



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-21-60  
Meeting 21-14  
May 12, 2021

## AGENDA ITEM 5

### AGENDA ITEM

Approval of a New Field Resource Specialist Position to Implement the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Approve a new Field Resource Specialist position, contingent on Board of Directors approval of the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program.

### SUMMARY

To increase the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District, Midpen) project delivery output and meet the goals outlined in the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program (WFRP), the General Manager recommends approval of a new Field Resource Specialist position, with an anticipated start date of August 2021. The Field Resource Specialist position would be responsible for natural resource and vegetation management projects that implement the WFRP, the adoption of which the Board will also consider on May 12, 2021 prior to this Agenda Item. The new proposed position would be responsible for planning, scheduling, and leading fuel reduction activities, including natural resource surveying, invasive species removal, vegetation treatments, and mitigation monitoring. Working closely with other District departments, the position would coordinate with local, state, and federal authorities to capitalize on interagency partnerships and funding measures to implement the WFRP. The Field Resource Specialist would represent the District at public meetings and provide WFRP reports and progress updates to the Board of Directors (Board), fire agencies, local governments, tribes, business groups and the public. This position is included in the proposed Fiscal Year 2021-22 (FY22) Budget, which the Action Plan and Budget Committee recently recommended forwarding to the full Board as a balanced budget. This position is being expedited for Board approval to quickly shift into WFRP implementation at the start of FY22 and bring in the additional capacity to manage large fuels management projects that are expected to receive grant awards this summer.

### DISCUSSION

Given the proposed scope of the WFRP, additional staff resources are needed to implement the objectives outlined in the program once adopted by the Board. This position is within the growth projected by the Financial and Operational Sustainability Model (FOSM) for field positions in the Visitor and Field Service Business line. The FOSM anticipated continued growth in the Visitor and Field Services (VFS) business line through 2045, "*Visitor and Field Services staffing needs will continue to increase as Vision Plan projects come online and require long term operation and maintenance.*" The primary metric utilized to plot staff growth was the increase in

trail mileage; however, as the District strives to increase vegetation management for fuel reduction and habitat enhancement, fuel and vegetation management areas may become another metric for assessing staffing needs, particularly in the Land and Facilities Department.

#### Position Adds Capacity to Implement the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program

The Field Resource Specialist position would aid in implementing two key objectives outlined in the WFRP:

1. *Manage vegetation (including invasive fire-prone trees) to establish healthy, resilient, fire-dependent or fire-adapted ecosystems, furthering] Midpen's mission to protect and restore the diversity and integrity of the ecological processes on Midpen lands and facilitate healthy post-fire recovery.*
2. *Manage vegetation and infrastructure on Midpen lands to reduce wildland fire risks, improve wildland fire fighting capabilities and coordination, and improve overall safety to reduce the harmful effects of wildland fire on people, property, and natural resources.*

This position would oversee progress completed annually in reducing unnaturally high fuels loads across District lands, including managing forests, scrub, shrub, and chaparral communities to maintain a healthy and fire-resilient mosaic of ages and species. The position would also oversee fuels management work within strategic management zones, including along emergency access roads, landing zones, ridgetops, and critical infrastructure.

The Field Resource Specialist position would also advance the District's strategic plan, improve operational efficiencies, and support core functions of the Land and Facilities Department as detailed below.

#### Advance Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

The Field Resource Specialist would further advance the following three Board-approved Strategic Plan goals/objectives:

**Goal 1: Objective 2** – *Build and strengthen diverse partnerships to implement a collaborative and science-based approach to regional environmental protection.*

This position would strengthen partnerships by coordinating with fire agencies and local communities to define locations where fire protection infrastructure is desirable and practical.

