



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-22-29
March 1, 2022

AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Hawthorns Area Plan – Project Planning Process

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Review and comment on the Hawthorns Area Plan project planning process and proposed public engagement opportunities. No Committee action required.

SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) intends to develop a Comprehensive Use and Management Plan for the Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve (Hawthorns Area). At this March 1, 2022 Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR) meeting, staff seeks PNR input on the proposed planning process to prepare the Hawthorns Area Plan.

BACKGROUND

The 79-acre Hawthorns Area is located southeast of the Alpine Road / Portola Road intersection in the Town of Portola Valley (Town). This property was gifted to the District in 2011 and is currently closed to the public in accordance with the Preliminary Use and Management Plan (R-06-53). In 2021, the District initiated a multiyear process to develop the Hawthorns Area Plan, which will be a Comprehensive Use and Management Plan to guide natural and cultural resource management activities, land management activities, and the implementation of ecologically sensitive public access improvements on the property.

At the August 24, 2021 PNR meeting (R-21-112), Committee members reviewed and commented on the draft vision and goals to establish an overarching direction for the future use and management of the Hawthorns Area. On November 16, 2021 (R-21-156), the PNR reviewed the revised vision and goals, suggested further refinements, and recommended forwarding the refined vision and goals to the full Board of Directors (Board) for consideration.

At the November PNR meeting, staff also proposed a potential working group composition and formation strategy to assist the District with developing the public access component of the Hawthorns Area Plan. The PNR discussed the focus, role, and membership of the working group, and how the working group process would balance public access opportunities with natural resource protection. The General Manager suggested that staff return to the PNR with a revised approach and timeline for the working group and stated that initiation of a working group can be

deferred to later in the process after staff brings forward recommendations for the use and management of the Hawthorns Area as a whole.

DISCUSSION

Hawthorns Area Plan - Project Planning Process

In accordance with Board policy 4.01, *Open Space Use and Management Planning Process*, the District conducts planning processes to develop comprehensive guidelines for future use and management of its open space preserves. This multistep process engages community members, District staff, and the Board, with the resulting plan documenting long-term goals for habitat enhancement, resource management, public access improvements, environmental education, and other land management activities. **Table 1** outlines the proposed planning process for the Hawthorns Area Plan, which is described in further detail on the following page.

Table 1: Hawthorns Area Plan Planning Process

#	Phase Title	Phase Overview	Public Engagement Opportunities
1	Vision & Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop vision & goals • Refine planning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual comment card • Board/PNR meetings
2	Existing Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey existing conditions • Prepare Opportunities & Constraints Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement • Site tours • Open house • Virtual comment card • Board/PNR meetings
3	Programming / Conceptual Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify use & management objectives and recommendations • Identify programmatic elements • Develop Conceptual Plan Alternative(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement • Workshops • Working group • Online surveys • Pop-up events • Virtual comment card • Board/PNR meetings
4	Area Plan / Environmental Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Area Plan • Approve CEQA findings and Area Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board/PNR meetings • Public/agency comment on CEQA document
5	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design development, permitting, & construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD (Town permitting process)

Each phase of the Hawthorns planning process would include various public and stakeholder engagement opportunities. District staff would also work with the Town of Portola Valley to share key milestones and coordinate on permitting considerations. A Conditional Use Permit from the Town would be needed to authorize new uses and planned improvements at the Hawthorns Area during the implementation phase.

Phase 1: Vision & Goals

The Hawthorns Area planning process begins with establishing the vision and goals. The vision describes how the Hawthorns Area should look and function into the future, while goals provide guidelines for management actions that support the vision. Together, the vision and goals represent a comprehensive roadmap for the Hawthorns Area. On November 16, 2021 (R-21-156), the PNR recommended draft vision and goals to the Board for review and approval at an upcoming Board meeting (anticipated March 23, 2022).

Phase 2: Existing Conditions / Identification of Opportunities and Constraints

With Board approval of the vision and goals, District staff would continue data collection, surveys, and technical studies to further characterize physical, biological, cultural, aesthetic, and community resources at the Hawthorns Area. District staff would also engage key stakeholders, including local neighbors, advocacy organizations, recreational user groups, and the Town, to collect public feedback on the existing conditions. Using this information, staff would identify site opportunities and constraints and land management needs. The resulting Opportunities and Constraints Report would identify resource management priorities and other key considerations that may have policy implications for the future use and management of the property. The Opportunities and Constraints Report will provide important background information to inform the work under Phase 3.

