



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-21-132
Meeting 21-30
October 27, 2021

AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Bay Area Ridge Trail Designation at El Sereno Open Space Preserve

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS *den*

1. Designate 2.2 miles of the Aquinas Trail and the 1.3-miles of the Serenity Trail in El Sereno Open Space Preserve as a new segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail.
2. Designate the 0.2-mile section of the Montevina Ridge Trail from the Aquinas Trail intersection to the roadside parking area on Montevina Road as an “access route” to the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

SUMMARY

In June 2021, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) acquired a property as an addition to El Sereno Open Space Preserve (El Sereno Preserve or Preserve). This addition formalizes a segment of the Aquinas Trail, establishing trail continuity within the Preserve and laying the foundation for trail connectivity throughout the southern Bay Area region. This trail segment is identified as a high priority gap in the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail) and serves as a key piece of a planned regional trail connection between El Sereno Preserve and Sanborn County Park in association with the Highway 17 Regional Trails Crossing Project (Highway 17 Project). As such, the proposed 3.5-mile trail designation in El Sereno Preserve has been a long-standing goal of the District, County of Santa Clara, and Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (Ridge Trail Council). In addition, this designation would support the Ridge Trail Council in fulfilling a milestone achievement: dedicating 400 miles of Ridge Trail. Therefore, the General Manager recommends the Board of Directors (Board) designate a 2.2-mile section of the Aquinas Trail and 1.3-mile section of the Serenity Trail in El Sereno Preserve as a new segment of the Ridge Trail. Additionally, the General Manager recommends the Board designate the 0.2-mile section of the Montevina Ridge Trail from the Aquinas Trail intersection to the roadside parking area on Montevina Road as an “access route” to the new segments of the Ridge Trail. The Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) reviewed this item at its September 7, 2021 meeting and unanimously supported the General Manager’s recommendations.

DISCUSSION

In May 2021, the District was awarded a \$1,075,000 grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to purchase a 182.15-acre parcel of land previously owned by San Jose Water Company (SJWC) and subsequently acquired by Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST). With the close of escrow on June 30, 2021, the property was officially transferred to the District and added to El Sereno Preserve, closing a central trail gap within the Preserve (R-20-78, R-21-28). The recent

actions present a timely opportunity to fulfill multiple objectives for the District, its partners, and peer agencies.

With the addition of the SJWC property and the now-possible dedication of the Aquinas and Serenity Trails in El Sereno Preserve, the District is positioned to support the long-standing regional trail partnership with the Ridge Trail Council as they celebrate a major milestone accomplishment: dedicating 400-miles of Ridge Trail. In addition to facilitating this landmark achievement, this designation fulfills goals in multiple long-range regional plans. The trail segment in El Sereno Preserve provides a key piece of a planned regional trail connection between El Sereno Preserve and Sanborn County Park, identified as Vision Plan priority #19 and Measure AA project #19 for *El Sereno: Connect to Skyline, Sanborn County Park, and Lexington Reservoir*. Moreover, this Ridge Trail connection completes objectives outlined in the *Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Master Plan Update (1995)*, which is part of the *County of Santa Clara General Plan*, as well as the *Sanborn County Park Trails Master Plan (2008)*. By addressing a critical, high-priority gap in the Ridge Trail and fulfilling long-term goals of the Ridge Trail Council, the District, and the County of Santa Clara, this designation enables continued collaborations for promoting regional connectivity throughout the southern Bay Area.

Furthermore, this proposed Ridge Trail designation supports a key long-term goal of the Highway 17 Project: providing regional and national trail connections. Spanning El Sereno, Sierra Azul, and St. Joseph's Hill Open Space Preserves, as well as Lexington and Sanborn County Parks, the planned Highway 17 crossing and full trail build-out will connect approximately 50 miles of existing Ridge Trail on either side of Highway 17, ultimately linking approximately 30,000 acres of protected open space lands. This regional trail network includes an east-to-west route connecting Sierra Azul Preserve to El Sereno Preserve and Sanborn County Park across Highway 17. The Aquinas and Serenity Trails in El Sereno are an integral Ridge Trail segment within this trail route. Accordingly, the proposed 3.5-mile Ridge Trail designation is a foundational step to fulfill one of the Highway 17 Project's objectives of linking a critical trail gap in the southern Bay Area region. Moreover, as this segment of the Ridge Trail overlaps with the Anza Trail network, it may also be eligible for a national historic trail certification with the National Park Service. The Anza Trail certification is being researched by staff and may be pursued as a separate effort at a future date.

