



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-21-92  
Meeting 21-19  
June 23, 2021

## AGENDA ITEM 11

### AGENDA ITEM

Redwood Cabin Removal Project: CEQA Scoping Meeting

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Provide feedback and receive public comment on the scope and content of the Environmental Impact Report to be prepared per the California Environmental Quality Act.

### SUMMARY

The Redwood Cabin is located in the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve and is eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources. On April 8, 2020, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) directed the General Manager to evaluate the environmental effects that would result from removing the Redwood Cabin and improving native habitat conditions of the building footprint (R-20-35). District staff subsequently initiated environmental review per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of this meeting is to provide an overview and schedule for the Project's CEQA process and receive public comment on the environmental issues to be considered in the Project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Board is not approving any elements of the Project at this time. Board consideration to approve the Project is expected in Summer 2022 after completion of environmental review.

### BACKGROUND

The Redwood Cabin is located west of the community of Sky Londa, California, in a portion of the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve that is closed to the public. The District acquired the Redwood Cabin in 1998 and the building has been vacant since acquisition.

In 2020, Page & Turnbull, Inc., prepared a Historic Resource Evaluation to assess if the Redwood Cabin is eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register). The Historic Resource Evaluation determined that the Redwood Cabin is potentially eligible for listing in the California Register for the following reasons:

- The Redwood Cabin appears to be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
- The Redwood Cabin appears to embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction.

The Board reviewed several disposition options for the Redwood Cabin throughout 2019 and 2020, including retention as-is, stabilization, rehabilitation, and demolition. The Board ultimately opted to remove the Redwood Cabin for two reasons. First, removal represented the most cost-effective disposition approach, partially because it would eliminate long-term operational costs. Second, the Board noted trespass and public safety concerns and the difficulty associated with managing the remote building site (refer below to history of trespass and vandalism).

## **STATUS AND RECENT TRESPASS AND VANDALISM**

The Redwood Cabin has a long history of periodic trespass including recent vandalism events in 2021. On February 16, 2021, District staff visited the Redwood Cabin and observed broken locks, smashed windows, and deliberate dismantlement of the deck and railing. While the Redwood Cabin is located some distance from the closest publicly accessible road or parking area, vandalism at this unoccupied structure remains an issue for District staff to manage and monitor. Compared to other unoccupied structures, this building experiences more frequent vandalism and trespassing.

To prevent future unauthorized entry, Land and Facilities staff installed plywood boards over all window and door openings that could provide ingress into the Redwood Cabin. Visitor Services staff also posted new signage around the Redwood Cabin to convey its status as a “hazardous closed area”, which elevates the trespass penalty from an infraction (code MROSD 805.2[a]) to a misdemeanor (code MROSD 802.2[b]). Visitor Services staff will continue to patrol, monitor, and enforce the closed area regulations. After trespass and vandalism were again observed on April 26, 2021, staff removed the dilapidated deck to address public safety concerns.

## **DISCUSSION**

On April 8, 2020, the Board directed the General Manager to evaluate the environmental effects that would result from removing the Redwood Cabin. District staff initiated the environmental review process per CEQA, which will culminate in the preparation of an EIR based on the following Project objectives:

- Remove physical hazards to ensure public safety;
- Enhance habitat at the Redwood Cabin site and immediate surroundings;
- Provide focused interpretive and educational opportunities consistent with open space values;
- Improve natural visual character and scenic qualities; and
- Implement a fiscally sustainable project.

On June 9, 2021, the District circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a 30-day public review to initiated public Scoping and comment period (Attachment 1). The NOP is available on the District website and was distributed to responsible agencies, nearby jurisdictions, adjacent landowners, and local resource protection organizations.

The CEQA process offers several opportunities to receive public input, starting with the Scoping period. The purpose of Scoping is to solicit feedback on the content of the EIR, feasible project alternatives to consider in the EIR, and mitigation measures that could reduce potentially significant impacts. The Project’s Scoping period was initiated with the release of the NOP on June 9, 2021 and will conclude on July 9, 2021. In addition, District staff will solicit public comment during the Scoping meeting at the June 23, 2021 Board meeting. Relevant comments

received during the Scoping period, including those received after this Board meeting, will be considered as part of the development of the Project's EIR.