Phase 3: Programming / Conceptual Planning

Based on the Opportunities and Constraints Report, District staff would develop draft objectives for the proposed use and management of the Hawthorns Area. The objectives would define specific targets necessary to accomplish the Board's vision and goals regarding resource protection, public access, and land management. In addition, the District would develop a program of proposed resource management actions, land management activities, recreational uses, and public access facilities to consider during conceptual planning. Public engagement opportunities to inform the development of objectives and program activities would include community workshops, continued stakeholder engagement, and receipt of public comments at Board meetings.

The District would then form a working group to collaborate with the District in developing conceptual plan alternatives for public access that are ***informed and framed*** by the vision and goals, existing conditions information, the Opportunities and Constraints Report, and the use and management objectives established for the property. Recognizing that the public access component generates a high level of public interest, this working group would convene diverse local and regional perspectives, including local community members and environmental advocacy representatives, to work together and with the District in preparing recommendations for introducing ecologically sensitive public access and interpretation opportunities. Ultimately, in collaboration with the working group, the District would develop recommendations for the trail system, trailhead locations, parking area location(s), and proposed low-intensity recreational uses.

All of the use and management recommendations (natural resource and cultural resource management, land management and operations, public access, etc.) would then be folded into conceptual plan alternative(s) that would be presented to the PNR for review and confirmation.

Phase 4: Area Plan / Environmental Review

District staff would compile the existing conditions and PNR-supported conceptual plan alternative(s) into the Hawthorns Area Plan for Board review and for approval as the project description to initiate environmental review per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This phase would entail development of an environmental document, public circulation of the CEQA document, and public and external agency review and input. At the end of the process, the Board would consider adoption of the CEQA findings and approval of the Area Plan.

Phase 5: Implementation

With Board approval, District staff would implement the activities outlined in the Area Plan, including natural resource protection, land management actions, and public access improvements. Implementation would likely be phased over a period of years and entail coordination with appropriate regulatory agencies, including the Town for permitting oversight.

FISCAL IMPACT

Review and comment on the Hawthorns Area Plan project planning process has no direct, immediate fiscal impact. Funding for further planning efforts and related costs this fiscal year are within the approved Fiscal Year 2021-22 (FY22) budget.

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio #6 Windy Hill: Trail Implementation, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected ending balance at the portfolio level.

MAA06 Windy Hill—Trail Improvements, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership Portfolio Allocation:	\$12,740,000
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$12,740,000
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 02/08/22):	(\$70,113)
Encumbrances:	(\$32,691)
Remaining FY22 Project Budgets:	(\$49,472)
Future MAA06 project costs (projected through FY25):	(\$95,796)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$248,072)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$12,491,928

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio #06 Windy Hill: Trail Implementation, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership allocation, costs-to-date, projected life-to-date project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA06 Windy Hill—Trail Improvements, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership Portfolio Allocation:	\$12,740,000
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$12,740,000
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
06-002 Hawthorns Area Plan	(\$248,072)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$248,072)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$12,491,928

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- May 2021: The PNR received an informational presentation on the proposed planning and public engagement process for the Hawthorns Area and provided input and guidance ([R-21-65](#), [meeting minutes](#)).
- August 2021: The PNR reviewed the draft Hawthorns Area vision and goals for the Hawthorns Area and provided input and guidance ([R-21-112](#), [meeting minutes](#)).
- November 16, 2021: The PNR reviewed the revised vision and goals for recommendation to the Board and commented on a draft working group strategy. At this meeting, the General Manager stated that staff would return to the PNR with a revised timeline and approach for the working group ([R-21-156](#), draft minutes included in meeting packet).

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Notice was also provided via email to members of the public enrolled in the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve interested parties list.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Developing the Hawthorns Area Plan project planning process is not a project subject to CEQA. Environmental review would occur in a future fiscal year upon Board approval of a preferred conceptual plan or CEQA project description.

NEXT STEPS

Pending approval from the PNR, staff would implement the project planning process outlined above according to the timeline in **Table 2**. Staff will also present the Hawthorns Area vision and goals for Board approval at an upcoming regular Board meeting in spring 2022.

Table 2: Hawthorns Area Plan Timeline

Phase #	Phase Title	Timeline
1	Vision & Goals	Spring 2022
2	Existing Conditions	2022
3	Programming / Conceptual Planning	2023
4	Area Plan / Environmental Review	2024
5	Implementation	2025

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