**Goal 2: Objective 2** – *Protect and restore the natural environment to preserve healthy natural systems.*

This position would aid in managing forests as critical habitat for sensitive species by restoring forest structure and habitat elements through the removal of unnaturally high fuel loads. This includes utilizing state-of-the-art silvicultural (forestry) practices to restore degraded forest habitats to promote the development of late-seral habitat, forest habitat complexity, and to enhance biodiversity. The position would also expand the District's focus in removing invasive vegetation that will improve habitat conditions for sensitive species and expand the number of available areas for restoring lost or altered native plant communities.

**Goal 2: Objective 3** – *Work with fire agencies and surrounding communities to strengthen the prevention of, preparation for and response to wildland fires for enhanced ecosystem resiliency and public safety.*

This position would actively participate in County Fire Safe Councils and Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) efforts as the District's representative. They would also manage the implementation of the WFRP by coordinating internally with crew supervisors to schedule annual in-house projects, coordinating with the Volunteer Program on annual volunteer projects and assignments, assembling outside crews and contractor resources to carry out additional fuels management work, and partnering with communities and fire agencies on similar work. This may include partnerships and coordination with the California Conservation Corps or others to engage diverse youth in fire resiliency, where possible. This position will also work closely with the Grants Program Manager to secure outside funds that further leverage District resources to expand fire resiliency activities and meet the necessary grant submittal requirements. Throughout implementation of the WFRP, this position will monitor post fire and vegetation management projects to assess the achievement of project objectives and ensure that mitigation measures are implemented.

#### Improve Operational Efficiencies

The Field Resource Specialist position would improve efficiencies in four key areas: project management, District representation, grant administration, and natural resource protection and monitoring.

Currently the Land and Facilities department utilizes a mixture of hours from two Area Managers, four Supervisors, and one Lead Open Space Technician to coordinate fuels reduction projects throughout the District. Coordinating wildland fire resiliency projects between seven different staff dilutes the concentrated effort needed to manage and lead an effective program. A focused point of contact will enhance the reporting and coordination activities required to implement an expanded District-wide program. The position would report to the Skyline Field Office Area Manager (Attachment 1) and be responsible for coordinating work across the entire District.

This position would also enhance District representation by increasing community participation and freeing up other department staff time to focus on delivering other assigned projects.

With increased public awareness and support for ecosystem resiliency and wildland fire resiliency projects, available funding from local and state agencies is expanding. Earlier this year, Governor Newsom announced a \$1 billion investment in forest restoration, fire prevention, and recovery. This position will provide additional resources to support the Grants Program in preparing, securing, and administering grants for fire resiliency work. The Field Resource Specialist will provide subject matter expertise for project prioritization and coordination across departments for effective use of grant funds and promote public awareness of District land management practices for ecological benefit.

The advancement of invasive species removal, fuel break installation, and other natural resource protection projects all require mitigation monitoring and reporting. The Field Resource Specialist would ensure that WFRP monitoring and reporting activities, as required by CEQA as well as local, state, and federal agencies, are met. This added capacity will allow the Natural Resources

Department to remain focused on priority restoration and conservation projects and lending critical support on Measure AA public access and land conservation projects.

#### Land and Facilities Core Functions

This position would further three core functions within the Land and Facilities Department:

1. Provide in-the-field services to protect and restore the natural resources.
2. Protect public health and safety through fire prevention and safe access.
3. Foster neighbor, partner, funder, and jurisdictional-oversight agency relationships and engage in multi-stakeholder efforts to further the District's WFRP goals.

The General Manager is requesting expedited approval of this position prior to the adoption of the FY22 Budget and Action Plan to allow staff to begin recruitment immediately, for an anticipated hire date in August 2021. This will accelerate the pace with which the District can implement vegetation management projects under the WFRP. If recruitment were deferred until FY22 Budget approval, the anticipated start date would be delayed until September or October.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for the new position are included in the proposed FY22 Budget and would be included in subsequent future fiscal year budgets. The estimated cost, including benefits and pension, for this position in FY22 is \$179,574 and in FY23 is \$184,962. The addition of this position was confirmed to be within the Controller's 30-year fiscal model. On May 4, 2021, the Action Plan and Budget Committee unanimously recommended forwarding the proposed FY22 Budget, which includes this position, to the full Board for consideration. The Board is scheduled to receive the first reading of the FY22 Budget on May 26.