The EIR will describe potential environmental impacts associated with the Project and identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts. CEQA allows the EIR to focus on environmental effects that may be potentially significant; thus, the Project's EIR will focus on (1) biological resource impacts during construction activities, and (2) removal of a historic structure that is eligible for listing on the California Register. An Initial Study will accompany the EIR to discuss all other environmental topics that are unlikely to result in significant impacts and do not warrant detailed analysis in the EIR.

The EIR will also describe a reasonable range of alternatives that can meet the Project objectives but would avoid or lessen significant environmental effects. The EIR will therefore discuss Project alternatives that could reduce likely impacts to biological and historic resources.

## COMPARISON WITH THE BEATTY HOUSE

The Board recently modified their decision regarding a separate building known as the Beatty House, which was also originally proposed for removal, to instead retain the building with no future repairs and fence the site to prevent entry. While both structures are potentially historically significant, the Redwood Cabin is much larger and more difficult to keep secure. The Beatty House is easily accessible from a public road that is used routinely by Rangers on patrol to check on site conditions. It is also much more likely that illegal activity or a fire at the Beatty site would be reported quickly since it is in a more visible location. In some cases, a remote location can protect an unoccupied structure from trespass and vandalism, but in the case of the Redwood Cabin, it is clear that people are aware of its location. The location makes regular patrol difficult and any illegal activity or fires are unlikely to be reported by the public. Evidence of fires have been found in the past in the nonfunctional fireplaces in the Redwood Cabin.

While all unoccupied structures are subject to trespass and vandalism, based on experience with these two structures, staff anticipates that the effort needed to prevent trespass and vandalism at the Beatty House will be much less and more effective than securing the Redwood Cabin. As noted in prior reports, Redwood Cabin is in poor condition, with the lack of available access for public use, and no known partnership potential.

## FISCAL IMPACT

Initiating the Project's CEQA Scoping process has no immediate fiscal impact. The FY22 adopted budget includes funding for environmental review, permitting, and removal activities. The following table outlines the Project budget per fiscal year.

<b>La Honda Creek Redwood Cabin Removal MAA05-009</b>	<b>Prior Year Actuals</b>	<b>FY21 Amended</b>	<b>FY22 Adopted</b>	<b>FY23 Projected*</b>	<b>Estimated Future Years</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$88,486</b>	<b>\$70,986</b>	<b>\$92,870</b>	<b>\$411,792</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$664,134</b>
Spent-to-Date (as of 05/25/2021):	(\$88,486)	(\$20,570)	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$109,056)
Encumbrances:	\$0	(\$31,703)	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$31,703)
<b>Budget Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$18,713</b>	<b>\$92,870</b>	<b>\$411,792</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$523,375</b>

*\*This is the projected budget as reflected in the FY22 Budget and Action Plan, but based on new estimates, the construction budget for FY23 will be reduced in FY22 as part of the annual budget and action plan process.*

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 05 La Honda Creek: Upper Area Recreation, Habitat Restoration and Conservation Grazing Projects allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

<b>MAA05 La Honda Creek: Upper Area Recreation, Habitat Restoration and Conservation Grazing Projects Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$11,733,000</b>
<b>Total Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$11,733,000</b>
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 05/25/2021):	(\$2,643,612)
Encumbrances:	(\$54,279)
Remaining FY21 Project Budgets:	(\$146,339)
Future MAA05 project costs (projected through FY25):	(\$3,525,469)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$6,369,759)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$5,363,241</b>

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 05 allocation, projected life of project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

<b>MAA05 La Honda Creek: Upper Area Recreation, Habitat Restoration and Conservation Grazing Projects Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$11,733,000</b>
<b>Total Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$11,733,000</b>
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
05-001 La Honda Creek Land Conservation Opportunities	(\$1,756,093)
05-002 Upper La Honda Creek Grazing Infrastructure	(\$297,432)
05-005 La Honda Creek Red Barn Parking Area and Easy Access Trail	(\$327,513)
05-007 La Honda Creek Phase II Trail Connection	(\$471,622)
05-008 La Honda Creek White Barn Structural Rehabilitation	(\$588,638)
05-009 La Honda Creek Redwood Cabin Removal	(\$664,134)
05-010 Restoration Forestry Demonstration Project	(\$1,360,832)
05-011 Lone Madrone Ranch Fence Installation	(\$278,898)
05-012 Phase 2 - Paulin Bridge Replacements (2)	(\$624,597)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$6,369,759)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$5,363,241</b>

## BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

The assessment of disposition alternatives for Redwood Cabin previously came before the Board at the following dates:

- **April 24, 2019:** Board review of contract with ZFA for structural assessment and construction documents for stabilization of three structures, including Redwood Cabin ([R-19-51](#), [meeting minutes](#)).
- **May 15, 2019:** Board authorization of contract with ZFA for assessment of three structures, including Redwood Cabin, and exploration of stabilization, rehabilitation, and removal alternatives ([R-19-63](#), [meeting minutes](#)).
- **April 8, 2020:** Board review of ZFA's Basis of Design and selection of Alternative #4: Removal of the Redwood Cabin ([R-20-35](#), [meeting minutes](#)).
- **November 4, 2020:** Board authorization of contract with Ascent Environmental. to provide environmental and permitting consulting services ([R-20-127](#), [meeting minutes](#)).
- **May 12, 2021:** FYI Redwood Cabin removal project ([FYI](#), [meeting minutes](#))

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Additional notice was distributed to the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve interested party list and property owners and residents surrounding the Project site.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The purpose of this meeting is to receive public Scoping comments to inform the scope and content of the EIR.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The following table provides a tentative Project schedule.

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Tentative Schedule</b>
Scoping Period	June 9, 2021 – July 9, 2021
District Prepare Draft EIR	Summer – Winter 2021
Public Review of Draft EIR	Winter 2022
District Prepare Final EIR	Spring/Summer 2022
Circulate and Certify Final EIR	Summer 2022
Permitting	Fall 2022 – Summer 2023
Project Implementation	Fall 2023

Attachment:

Redwood Cabin Removal Project Notice of Preparation

Responsible Department Head:

Jane Mark, Planning Department

Prepared by:

Alex Casbara, Planner III, Planning Department

Melissa Borgesi, Planner I, Planning Department

Contact person:

Alex Casbara, Planner III, Planning Department

## NOTICE OF PREPARATION REDWOOD CABIN REMOVAL PROJECT Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

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<b>Date Published:</b>	June 9, 2021
<b>Project Title:</b>	Redwood Cabin Removal Project
<b>Project Location:</b>	La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, San Mateo County, CA
<b>Lead Agency:</b>	Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District 330 Distel Circle Los Altos, CA 94022
<b>Contact:</b>	Alex Casbara, Planner III <a href="mailto:acasbara@openspace.org">acasbara@openspace.org</a>
<b>Review Period:</b>	June 9, 2021 – July 9, 2021

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### INTRODUCTION

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) issues this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to announce preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Redwood Cabin Removal Project (Project). Midpen will prepare an EIR for the Project to satisfy the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and will serve as the lead agency for CEQA compliance. In accordance with CEQA Statute and Guidelines (Guidelines) Section 15082, the purpose of this NOP is to describe the Project, identify potential environmental effects, and invite interested parties to comment on the scope and content of the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082[b]).

### PROJECT LOCATION

The Redwood Cabin is situated within the upper portion of Midpen's La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (Preserve). The Preserve encompasses 6,142 acres in the Santa Cruz Mountains within unincorporated San Mateo County (Attachment 1) and is bounded by Highway 35 (Skyline Boulevard) to the north, Highway 84 (La Honda Road) to the east and south, and Bogess Creek to the west.

The Redwood Cabin occupies a portion of Assessor's Parcel Number 075-330-260 and is located west of the community of Sky Londa, California. The Project site is designated for Forest/Timber Production land uses under the San Mateo County General Plan and is zoned as Timberland Preserve District under the San Mateo County Zoning Ordinance. Access to the Redwood Cabin is provided via an unpaved road accessible from Skyline Boulevard, which travels through two locked gates. The final segment of this unpaved road requires a four-wheel drive vehicle or access by foot.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Redwood Cabin is located in a heavily wooded area within a portion of the Preserve that is currently closed to the public. The building site is situated atop sloping terrain overlooking a circular dirt driveway and stone retaining walls that surround a small grove of redwood trees. Various remnants of the Redwood Cabin's recreational history are scattered throughout the property, including horseshoe pits, a stone barbeque pit, and a brick planter.

