



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: December 8, 2021

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *AR*

FROM: Michael Gorman, Foothills Area Manager; Brandon Stewart, Land & Facilities Manager

SUBJECT: Dog Waste Receptacle Update

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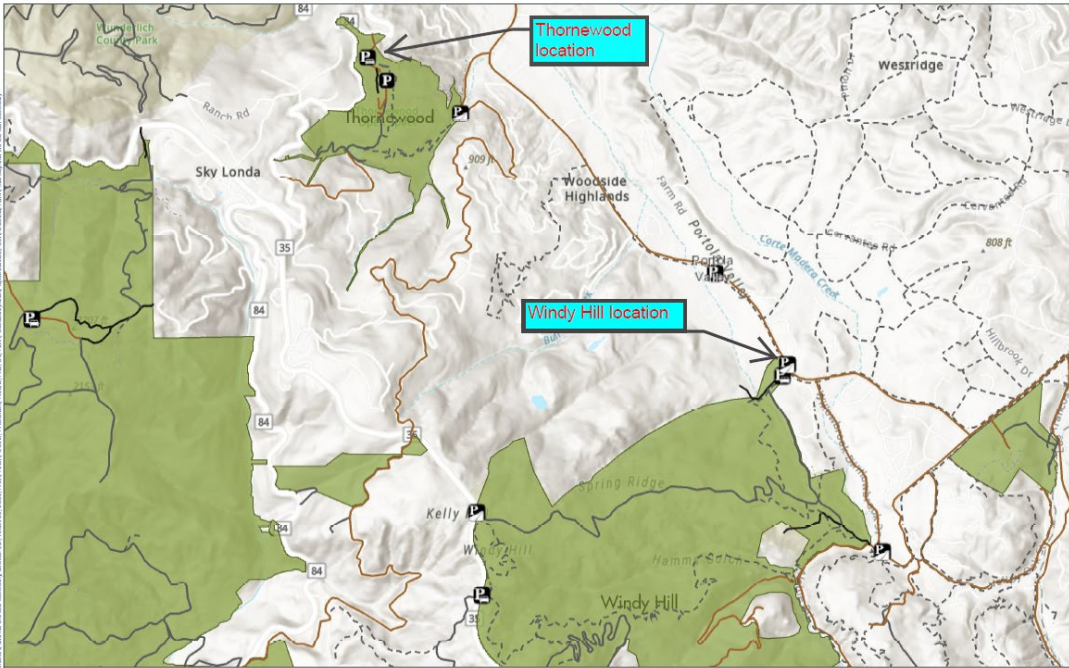
The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) an update on the use of dog waste receptacles in Pulgas Ridge, Fremont Older, Thornewood and Windy Hill Open Space Preserves. This memorandum summarizes the effects of installing dog waste receptacles on managing dog waste in these preserves. The Board approved dog waste receptacles after education and enforcement were deemed insufficient to improve compliance of visitors for packing out dog waste. This memo includes a calculation on the quantity of waste being removed by weight over a four-week period and the cost of staff time and materials to maintain and empty the bins for a year.

## BACKGROUND

Dog waste in preserves affects the visitor experience and can pollute native habitats and watersheds. To address the ongoing issue of dog waste in preserves, the General Manager directed staff to develop a program with an incremental adaptive management approach to ramp up education, outreach, and enforcement actions to improve visitor compliance for the proper disposal of dog waste. At the July 24, 2019, Board meeting ([R19-100](#))([minutes](#)), the Board approved installing dog waste receptacles at all preserves that allow dog use using a phased approach, and directed the General Manager to develop a public outreach campaign and return to the Board with an informational report on costs and compliance. In late summer of 2019, District field staff installed dog waste receptacles in the following open space preserves: two in Pulgas Ridge, one in Fremont Older, one in Thornewood, and one in Windy Hill. The maps that follow illustrate the locations of each dog waste receptacle.

## DISCUSSION

The impacts of the COVID pandemic interrupted all in-person educational efforts and the initial public outreach campaign was put on hold. Efforts to do trail counts of dog waste were also deferred because staff were diverted to managing extreme increases in visitation during the period of restrictions on indoor activities. The initial service level to empty dog waste containers was two days per week and coincided with the restroom cleaning schedule. With the increased numbers of visitors in 2020, the dog waste and restroom service level increased to four days a week.