#### **BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

There was no prior committee review of this item.

#### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

#### **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Pending Board approval, the General Manager will direct staff to begin the recruitment process. Actual hiring would not occur until after the FY22 Budget is approved in June.

Attachments:

1. Land & Facilities Organization Chart

Responsible Department Head/Prepared by:  
Brandon Stewart, Land and Facilities Department Manager



# Land & Facilities Services Department Organization Chart



**Brandon Stewart**  
Land and Facilities Services Manager

**Omar Smith**  
Senior Property  
Management Specialist

Attachment 1

**Michael Gorman**  
Foothills Area Manager

**Bryan Apple**  
Capital Projects Field Manager

**Craig Beckman**  
Skyline Area Manager

**Jennifer Kavanagh**  
Admin. Asst.

**Proposed Position**  
Field Resource Specialist

**Gloria Bell**  
Admin. Asst.

**Susan Weidemann**  
Property  
Management  
Specialist II

**Carissa Rivers**  
Property  
Management  
Specialist II

**Jean Chung**  
Property  
Management  
Specialist I

**Michael Bankosh**  
Maintenance Supervisor

**Jim Mort**  
Maintenance Supervisor

**Erik Viik**  
Special Projects  
Maintenance Supervisor FFO

**Don Mackessy**  
Maintenance Supervisor SFO

**Grant Kern**  
Maintenance Supervisor

**Brendan Dolan**  
Maintenance Supervisor

**Adriana Headley**  
Management Analyst II

**Ivana Vento**  
Admin. Asst.

**Modified Duty Staff**

- Stephanie Towne  
Equipment  
Mechanic Operator
- Alex Rodriguez  
Lead Open Space  
Technician
- John Holback  
Resource Lead Open  
Space Technician
- Frank Healey  
Open Space  
Technician
- Kyle Putnam  
Open Space  
Technician
- Miguel Ojeda  
Farm Maintenance  
Worker

- Tom Hanson  
Equipment  
Mechanic Operator
- Vince Hernandez  
Lead Open Space  
Technician
- Ignacio Zavala  
Open Space  
Technician
- Brian Fair  
Open Space  
Technician
- Steve Neighbors  
Open Space  
Technician

- Dan Chamberlin  
Equipment  
Mechanic Operator
- Cody Fickes  
Lead Open Space  
Technician
- John Cifelli  
Open Space  
Technician
- Trisha Marshall  
Open Space  
Technician
- Vacant  
Equipment  
Mechanic Operator

- Chris Perry  
Lead Open Space  
Technician
- Ken Bolle  
Equipment  
Mechanic Operator
- Bernard Fahey  
Open Space  
Technician
- Holden Neal  
Equipment  
Mechanic Operator
- Kandahar Husin  
Open Space  
Technician

- Warren Jenkins  
Equipment  
Mechanic Operator
- Eric Stanton  
Equipment  
Mechanic Operator
- Brett Snider  
Open Space  
Technician
- Rob Scilingo  
Open Space  
Technician
- Brennon McKibbin  
Open Space  
Technician

- Steve Davison  
Lead Open Space  
Technician
- Scott Cotterel  
Lead Open Space  
Technician
- Steve Reed  
Open Space  
Technician
- Rich Hopp  
Open Space  
Technician
- Jessica Vizona  
Open Space  
Technician

**Joe Mackessy**  
Facilities Maintenance  
Supervisor

**Vacant  
Facilities  
Maintenance  
Specialist**

58.5 FTEs in Land and Facilities Services  
49 Permanent Staff  
17 Seasonal Staff

Seasonal  
Open Space  
Technicians

Seasonal  
Open Space  
Technicians