The Redwood Cabin is approximately 66 feet long by 30 feet wide with an exterior consisting of redwood logs, timber roof framing, and hinged windows, skylights, and doors. The building interior

contains a large stone fireplace in the living room, two small bedrooms, a bathroom, and a kitchen. The structure appears to be in generally poor to fair condition with obvious structural damage and deterioration.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Midpen acquired the Redwood Cabin in 1998 and the building has been vacant since acquisition. In 2020, Page & Turnbull, Inc. prepared a Historic Resource Evaluation to assess the Redwood Cabin's eligibility for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register). The Historic Resource Evaluation determined that the Redwood Cabin is an historic resource per CEQA because it appears to be eligible for individual listing in the California Register for the following reasons:

- The Redwood Cabin appears to be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
- The Redwood Cabin appears to embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values.

On April 8, 2020, the Midpen Board of Directors directed the General Manager to evaluate the environmental effects that would result from removing the Redwood Cabin and implementing habitat enhancements to reflect native ecological conditions.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The Project would achieve the following objectives, in alignment with Midpen's mission:

- Remove physical hazards to ensure public safety;
- Enhance habitat at the Redwood Cabin site and immediate surroundings;
- Provide focused interpretive and educational opportunities consistent with open space values;
- Improve natural visual character and scenic qualities; and
- Implement a fiscally sustainable Project.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

The Project would entail demolition of the Redwood Cabin and removal of associated features onsite, including retaining walls and barbeque pits. After demolition, the site would be left to return to its natural condition. Excavations that extend below finish grade would be backfilled, compacted, and would entail minor grading as necessary for drainage and erosion control. No public access facilities would be constructed as part of this Project.

## **POTENTIAL PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED**

- Midpen Board of Directors: Project approval
- Regional Water Quality Control Board: general construction permit
- County of Santa Mateo: demolition and grading permits
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD): register all portable equipment permits with BAAQMD; notify BAAQMD of all demolition activities 10 days prior to occurrence of activity.

## **POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

The EIR will describe direct and indirect environmental impacts associated with the Project and will identify feasible mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts. The EIR will focus on significant or potentially significant impacts to the following resources:

- Biological Resources: Impacts to sensitive species during construction activities.
- Cultural Resources: Impacts to a historic building that is eligible for listing on the California Register.

CEQA allows a lead agency to limit detailed discussion of environmental effects that would not be potentially significant (PRC Section 21100, CEQA Guidelines Sections 15126.2[a] and 15128). An Initial Study will accompany the EIR to discuss the following environmental topics that are unlikely to result in significant impacts and do not warrant detailed analysis in the EIR.

- |                                    |                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Aesthetics                       | • Mineral Resources                  |
| • Agriculture & Forestry Resources | • Noise                              |
| • Air Quality                      | • Population & Housing               |
| • Energy                           | • Public Services & Recreation       |
| • Geology & Soils                  | • Transportation                     |
| • Greenhouse Gas Emissions         | • Tribal Cultural Resources          |
| • Hazards & Hazardous Materials    | • Utilities & Service Systems        |
| • Hydrology & Water Quality        | • Wildfire                           |
| • Land Use & Planning              | • Mandatory Findings of Significance |

### **ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE EIR**

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a reasonable range of alternatives capable of meeting most of the Project objectives that would avoid or substantially lessen significant effects resulting from the Project. The EIR will also evaluate a No Project Alternative and will discuss alternatives that were considered but rejected as infeasible by Midpen.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

All comments on environmental issues received during the public comment period will be considered and addressed in the EIR. Midpen will accept written or emailed comments submitted by July 9, 2021 to the following address:

