



THE CITY OF
HALF MOON BAY
CALIFORNIA

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Midpen approves purchase of 644 acres of Johnston Ranch near Half Moon Bay Midpen, POST and City of Half Moon Bay partner to protect open space and farmland

Los Altos, CA— At their regular public meeting last night, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's board of directors approved the purchase of a 644-acre portion of the Johnston Ranch property from the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) for \$4.8 million. The purchase aligns with [Midpen's community-supported Vision Plan](#). It is funded by Measure AA that was passed by local voters in 2014, in addition to a total of \$700,000 in grants from the Coastal Conservancy and California State Parks' Habitat Conservation Fund.

"By joining our resources and unique expertise, POST, Midpen and the City of Half Moon Bay are partnering to keep Johnston Ranch protected as natural open space and agricultural working lands," Midpen General Manager Ana María Ruiz said. "We have a shared vision to balance natural resource protection and viable agriculture at Johnston Ranch with future opportunities for new community connections to nearby nature."

The 868-acre Johnston Ranch property is an iconic coastal open space located on the southern edge of the City of Half Moon Bay, and is made up of rolling grassy hills, coastal scrub, the Arroyo Leon Creek corridor and working agricultural lands. Once slated to be developed into a golf course and luxury homes, POST purchased and preserved it in two transactions taking place in 1999 and 2001. When a lot-line adjustment process is completed with San Mateo County, the Johnston Ranch property will be preserved by the City, POST and Midpen as follows:

The City of Half Moon Bay will continue to own the historic New England saltbox-style [Johnston House](#) located on the property. Visible from Highway 1 and a landmark to many who live on or visit the coast, it is open to the public for docent-led tours. The City of Half Moon Bay is planning for a pedestrian and bike trail that will connect downtown Half Moon

Bay with the Johnston House along Higgins Canyon Road, utilizing a series of easements that the City accommodated.

“This acquisition is remarkable for our community and the entire Coastside, ensuring beautiful open space and farmland will forever be protected directly adjacent to our city,” Half Moon Bay Mayor Robert Brownstone said. “Connecting people to open space is something all three agencies strongly support, and our future trail connection from downtown to the Johnston House will help achieve that. The generations to come will appreciate that action was taken today to safeguard this irreplaceable natural resource.”

POST, a private nonprofit land trust, will retain ownership of Johnston Ranch's 224 acres of prime agricultural lands that have been farmed by the Guisti family for decades. As part of their [Farmland Program](#), POST intends to eventually sell the prime agricultural portion of the property to the farmer subject to a conservation easement, protecting it from future development and ensuring it remains productively farmed in private ownership.

Midpen, a public agency, will own the undeveloped 644-acre Johnston Ranch uplands area. Midpen will begin managing this area as part of its adjacent Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve beginning in December 2021. Midpen's long-term management of the property will include ranger patrol, environmental restoration and wildland fire resiliency work, incorporating the existing cattle grazing operations into [Midpen's conservation grazing program](#) for coastal grassland health, and eventually beginning a public process to explore the possibility of a new easy-access loop trail near the Johnston House for ecologically sensitive recreation.

For more information visit openspace.org/Johnston

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***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.*

www.openspace.org

***POST** protects open space on the Peninsula and in the South Bay for the benefit of all. As a private nonprofit land trust, POST has been responsible for conserving more than 80,000 acres since its founding in 1977. POST works with private landowners and public agencies to connect people and nature. Visit openspacetrust.org for more information.*

***The City of Half Moon Bay**, located 28 miles south of San Francisco, is a community of about 12,500 people situated on the Peninsula between forested hills and some of the most beautiful coastlines that California has to offer. Its historic downtown is home to numerous shops, art galleries, restaurants, bed and breakfasts and other businesses, and its celebrated beaches and parks are wonders of nature, accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians. With its many activities and events, beautiful natural scenery, old-town charm, and abundance of retail and commercial services, Half Moon Bay is a regional destination. www.hmbcity.com.*

