At its July 22, 2020, meeting, the Midpen board of directors approved the purchase of the property, assigning purchase rights to POST until funding could be secured through the California Wildlife Conservation Board. Since POST closed escrow on the property in September 2020, Midpen has managed the land as part of the El Sereno Preserve. At its May 20, 2021, meeting, the WCB approved Midpen’s funding request. The WCB administers \$10 million in funding that former senator Beall secured for Midpen through a state budget request.

Located south of the city of Saratoga and west of the town of Los Gatos, El Sereno Preserve is open to the public free of charge, 365 days a year, from a half-hour before sunrise until a half-hour

after sunset. With nearly 7 miles of trails winding through chaparral communities, bay laurel forests and meadow areas, the preserve is available for hiking, on-leash dog walking and mountain biking, as well as horseback riding on designated trails. It is known for its vistas of Lexington Reservoir, Sierra Azul Preserve and Silicon Valley.

###

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's mission is to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land of regional significance in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education. On the San Mateo County coast, our mission also includes preserving agricultural land of regional significance and rural character and encouraging viable agricultural use of land resources. Midpen has successfully protected more than 65,000 acres of public open space land in the Santa Cruz Mountains region since 1972.

openspace.org