FISCAL IMPACT

The General Manager's recommendation has no immediate fiscal impact. Ridge Trail medallions, which will be provided free of charge from the Ridge Trail Council, would be installed by Visitor Services department staff on existing signposts.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

Actions related to this trail segment at El Sereno Preserve previously came before the full Board of Directors at the following public meetings:

- **July 22, 2020:** The Board approved the proposed purchase of the 182.15-acre SJWC property as an addition to El Sereno Preserve and the assignment of a purchase and sale agreement to POST ([R-20-78](#), [purchase resolution](#), [meeting minutes](#)).
- **February 24, 2021:** The Board adopted a resolution authorizing the General Manager to negotiate and execute a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to

support the acquisition of the 182.15-acre property as an addition to El Sereno Preserve ([R-21-28](#), [meeting minutes](#)).

- **May 21, 2021:** WCB awarded grant funds ([grant agreement](#)).
- **June 22, 2021:** Escrow closed for the subject transaction, passing the title to and possession of the property to the District (Resolution No. 20-23, [closing memorandum](#)).
- **September 7, 2021:** LFPAC voted unanimously to forward a recommendation to the full Board to designate the 2.2-mile section of the Aquinas Trail and 1.3-mile section of the Serenity Trail in El Sereno Preserve as a new segment of the regional Bay Area Ridge Trail. Additionally, LFPAC voted unanimously to forward a recommendation to the full Board to designate the 0.2-mile section of the Montevina Ridge Trail from the Aquinas Trail intersection to the roadside parking area on Montevina Road as an “access route” to the new segments of the Ridge Trail ([R-21-117](#), draft meeting minutes are attached as Attachment 3).

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided per the Brown Act. Notifications were also sent to the El Sereno Preserve, Regional Trails, and Highway 17 Project Interested Parties lists, as well as neighbors.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The designation of the Aquinas, Serenity, and Montevina Ridge Trails as segments of the Bay Area Ridge Trail is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

Pending Board approval, staff would implement the Ridge Trail designation for the proposed segments, including:

- Updating the El Sereno Preserve map and District website;
- Installing Ridge Trail medallions on trail sign posts;
- Notifying members of the public on the El Sereno Preserve, Regional Trails, and Highway 17 Project Interested Parties lists; and
- Incorporating an announcement about the Ridge Trail designation in a future Newsletter.

Concurrently, the Ridge Trail Council considered the designation of the 3.5 miles of Ridge Trail and the 0.2-mile “access route” at their September 23, 2021 Executive Committee meeting. If the District Board of Directors approves the designation, the Ridge Trail Council will subsequently formally recognize and promote the designation through their media channels as part of the milestone “400 dedicated miles” achievement.

Attachments:

1. Map of Proposed Bay Area Ridge Trail Segments at El Sereno Preserve
2. Map of Southern Bay Area Ridge Trail Routes
3. Draft Meeting Minutes from September 7, 2021 LFPAC Meeting