**Skyline Area Dog Waste Receptacles**

**Parking Location Trail (classes)**

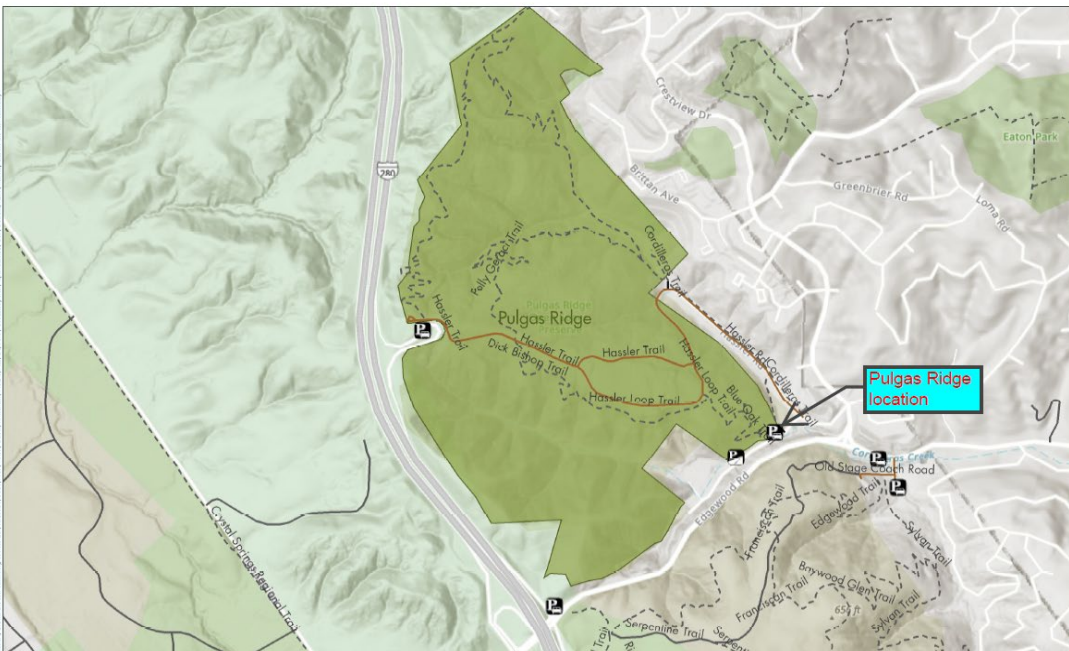
- |          |                         |                                |
|----------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lot      | Paved Road              | Abandoned / Unmaintained Trail |
| Roadside | Unpaved All-Season Road | Abandoned / Unmaintained Road  |
| Other    | Unpaved Seasonal Road   | Preserve Boundary (fill)       |
|          | Trail                   |                                |

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9/30/2021



Michael Grimm

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.



**Pulgas Ridge Dog Waste Receptacles**

**Parking Location Trail (classes)**

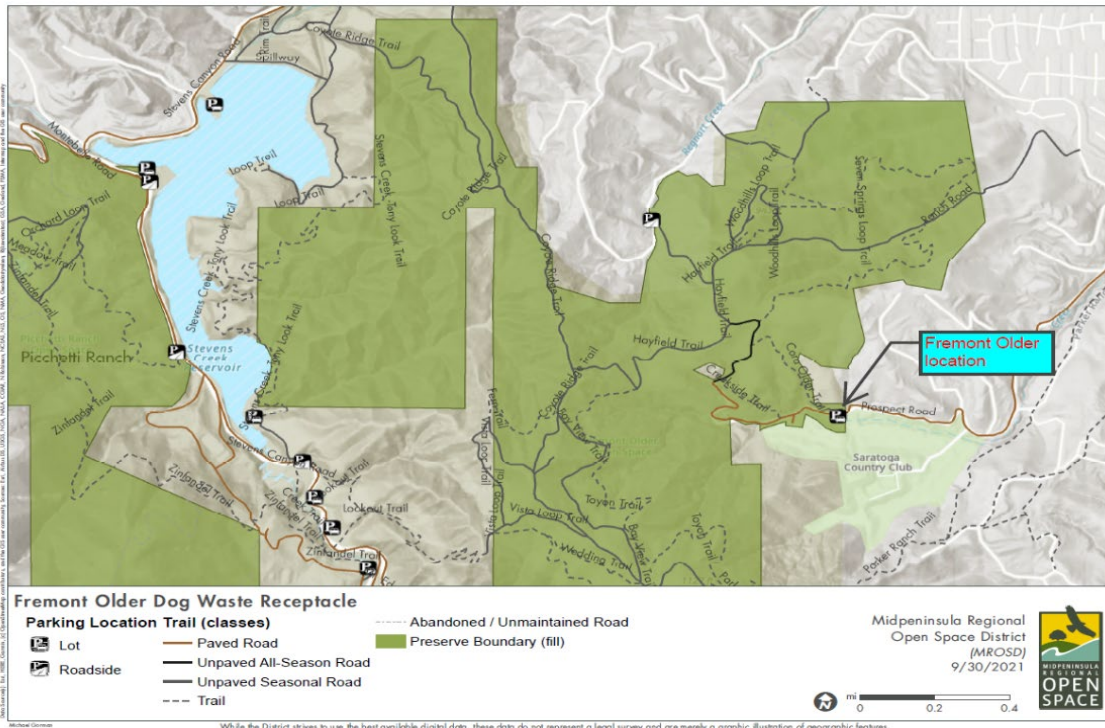
- |          |                         |                          |
|----------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Lot      | Paved Road              | Preserve Boundary (fill) |
| Roadside | Unpaved All-Season Road |                          |
|          | Unpaved Seasonal Road   |                          |
|          | Trail                   |                          |