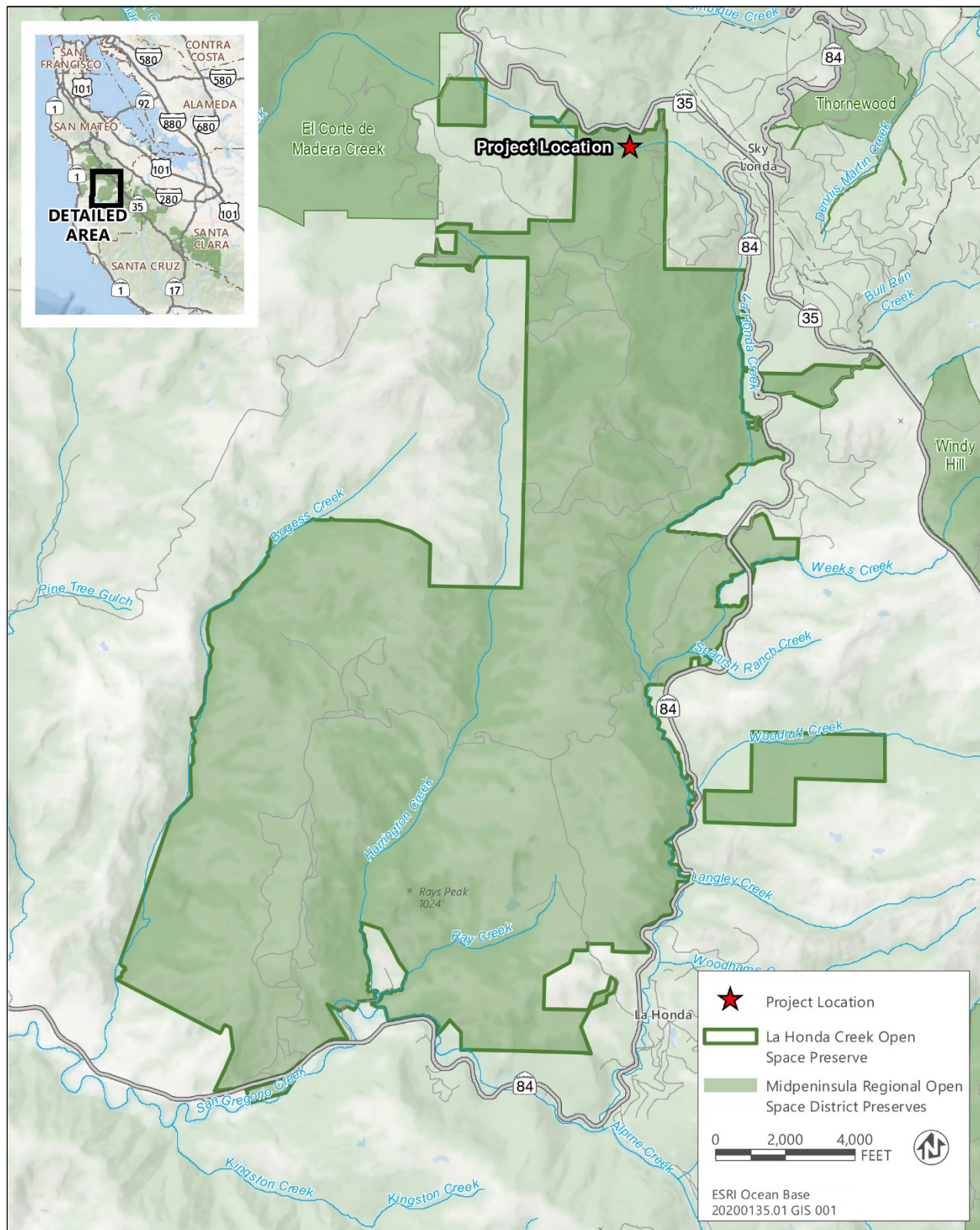
Alex Casbara, Planner III  
 Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District  
 330 Distel Circle  
 Los Altos, CA 94022  
 Via email: [acasbara@openspace.org](mailto:acasbara@openspace.org)

Comments provided via email should include *Redwood Cabin Removal Project NOP Scoping Comment* in the subject line, and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email. Other inquiries related to the Project may be directed to Alex Casbara via email at [acasbara@openspace.org](mailto:acasbara@openspace.org).

### **PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING**

Midpen will host a public scoping meeting to inform stakeholders about the Project and solicit input regarding environmental topics and alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR. The scoping meeting will occur during the Midpen Board of Directors meeting scheduled for June 23, 2021. In accordance with public health orders, all Midpen board meetings are held via teleconference only. The meeting may be viewed online and links to the meetings will be posted with each agenda at the following website: <https://www.openspace.org/about-us/board-meetings>.





Source: Adapted by Ascent Environmental in 2021

## Attachment 1 Redwood Cabin Removal Project Location