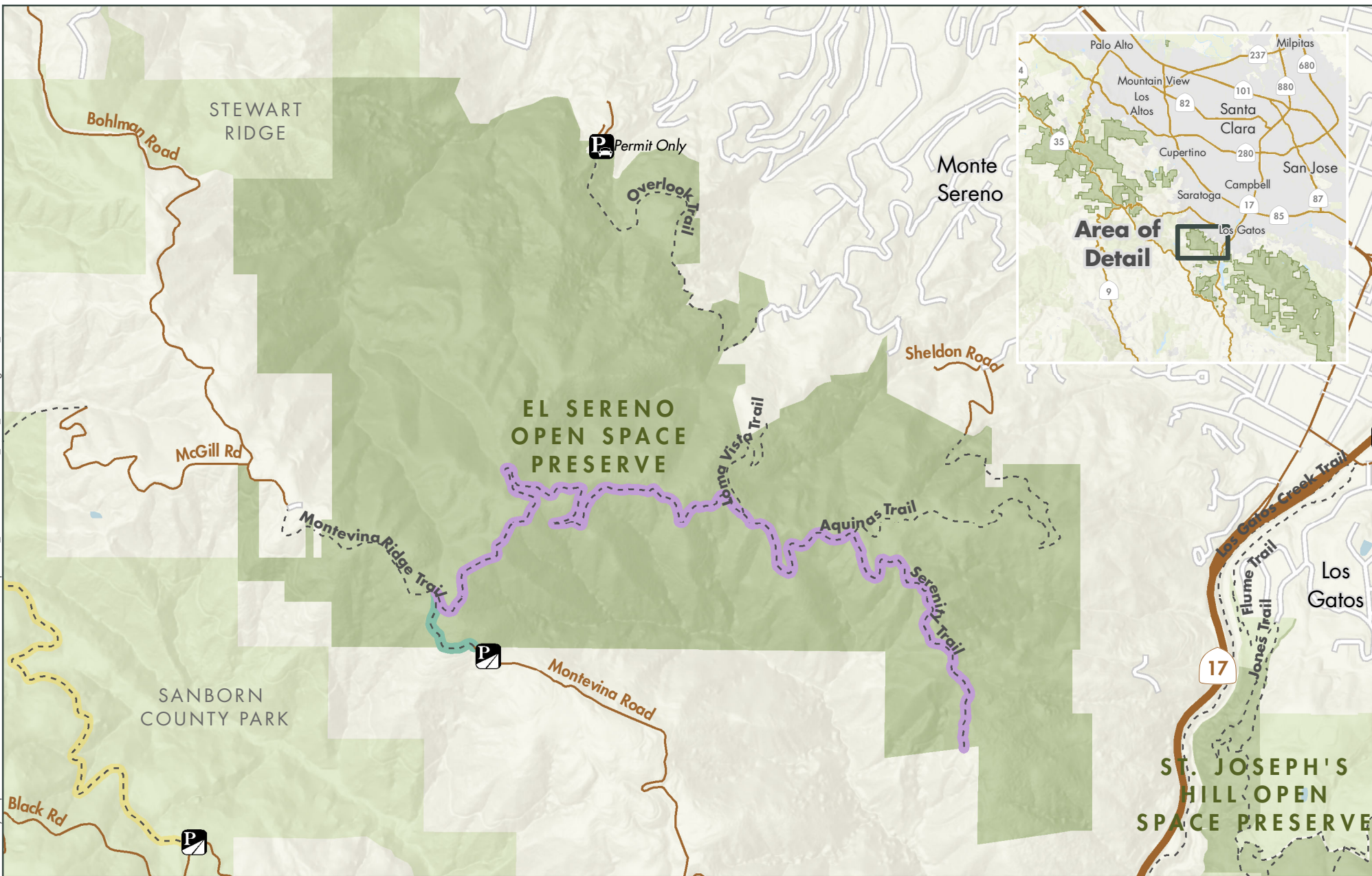
Responsible Department Head:

Jane Mark, Planning Manager, Planning

Prepared by/Contact person:
Arianna Nuri, Planner I, Planning

Graphics prepared by:
Francisco Lopez Tapia, GIS Technician
Alex Sabo, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council

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Created By: Ilopez



Bay Area Ridge Trail Designation in El Sereno Preserve

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  MROSD Preserves |  Existing Bay Area Ridge Trail |
|  Other Protected Lands |  Proposed Bay Area Ridge Trail |
|  Private Property |  Proposed Bay Area Ridge Trail Access Route |

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
8/2/2021



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.



--- Designated Ridge Trail
--- Planned Ridge Trail





Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE, FUNDING, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Committee conducted this meeting in accordance with California Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20. All Board members and staff participated via teleconference.