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The service level for dog waste receptacle cleaning has remained at four days a week for Pulgas Ridge and Fremont Older Preserves due to continual increased visitation. The receptacle in Thornewood is serviced twice a week by ranger staff, as there is no restroom at this location, and Windy Hill is serviced twice a week on the same schedule as the restroom.

In locations where there is a District-serviced restroom -- Windy Hill and Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserves -- there is a minimal increase in staff time compared to just servicing the restroom. Therefore, the increase in staff time to service dog waste containers is limited to locations where there is no restroom serviced by District staff -- Fremont Older and Thornewood Open Space Preserves. The restroom at the Fremont Older Prospect parking lot is a portable restroom (Porta-Potty) that is serviced by a contractor.

The table below shows an estimate of staff time to service dog waste receptacles in preserves where the District does not service an existing restroom. The total hours per year is approximately 288 hours. The estimated hourly rate per employee, including vehicle expenses, is \$65.31. . As the table illustrates, the cost to service dog waste receptacles at these two preserves, is approximately \$18,810 per year.

Preserve	Average Hrs/Week	Average Hrs/Month	Average Hrs/Year	Estimated Yearly Cost
Thornewood	2	8	96	\$6,270
Fremont Older	4	16	192	\$12,540
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>\$18,810</b>

Over a four-week period staff weighed the bags when emptying the receptacles in Pulgas Ridge and Fremont Older Preserves. The following table shows the amount of dog waste per weight in pounds collected from these preserves for each week and estimated yearly total.

<b>Preserve</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>4 Week Total</b>	<b>Estimated Yearly</b>
Pulgas Ridge (2 bins)	112 pounds (lbs)	126 lbs	120 lbs	122 lbs	480 lbs	5760 lbs
Fremont Older (1 bin)	39 lbs	36 lbs	38 lbs	34 lbs	147 lbs	1764 lbs

Based on the service interval for Fremont Older, an estimated annual collection amount for Thornewood and Windy Hill Preserves is 1764 pounds. When added to the estimated totals for Fremont Older and Pulgas Ridge, staff calculate an estimated annual total of 9,288 pounds of dog waste is being collected from all four preserves. Based on the collected amounts of dog waste at Pulgas Ridge and Fremont Older Preserves, these three receptacles collect an average of 1.25 tons per year.

While specific comparable counts of on-trail dog waste were not made after installing the dog waste receptacles, staff report that while visitors may still come across some dog waste on trails, the amount of dog waste both bagged and unbagged has been reduced significantly to the point where it is no longer a significant issue at the four locations where dog waste receptacles were installed. There are eleven preserves that allow dogs on some or all trails. The four trailheads where dog waste containers were placed, along with St. Joseph’s Hill Open Space Preserve, represent trailheads where the vast majority of dog owners access District preserves. St. Joseph’s Hill Open Space Preserve has dog waste containers outside the preserve entrances serviced by the town of Los Gatos and Santa Clara County Parks. There are an additional 33 trailheads that allow dogs. These areas have a much lower level of dog use that ranges from moderate (upper Windy Hill Open Space Preserve) to very light (Foothills Open Space Preserve). Staff did not report significant dog waste problems at these locations prior to the beginning of this program and that remains the case today. Therefore, the General Manager does not recommend installing dog waste receptacles at these other locations.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Since the installation of dog waste receptacles at four locations, field staff have observed a reduction of dog waste bags on those trails, parking lots and restroom vaults. However, this has not eliminated the problem completely and occasionally dog waste bags are still left on the trails. Public outreach and education to encourage use of the dog waste receptacles and to carry out dog waste when receptacles are not available will be ongoing. Engagement strategies include targeted ranger and volunteer patrols and educational contacts with dog owners, signboard educational content, information at tabling events, docent dog walks and social media posts.