Tuesday, September 7, 2021

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Director Cyr called the meeting of the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee to order at 2:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Jed Cyr and Larry Hassett

Members absent: Karen Holman

Staff present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Jennifer Woodworth, Planning Manager Jane Mark. Planner II Melissa Borgesi Planner II Ari Nuri

Director Cyr announced this meeting is being held in accordance with Governor Newsom's Executive Order allowing Committee members to participate remotely. The public has the opportunity to comment on the agenda, and the opportunity to listen to this meeting through the internet or via telephone. Director Cyr described the process and protocols for the meeting.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Woodworth reported no public comments had been submitted.

Director Holman joined the meeting at 2:04 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Hassett moved, and Director Cyr seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

LFPAC
September 9, 2021

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COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Approve the March 9, 2021 Legislative, Funding, & Public Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes.

Motion: Director Hassett moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to approve the March 9, 2021 Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs committee meeting minutes.

Public comment opened at 2:05 p.m.

Ms. Woodworth reported no public comments had been submitted.

Public comment closed at 2:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Designation of the Stevens Creek Nature Trail, Skid Road Trail, and White Oak Trail in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail (R-21-118)

Planner II Melissa Borgesi provided the staff report presenting a film highlighting the route, common uses of, and points of interest along the Stevens Creek Trail. Ms. Borgesi explained the Friends of Stevens Creek trail created a working group of agencies to support the Stevens Creek Trail. Several of the District's current trails contribute to the regional Stevens Creek Trail, and are proposed for trail designation and to receive Stevens Creek Trail signage in the form of medallions to be included with existing District trail signs.

Director Hassett requested and received additional information regarding the locations of the three trails in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve (OSP) proposed for the Stevens Creek Trail designation and also potential future trails, which the Board may consider at a later time.

Public comment opened at 2:21 p.m.

District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth read the submitted comments into the record.

Ross Heitkamp provided comments in support of the proposed Stevens Creek Trail designation to support regional trails and thanked the District for its work on the project.

Alex Sabo, with the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, supported the designation of the three trails as part of the Stevens Creek Trail, which will help close gaps in the Stevens Creek regional trail and support other regional trails, including the Ridge Trail and Bay Trail.

Joel Gartland supported the Stevens Creek Trail designation stating it is a critical regional trail connection and supports other regional trails, including the Ridge Trail and Bay Trail. The regional trail designation will also help promote awareness of the trail.

Public comment closed at 2:25 p.m.

Motion: Director Hassett moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to forward to the full Board of Directors the recommendation to designate the Stevens Creek Nature Trail, White Oak Trail, and Skid Road Trail in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

3. Bay Area Ridge Trail Designation at El Sereno Open Space Preserve (R-21-117)

Planner I Ari Nuri provided the staff report presentation describing the trail's location and project background. Ms. Nuri explained the trail segment proposed for designation as Bay Area Ridge Trail helps support the District's and partner agencies' regional trail goals. Additional regional trail connections are included in the Highway 17 crossing project to provide an integral throughway in the area.

Public comment opened at 3:34 p.m.

District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth read the submitted comments into the record.

Ross Heitkamp provided comments in support of the proposed Bay Area Ridge Trail designation to support the future Highway 17 crossing and fill regional trail gaps.

Brian Vermilion supported the Bay Area Ridge Trail and the increase the number of multi-use trails in the Bay Area.

Alex Sabo, with the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, supported the designation of the trails as Bay Area Ridge Trail to support regional trail connections and contribute to almost 40 miles of dedicated Bay Area Ridge Trail.

Public comment closed at 2:37 p.m.

Motion: Director Holman moved, and Director Hassett seconded the motion to:

1. Recommend the Board of Directors designate 2.2 miles of the Aquinas Trail and the 1.3-miles of the Serenity Trail in El Sereno Open Space Preserve as a new segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail.
2. Recommend the Board of Directors designate the 0.2-mile section of the Montevina Ridge Trail from the Aquinas Trail intersection to the roadside parking area on Montevina Road as an "access route" to the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

Director Cyr adjourned the meeting of the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee at 2:38 p.m.

Jennifer Woodworth, MMC
District Clerk